

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### Ripping Yarns

### The Breaking of Masculine Codes in "Boy's Own" Adventure Stories, 1855 - 1940

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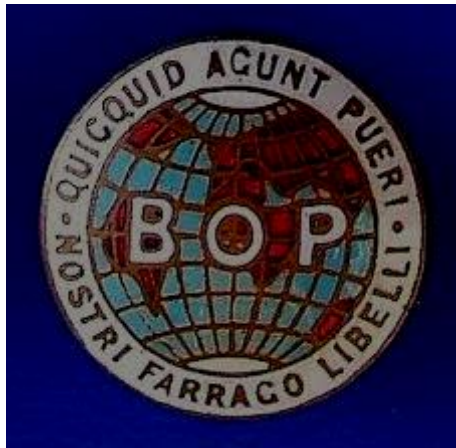
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# **Ripping Yarns: The Breaking of Masculine Codes in “Boy’s Own” Adventure Stories, 1855 – 1940**



Quicquid agunt pueri nostri farrago libelli

Whatever boys do makes up the mix of our little book

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD**

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## **Abstract**

My thesis explores the yarn, the British masculine adventure story for boys of all ages, from 1855 until 1940. Using Raymond Williams' concept, "structure of feeling", the "boy's own" ethos is examined within its material culture, strongly influenced by the public schools. The thesis follows the yarn's mutations in popular literature from school story to maritime adventure, colonial encounter, domestic landscape fantasy, invasion scare novel and war memoir.

The study argues that, when the pedagogic system privileged the study of Classics as the professional gateway to success, the yarn constructed a valorised code of masculinity as an intellectual and moral puzzle requiring decryption. Using Rudyard Kipling's stories about adolescent males as the chronological spine, it follows the competitive discourse of different masculine codes, Christian, imperialist and sporting, which the implied reader is encouraged to "break". Extending Pierre Bourdieu's notion of code as cultural competence to include crypto-analysis, the thesis examines how superficially extroverted tales remain fixated upon bookish practices of reading and interpretation, through scriptural exegesis, classical translation, and scrutiny of treasure maps, genealogies, landscapes and ciphers.

Chapter One considers the school story, and specifically its competitive examination as an overarching metaphor for masculinity; Chapter Two the maritime adventure as a hermeneutic quest where the adolescent struggles to read male behaviour; and Chapter Three the colonial encounter as an identity crisis when cultural hybridity challenges the construct of the White Man. Chapter Four explores the domestic landscape fantasy when imperialist anxiety becomes enmeshed within nostalgia for boyhood; Chapter Five the paranoia about invasion running parallel to imperial hubris; and Chapter Six thematic developments in two short stories by Kipling. Chapter Seven provides an aerial view (including the post-War cult of the airman), before the Conclusion summarizes the shifts in constructions of masculinity across my periodization.

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## **Note on Referencing System**

The thesis has adopted MLA, the preferred referencing system of the Department of English Literature & Creative Writing as set out in the University of Roehampton Referencing Style Guide MLA Version 2013. Variations from other formats of MLA are therefore explained by this source, for example the dropping of the letter p from page references and the use of square brackets around ellipses (three dots). Where Kindle editions have been used, chapter references replace page references. For primary texts, the original date of publication is sometimes bracketed for the sake of chronological context, in addition to referencing by modern edition.

Endnotes are situated at the end of the thesis rather than each chapter. They are used to illuminate or clarify information that is not essential to the body of the argument - and would prove digressive if included in the main text - but still important enough for inclusion.

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## Introduction

### The significance of a Latin cipher

The Latin motto, "Quicquid agunt pueri nostri farrago libelli", is a helpful key with which to unlock the rationale of this thesis, or - given its emphasis upon the literary "decryption" of masculine identities - a linguistic cipher with which to decode its argument. The thesis is about two interrelated subjects. First, it follows the development of the masculine adventure tale from the 1850s until its eclipse in critical favour, if not popularity, after the First World War; a genre that was known widely (and to several of its chief authors)<sup>1</sup> as the yarn, without any modern sense of quaintness. Second, it looks at the lost code in which the yarn was written, meaning its distinctive moral atmosphere and the linguistic hierarchy it valorised - with classical languages at the apex and English below.

The Latin tag, reproduced above, was the motto of *The Boy's Own Paper* (1879-1967). Not only was *B.O.P.* Britain's longest-running story paper for boys, it also led to the coinage, "boy's own adventure", as an alternative to the yarn, pointing to the same sense of being a slightly preposterous story: tall, larger-than-life and spun beyond the strict truth; boyish in requiring a certain credulity on the part of the reader, but appealing across a wide spectrum of age, as witnessed by Rider Haggard's dedication of *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) to "all the big and little boys who read it". And although there were tales for girls, indeed a *Girl's Own Paper* with a larger readership, the cultural conditioning towards which those tales for females was directed is a subject that lies outside the remit of this thesis. This is not to falsely define adventure as an exclusively male preserve. Matthew Grenby indicates that "even in the Victorian period, many adventure stories featured girls as central characters", mentioning Elizabeth Whittaker's "Robina Crusoe and her Lonely Island Home", which was serialised in the *Girls' Own Paper* between 1882 and 1883 (2008, 189). Furthermore, Terri Doughty, in writing about Whittaker's tale, cites the Victorian essayist, Edward



Salmon as noting that in the 1880s *B.O.P.* was the second most popular periodical for girls after *G.O.P.* (2014, 61). Yet the renaissance of the masculine adventure story runs parallel to a major social change which saw the ruling classes educate their sons at boarding institutions deliberately sequestered from female influence; the *B.O.P.* was designed to widen the appeal of the personal and social values familiar to that captive male audience. A prominent historian of Victorian masculinity, John Tosh, suggests that “[a]s a social identity masculinity is constructed in three arenas – home, work and all-male association” (1999, Chapter One, Kindle edition), and I have approached the yarn as a form that views masculinity primarily through the prism of all-male association.

The semi-official guide to *B.O.P.*, written by its last editor, alludes to the importance of its motto as an adult male *credo* for charting and circumscribing activity within the boy-world. Jack Cox records how it was “carefully concocted in Latin and placed in an arc of splendour on the cover” (1982, 14) without an accompanying translation. Tellingly, he does not gloss the sociological reasons why a Latin inscription should be privileged over an English phrase. In setting the boundaries of what boys could legitimately do, the employment of Latin is accepted as the natural order of things. Even in Cox’s time as editor, the same phrase appeared on the perimeter of an enamel button-hole badge, of which the frontispiece to the thesis provides but one example: “The motto was to remain throughout the paper’s long history” (Cox, 14).

To take one example, my belief that the work of authors such as John Buchan (who features in my examination of the invasion scare story) exemplifies the connection between adventure, the Classics and code-breaking is endorsed by one critic who attributed Buchan’s skill in trick writing - invaluable in making an outlandish plot plausible - to his “First in Greats” mind<sup>2</sup> (Usborne, 1974, 86). Buchan, who wrote for *B.O.P.*’s upmarket competitor, *The Captain* (1899-1924) admitted to taking up fiction, and writing for boys particularly, from frustration at the dullness of most boys’ books (1940, 194). In the dedication of his

breakthrough novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), Buchan admits that "incidents defy the probabilities and march just within the borders of the possible" (1994, 8) and then imputes a variation of his own linguistic facility as a classicist to its protagonist. At breakneck speed with no prior experience, Richard Hannay decodes a cipher found in a dead agent's pocket book, an achievement that might be termed "boy's own" in its unlikeliness. Indeed, throughout his adventures, Hannay observes the boundaries of gallant, manly behaviour inculcated by *B.O.P.*, leading Usborne to lament that Hannay is too anodyne to be an effective hero: too boy's own in obeying the directives of schoolmasters, pastors and moral guardians (1974, 82). By contrast, in his memoirs Buchan parades his credentials as a proudly independent Scot, abjuring incorporation into an elite, English set of manners. He claims as a boy to have been "incapable of what is called the public-school spirit" (1940, 10), lacking the "usual code" of behaviour (11) because of a natural wildness. As Buchan's progression from a Scottish manse to a Barony was clearly eased by academic success in Classics at Oxford, his disavowal of the hegemonic influence of the public school suggests that the conventions of fiction for boy's own adventure could be learnt and assimilated, like a grammar. More than this, his own curriculum vitae might be taken as proof that the mastery of Latin symbolised suitability for admission to full membership privileges within the establishment.

My thesis argues that the masculine adventure story popular within my periodization is best understood in terms of its hierarchical approach to language (in particular a deference to Latin and Greek scholarship), its literariness and intertextuality, and its enthrallment to the inherently bookish practice of close reading. Therefore the reproduction of a *B.O.P.* club membership badge on the cover of this thesis does more than document the hierarchical relationship between Latin and English of the time. It symbolizes the intellectual puzzle at the heart of the thesis: the interrelationship between dominion over the material world and internal mastery of cognitive skills that in the yarn, I suggest, signals

either masculine success or failure. The membership badge also serves as a reminder of the original contribution made by this thesis. Although following a tradition of scholarship that has examined the Victorian or fin-de-siècle romance (Zweig, 1974; Green, 1980; Bristow, 1991; Fraser, 1998; Daly, 2000; Kestner, 2010), it is the first to posit a hermeneutic quest or interpretative journey during which its male hero redefines his sense of selfhood in relation to symbol or text (thereby showing himself to be a good reader), as the unifying feature of the masculine adventure story.

My analysis has therefore two focal points. Under examination in the first of these is the “boy’s own” ethos, strongly influenced by the public schools, which I characterise as more than a representative story paper for boys: as a state of mind, in fact, or a “structure of feeling” (1954) to employ the term developed by Raymond Williams. I also follow Williams, a pioneer of the cultural materialist approach to literature, in situating the production of texts firmly within their historical, economic context. Under examination in the second are the interpretative challenges that adventure literature set before a mixed audience of child, adolescent and adult male readers across a range of settings: the school, the sea, the empire, the domestic landscape and the air. So while observing the successful completion of a test or quest, such as Tom Brown abjuring a crib when fighting the complexities of Greek particles, or Jim Hawkins navigating piratical duplicity aboard the *Hispaniola* while acquiring a fortune, the reader is asked to consider *how* the boy hero conducts himself. And since the yarn, *Treasure Island*, being the prime example<sup>3</sup>, tends to advertise its borrowings from earlier adventure stories, the reading competence that is being engendered necessitates the comparative assessment of competing constructions of masculinity within and across texts. The yarn therefore strongly exhibits the tendency, noted by Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, of a work of art to have “interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded” (1986, 6).

If, as the *B.O.P.* badge suggests, the consumers of the yarn were to be distinguished by their membership of an all-male club with elite literary pretensions, the same is true of the purveyors of the yarn. Most of the primary texts examined and re-evaluated in this thesis are the product of the second half of the long nineteenth century (1857-1918) and written, edited, published, reviewed and critiqued almost exclusively by men. They were the work, as Nicholas Daly notes, of an emerging class of professional writers (2000, 8). Apart from a smattering of school story authors - Thomas Hughes, Frederic Farrar, Talbot Baines Reed and Charles Hamilton - the writers could reasonably have been referred to collectively by a phrase that is now as quaint as the term yarn: men of letters. The rise and passing of this professional group has been documented by John Gross, who notes that up until the First World War they were a familiar part of the literary landscape (1991, 9). Eminent among them (and therefore significant in creating the masculine publishing world examined in this thesis) were Robert Ballantyne, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad, Henry Rider Haggard, W.E. Henley, Andrew Lang, J.M. Barrie, the publisher's reader Edward Garnett, the literary agent A.P. Watt, John Buchan and Rudyard Kipling, to whom special prominence is given, for reasons that will be made clear later. Not a movement in the sense of an artistic group with a stated manifesto, these authors nevertheless reflected in their subject matter what the historian of masculinities, John Tosh, has dubbed the "flight from domesticity" (1995). As Daly and Telfer (2010) have shown, they interacted socially without being concerned about the boundaries between highbrow and lowbrow literature. There was in fact something literally clubbable about them, since some met at the Savile Club<sup>4</sup> in London, established in 1868 for respected writers and artists. Examples exist in the biographical literature - as when Stevenson and Henley collude over the coin that can be made from *Treasure Island*<sup>5</sup> - of how these masculine networks exploited developments in the publishing and marketing of fiction (most notably the decline of Mudie's circulating library) to experiment with

the format and subject matter of the novel. The writers and publishers of masculine adventure romance deliberately set out to benefit from these market changes by producing best-sellers (McDonald, 1997, 19).

In order to be able to map the yarn across the period - from school story to sea story, colonial encounter, domestic landscape fantasy and invasion scare story, reaching an apotheosis in the war memoir - I have limited my selection to well-known fictional texts, which have attracted considerable critical attention. This has the advantage of both highlighting the major tropes within each sub-genre and enriching the textual discussion by reference to other scholars with specific interests in literary modernism, post-colonial theory and masculinity studies. This best-seller approach also avoids lengthy plot summaries, and is supplemented by historically significant works across the adult-child reader spectrum to give balance. I have admitted texts by two authors who blur the distinction between fact and fiction, T.E. Lawrence's, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) and *The Mint* (written 1922-8; published 1955) and *Scouting for Boys* (1908) by Robert Baden-Powell. These works feed off their authors' reputations as popular heroes and contain some accounts of dubious authenticity, so meet the criteria of being yarn-like in their stretching of the truth in the process of supposedly telling the truth about manliness. That they sold well is evidence of how readily the literary marketplace accommodated discussions of British masculinity.

To examine the primary texts in what Bourdieu termed the field of cultural production, "a partially autonomous arrangement of social relations according to basic forces, power relations, interests and hierarchies of value and judgement" (Calhoun, 1990, 503), is to witness a competitive publishing *milieu*. If only the fittest survived, the "coiniest" might still prosper, to adopt the common slang term for marketability used by Stevenson and Henley. Many tales first appeared in periodicals, for boys or a general adult readership - the placement sometimes defeats easy categorisation into literature for men or boys - and then

metamorphosed, with authorial revisions, into books. The writer J.B. Priestley fondly remembers the “variety and sparkle” of Edwardian print culture, despite publications leading a precarious life with some “doomed to vanish sooner or later” (1970, 179). And William Lubenow sees the importance given to literary life as part of a longer historical process in which social value “was desacralised and defetishized (though perhaps *resacralised* and *refetishized* would be more accurate) by attaching it to the experiences of professional life” in a shift to a club-based culture (2004, 19).

In this fraternising, clubbable context, the *B.O.P.* badge appears at first sight to extend the literary franchise through a concession to English as the pedagogic language for ordinary boys, whilst giving the story paper the mystique of Latin. Certainly, Cox cites the 1870 Elementary Education Act as the prime reason for the birth of *The Boy's Own Paper* (15) as an antidote to the supposedly deleterious effects of the penny dreadful. The story paper is being addressed as Robert MacDonald observes in his essay “Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy” (1989) to the “moral health of the young” (521) in an attempt to replicate bourgeois ethics in the widening circle of readers. Although the late 1870s seems slightly late to be concerned at the spread of literacy, the dating is supported by the Oxford historian and collaborator with Kipling, C.R.L. Fletcher - born in 1857 - who recalled that in his youth it was normal to meet people who were illiterate, before the introduction of compulsory schooling (1911, 232). Indeed, in his semi-official capacity, Cox is noticeably insistent that the Religious Tract Society launched *B.O.P.* on being convinced that reading the wrong sort of literature led inevitably to bad behaviour. The potency of reading is accentuated as a force for good or evil. This point is reinforced positively by an illustration, reproduced in Figure 1, the first of a series in this Introduction which symbolically represent the preoccupations of my thesis. It shows a prize-giving ceremony at the Crystal Palace in 1877 sponsored by *R.T.S.* for four thousand winning pupils of board schools, who had entered a voluntary examination to test their knowledge of

Scripture. At a given signal, all prize-winners displayed their open volumes of Scripture, "a scene described as unforgettable" (Cox, 17). The act of reading itself – scriptural and therefore "good" reading – is sacralised.

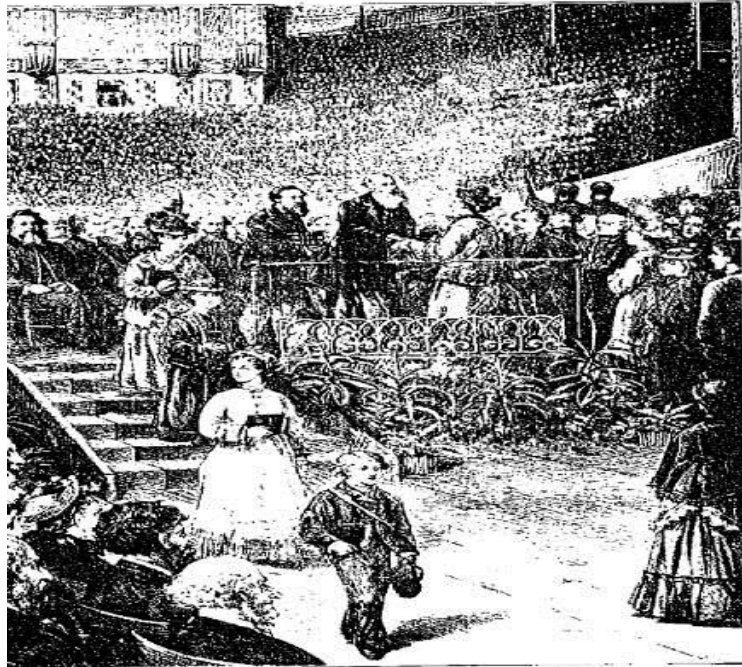


Figure 1 R.T.S. Scriptural Prize-giving Ceremony, 1877. *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!*

It would be wrong to suggest that all Victorians and their followers believed that the choice of reading material dictated behaviour or that conduct anxiety was universal as literacy increased. In his survey of boys' story papers, E.S. Turner notes the *Times Literary Supplement* deploring "the parental policy of foisting on schoolboys 'pietistic powder concealed in jam'" (1976, 12). He cites G.K. Chesterton's use of a *literacy/illiteracy* binary to defend the harmlessness of the penny dreadful: "[h]e had grown impatient with the thesis that a boy who could not read stole an apple because he liked the taste of an apple, but that a boy who could read stole an apple because his mind was aflame with a story about Dick Turpin" (12). Chesterton thought escapism, "the simple need for some kind of ideal world in which fictitious persons play an unhampered part" (12), was sufficient cause for story papers and rendered them harmless. By this token, the Crystal Palace Bible-reading ceremony I propose should be seen paradoxically as

an unnecessary act of wish-fulfilment, an attempt by the evangelical great-and-the-good to render its subjects' reading practices safe by strait-jacketing them into a procedure that bureaucratizes and assesses. Certainly, Cox's sanguine assumption that the ritualized display of four thousand Bibles is an act of reassuring conformity runs against the standard longitudinal view of the invention of printing, reading and the Bible as intellectually subversive. For example the cultural theorist, Matei Calinescu, suggests that "for the individual the opportunity to inspect and constantly re-inspect his or her self in search of the mysterious 'signs' of salvation" created a pattern of Bible re-reading that led to "the eventual internalization of interpretative authority" (1993, 86). By liberating the individual, then, Bible reading has historically challenged social structures. With this assessment in mind, the grandiosity of the Crystal Palace event seems a little milk-and-water; replicating for a less privileged audience the ritual of the examination preserved for the classically-trained elites of Oxford and Cambridge, rather than reproducing the virility and danger of early Christianity, where participation in the miraculous feeding of four thousand would have stood as a more genuine test of faith.

If anxiety at what any reading, even Bible reading, might lead to socially can be construed as lurking beneath the surface calm of the 1877 celebration of mass literacy, I contend that a similar concern is detectable in Victorian men of letters. Edmund Gosse, a man whom John Gross describes as a "snobbish, prickly, disingenuous literary politician" (1991, 172), illustrates this tendency in his writing. In "Reading Class, Examining Men: Anthologies, Education and Literary Cultures", Sue McPherson's convincing delineation of the practices by which Victorian society stratified literary competence through educational primers and examination systems, Gosse is quoted deploring the decay of literary taste. He frets that the populist rage for stories will challenge the prestige of the best poets (2011, Chapter 2, Kindle edition). In this light, the *B.O.P.* tag, "Quicquid agunt pueri nostri farrago libelli", appears to be only a half-open door. Ostensibly, club



membership might seem available to everyone. Yet entry to the inner sanctum (the august board room rather than the board school) is subject to a further linguistic control mechanism. Entry, as it were, to where “the committee of the controlling interest” meets is still limited to those with secret knowledge of the Latin tongue, the arbiter of gentility.

Cox describes the motto as carefully concocted, implying both deliberation and a secret intent that he does not elucidate. The Latin tag does indeed have a coded implication. It is a deliberate re-rendering of Juvenal’s Satire I, where it reads “Quicquid agunt homines nostri farrago libelli est”. Juvenal was writing *for* men *about* men in a milieu which was carnal, venal and corrupt. It is the world against which the satire is directed. By a clearly intended analogy, I suggest, it is also the corrupting environment from which boys were to be quarantined by *B.O.P.*’s founders. So even the motto itself carries a latent meaning, known to adults, which acts as a literal version of what Perry Nodelman terms a shadow text: “an unspoken and much more complex repertoire that amounts to a second, hidden text” (2008, 8). When it is borne in mind that the penny dreadful was not originally aimed at a juvenile market and that its plotlines derived from the middle-class Gothic novel of the later eighteenth century (Turner, 19-20), the complexity of the tag multiplies. Its Latin attempts to rarefy a form that had fluctuated by reading-age and class over a century; firstly, to give it the imprimatur of respectability and exclusivity; secondly, to filter out immorality (“what boys do *not* do”), which in view of Cox’s chosen title of his history of the story paper, *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!* (1982), encompasses any boyish sexual feeling.

When one adds to this finding Cox’s description of the prime movers of the Society gathering large quantities of extant story papers of varying quality, scrutinising them for insights into the best print format, size, use of illustrations and advertising before buying up the title of Samuel Beeton’s *Boy’s Own Magazine*, the fixated intertextuality of *B.O.P.* is clearer; even more so when it is

remembered that *B.O.P.*'s most enduring school story, Talbot Baines Reed's *The Fifth Form at Saint Dominic's (1881)* dissolves its story-line into *The Dominican*, the school magazine, which comments upon the twists and turns of its plot. In creating a literary world for boys that exposes the contradiction inherent in the term boy's own, the magazine's adult founding committee exemplify a hierarchical taxonomy of language, where their real motivation (the censoring and circumscribing of reading) is veiled in Latin, an acquired tongue signifying upper-class gentility. Although the motivation is never explicitly revealed, its existence is implied by a nod of obeisance to Juvenal that is linked to this class deference. As Honey has observed, "[m]ore important than [...] intellectual, aesthetic and moral considerations which contributed to the *mystique* which surrounded classical education was its connection with the idea of a gentleman" (1977, 133). As Raymond Williams' term implies, the *R.T.S.* league of gentlemen is drawing upon a shared structure of cultural norms - pedagogic, social and behavioural - engendered in the elite, scholastic environment in which they had been educated. In a period before English had emerged as a respectable subject for gentlemen at the University, even the creation of a boy's magazine *in English* in the demotic, rough-and-tumble world of Victorian publishing by a religious organisation is presented by Cox as if it is an awfully big adventure, "an enterprise from which others shrank" (15).

Cox's assumptions beg several questions. In publishing, why is the profane skill of selling fiction more problematic than the sacred business acumen needed to sell tracts? Given the amount of morally dubious material requiring censorship or euphemistic explanation in the classical texts presented to boys in public schools, why should Latin or Greek have acquired the imprimatur of godliness and good learning? The respected educationalist Thomas Arnold had in any case suggested that for boys "of ordinary talents [...] of a feeble intellectual appetite", another, non-classical system of schooling would be better (Quigly, 1982, 35). So why did the Victorians persevere in believing that the close reading of texts would

effect change in personal behaviour? The contradictions and ambivalences contained within the phrase "Quicquid agunt pueri nostri farrago libelli" undergo examination in my thesis: the superimposition of adult designs upon literature for boys; the simultaneous venturing into and shrinking back from democratic native language, the cultural oscillation that makes it sometimes difficult to place texts as high-, middle- or lowbrow; the valorisation of skill in close reading over simple physical courage. These dualities lie at the centre of my construction of the literary and linguistic properties of the yarn.

### **The defining literary and linguistic properties of the yarn**

There is not to my knowledge a clear delineation in the critical literature of the facets which make the yarn a distinctive form. When critics write about the action genre they tend to use the terms adventure or romance, as for example in Martin Green's *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1980) or Robert Fraser's *Victorian Quest Romance* (1998). The omission is a little surprising since the term yarn was used in contemporary fiction to define what has since become a common critical shibboleth. Conrad, in distinguishing Marlow's style of storytelling in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) acknowledges his "propensity to spin yarns", which lack however the "effective simplicity" of ordinary seamen for whom, "the whole meaning [...] lies within the shell of a cracked nut". By contrast, for Marlow the meaning of an episode is not "inside like a kernel but outside enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze" (2007, 6). As Sarah Cole observes, Conrad's modernism has been used as an ameliorating factor to offset against what in other writers of adventure fiction is regarded as imperialist complicity: "[h]is guilt is partially mitigated by his formal commitment to ambiguity, fragmentation, linguistic indeterminacy and other strategies typically understood as modernist" (1998, 252). The connection between adventure and imperialism implicit in Green's title has been taken further by critics like Bristow who in *Empire Boys* (1991) frames the boy's own adventure as a principal

propaganda weapon in preparing Victorian boys for the responsibilities of colonialism. As will be demonstrated, Bristow's approach is not untypical of recent criticism which can sometimes elevate ideological intent above themes, preoccupations and literary practices. One purpose of the thesis is to counteract the simplistic division of Victorian masculine adventure into imperialist and therefore didactic and anti-imperialist and therefore complex, a dichotomy which depends in part upon the supposed impressionability of its audience. Therefore it will help to outline the distinctiveness of the yarn amongst the commonalities it shares with the romance and adventure, the earlier forms from which it developed. In support of my formulation, I shall suggest some texts which are adventures but not strictly yarns.

The positioning of adventure as "outside the usual continuity of this life" (1971, 188) was theorized by George Simmel in 1911 in an essay acknowledged as foundational by both Zweig and Kestner. In his view, the adventure "lacks that reciprocal interpenetration with adjacent parts of life which constitute life-as-a-whole" [189]. In fictional terms, therefore, the experience it describes is alien from that considered in the realist novel of, for example, Jane Austen and George Eliot, which undertakes a detailed social and psychological examination of individuals, women and men, in a prescribed location. Crucially for Simmel, the adventure is a very different "form of experiencing" (197). It is a self-enclosed life episode, an "integrated unit" (189) that carries its own intrinsic meaning, and the adventurer a gambler willing to believe he can transcend fate and achieve intellectual, erotic or worldly success through the combination of his own strength and luck.

Simmel's surmise that the mastery of fate gives adventure its uniquely masculine lustre is taken up more forthrightly by later critics. Martin Green defines romance literature as a series of events, remote from the domestic, which constitute a challenge to the central male character, who must respond with exploits (1980, 23). Daly contends that "[f]rom the beginning, romance is a

gendered genre", and that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, "[p]ervasive in the critical accounts is the assumption that the romance is a more healthily masculine form than the realist novel" (2000, 18). Robert Fraser describes Kipling, returned from India and nominated by Lang for membership of the Savile Club, finding "its habitués torn between advocates of the crocodile of Realism and the catawampus of Romance" (1998, 11), the catawampus being a marvellous animal of the American swamps capable of eating other reptiles. Kipling imagines the one-volume romance as more aggressively omnivorous, swallowing up the three-decker domestic novel. For once, experience roaming beyond the boundaries of habitual social life is in the ascendant, harking back to almost prehistoric, mythic origins of adventure.

The fact that the second half of the nineteenth century marks the period when the yarn enters the written language as descriptive of a distinctive type of tale is itself suggestive of specific attributes for which the broader terms, adventure or romance, are less appropriate. Those particularities need now to be considered. This is partly a matter of a more limited range. Simmel considers the erotic to be a legitimate subject for adventure, and in his historical survey Zweig includes a chapter about Casanova. But with its schoolboy proscription upon sexual feeling, the yarn resolutely resists the incursion of the erotic. Even the courtly aspect of the medieval romance which provides sophisticated pointers as to how to woo women finds no echo in the Victorian yarn, where marriage to an aristocratic woman does not feature as the reward for masculine exploits. As I shall demonstrate in relation to the invasion scare story, when the Arthurian motif is revived from romance via the public schools, its purpose is to raise the spectre of national apostasy and the inability of men to protect women. For related reasons, I have excluded the Ruritanian fantasy popularised by Anthony Hope from my definition of the yarn, since its adventurous aspects focus upon a foreign aristocracy and the marriage of its hero.

By eliminating women almost completely, except in the supernatural manifestation of Haggard's Ayesha (whose eroticism exists primarily as a siren-like challenge to male continence), the yarn intensifies its scrutiny of male behaviour beyond what is usual in adventure. For not only does the yarn describe homosocial behaviour away from what Thomas Hughes describes in 1857 as "petticoat government" (*Tom Brown's Schooldays*, 1998, 52), it frets over that behaviour. Taken up with the socialisation of boys away from the domestic and creating a template for adventure which came to appeal to boy readers of all classes, Thomas Hughes set the tone for later yarns; rambling, conversational, and intergenerational to the point where becoming a man is an intensely serious matter for both fathers and sons, but not mothers. The yarn becomes, as the emergence of *B.O.P.* itself testifies, the adventure story motivated by conduct anxiety: a discourse which distinguishes between behaviours and either explicitly or implicitly proposes a hierarchy of valorisation. It focuses more than generalised adventure on the inner life of the young male, with a concomitant emphasis upon a movement towards self-knowledge, an interior quest that parallels any external journeying across space or time. For this reason, Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), because it revolves around the bachelor lives of ageing men, is strictly speaking only an adventure. Likewise, early science fiction novels by authors such as H.G. Wells, which feature male inventors, are merely adventures because they envisage a world-to-be, rather than a man-to-be. For, fundamentally, the yarn entertains while to pressing home the need to consider what sort of manliness is desirable in boys, adolescents and grown men. This trait is clearly observable in the writer who most overtly lays claim to the yarn as his principal means of communication: Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908) is peppered with a score of Camp Fire Yarns.

The documenting in book form of speeches that may have formed part of the original oral discourse of Scouting points to a further defining feature. The yarn enacts what is one of the major social transformations of the late Victorian

and Edwardian periods: the transition of an oral culture into a written culture. It may be no coincidence that the stories that cemented the popularity of the yarn, *The Coral Island* (1858), *Treasure Island* (1883) and *She* (1887) all feature a first-person narrator recording his own escapades. Jim Hawkins opens his account thus: "Squire Trelawney, Dr Livesey, and the rest of the gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from beginning to end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island [...] I take up my pen" (1985, 1). Even when written down, the yarn's evolutionary indebtedness to speech remains detectable; it may, Crusoe-like, retain the spontaneity, immediacy or bathos of vocal inflections. The format of oral discourse that is being documented may vary, constituting the transcript of a school speech as in the Kipling Stalky short story, "The Flag of their Country", which lampoons parliamentary, patriotic rhetoric, or the after-dinner reminiscence over cigars as in *Lord Jim* when "Marlow showed himself willing to remember Jim, to remember him at length, in detail and audibly" (2002, 24). In short, the yarn builds authorial asides, illustrative digressions and salty dialogue debating or expressing manliness into its narrative texture.

The often conversational tone of boy's own adventure establishes a bridge between manliness and boyishness. As a form, it constantly attempts cultural transmission. Very often, the yarn features an older narrator talking to or about a younger man or boy. It is a discourse from men to boys about manliness, charting the voyage from innocence to experience. In essence, it will be man-talk, or man-to-boy talk providing a serious masquerade of man-to-man talk. Even when, as in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, no boy is visibly present, the narrator's consciousness is haunted by the need for adult mentoring; Hannay relies on the insights of his South African mentor Peter Pienaar to elude capture in the Scottish Highlands.

Such a bridge can of course be crossed from both sides. There are inevitable complications and misunderstandings in the contact zone between adult author and child reader, resulting from the difficulty for the adult in "writing back"

into the experience of the child and for the child in "reading up" into the experience of the adult. As Alison Waller observes in a forthcoming publication, when an adult attempts to reimagine their childlike response to the world, as when re-reading a book popular in childhood, the capacity for self-deception exists (2015). Multiple selfhoods coexist and it is an assumption that the unadulterated child response can be recaptured without later psychological overlaying. The adult attempt to think as a child may lack authenticity, particularly when it comes across as talking down. Unbeknown to himself, Kipling's Raymond Martin M.P. in "The Flag of their Country" delivers a disastrous speech at United Services College, which secretly renders him contemptible in the minds of his youthful audience. The adult writer dare not assume that the young mind is a blank slate upon which ideas can simply be chalked up or imprinted. This is, in any case, to assume that the purpose of writing for children is itself automatically didactic and a preparation of the young for the responsibilities of adulthood. In contradistinction, Humphrey Carpenter in *Secret Gardens* argues that "a children's book can be the perfect vehicle for an adult's most personal and private concerns" (1985, 37). He explores a competing strain in the Victorian and Edwardian nursery featuring the names of Kingsley, Carroll, MacDonald, Grahame, Potter, Nesbit and Barrie: a fantastic strain of writing which "dealt largely with utopias, and posited the existence of Arcadian societies from the nature and concern of the everyday world" yet in doing so "was commenting, often satirically and critically, on real life" (16).

Children's literature can therefore contain a secret adult yearning for the enchanted places of childhood. In this reading, the yarn is best seen as a means of playing with the perceptual gap between adult and child. Arguably the enduring popularity of *Treasure Island* springs from its narrative hendiadys, when Jim Hawkins, *both man and boy*, recounts his adventures, the two states fusing in the story-telling. Since the Peter Pan myth also (especially in its 1902 proto-novel form, *The Little White Bird*) encompasses a largely male world of adventure, I



have - unlike Green who sees fantasy as antithetical to adventure or Kestner who does not cover it at all - specifically extended the boundaries of the yarn to include what I term the domestic landscape fantasy. My wider definition has encompassed the work of Barrie and that side of Baden-Powell which represents "the extreme manifestation of a particular psychological type, the 'boy-man' permanently stuck in adolescence" (Searle, 2004, 66).

Not only is the yarn a discourse about manliness, it is a competitive discourse. It is being written in a period when, as David Newsome demonstrates in *Godliness and Good Learning* (1961), his study of Victorian pedagogical practice, there were changing paradigms of boyishness and manliness over time, according to the waxing and waning influence of Christianity, Classics, athleticism and imperialism. New constructions of appropriate behaviour attempt to seduce the reader away from earlier representations. From a twenty-first century vantage point, *B.O.P.* may seem comfortably bourgeois in its sensibility, but its founders undoubtedly saw it as a subversive force in the competitive world of boy's story papers, in view of the time they took to make its format and appearance mimic earlier manifestations. Similarly *Stalky & Co.* might now seem to encapsulate late nineteenth-century attitudes towards imperialism, but Kipling partly conceived it as a counterblast to the pious school story, a philosophical argument for what boys really do as opposed to what respectable pedagogues thought they should do. Shipwreck in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a motif for rebellion against God, but in Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, also written within the Christian tradition, it is reconceived as a providential opportunity to explore boyish (and therefore manly) adventurousness. My thesis has grouped yarns by subject and locale in order fully to explore the ways in which later models of adventure play off against and subvert earlier prototypes.

The last defining feature of the yarn is its preoccupation with reading, interpretation and decipherment. In their separate ways, Tom Brown, Jim Hawkins, Kimball O'Hara and Baden-Powell's model scout are all boy-detectives.

Their growing mastery over the particles of Greek or Latin, the co-ordinates that identify treasure on Skeleton Island, the observational techniques of colonial surveillance or the signs within the landscape that loafers do not see, represent putative self-positioning or mapping into that adult male world they are preparing to join. More than this, their preternatural vigilance symbolically re-enacts the virtuous cycle of being and interpreting, or of action and cognition, which is also the process by which their sense of selfhood is redefined. With the preoccupation comes anxiety, for even though the product of an era when Britain was, in terms of its imperial landmass, at its zenith, the yarn is haunted by the prospect of failure. Conduct anxiety recurs so often in boy's own adventure that it might be taken as the primary colouring in its atmosphere. *Eric* charts the decline and fall, little by little, of a promising schoolboy. In *Captains Courageous*, Harvey Cheyne must pass through a secularised process of redemption aboard a fishing schooner to ready himself for the role of a captain of industry. In *Lord Jim* (1900), its eponymous hero ponders his moral defection aboard the *Patna*, struggling (and ultimately failing) to make amends in Patusan. The elderly narrator of *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) laments his youthful failure to prevent a German invasion. Baden-Powell's ideal scout is drawn from the siege of Mafeking when boys were prematurely commandeered to undertake men's until the town could be relieved by British soldiers. Baden-Powell's scout mirrors the protagonist of the yarn in being randomly forced into the role of hero, like Hannay in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. He is then freighted with responsibilities almost too great to bear and required to display a preternatural vigilance in then reading and mastering his environment.

### **Codes, code-breaking and masculinity**

Based upon Cox's historical account, boy's own adventure fiction was clearly first constructed with the intention of inculcating certain male behaviours by demonstrating within fictions how personal values might be internalised. As I play with the idea of boys "breaking into" knowledge of these masculine

paradigms in the title of my thesis, it is therefore important to define with some exactitude what is meant by masculine codes and code-breaking. I define masculine codes as the social and psychological identifications by which a male regulates his life, a definition that is suggested by the title of P.G. Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters* (1938). Since for Bertie Wooster, a member of the ruling class quietly determined not to rule, no quest is more significant than recovering a cow creamer from a stately home at the behest of a demanding aunt, Wodehouse's work helpfully provides an exemplar that contradicts any automatic assumption that the boy's own ethos supports patriotic and colonialist discourse. Since he, like Buchan, wrote for *The Captain*, Wodehouse's fiction is examined as typifying the sporting paradigm of masculinity in the school story chapter.

Tosh observes not only that "gender is itself constructed through relationships" but also that "how these relationships are formed, and what meaning they are invested with, are strongly conditioned by cultural expectations" (1999, Chapter One, Kindle edition). Tosh goes further, proposing that "full masculine status is the gift of one's peers; it builds on the foundation of boy-life outside the family" (1999, Chapter One). As the boarding school was the first and most influential institution encountered by youths from the ruling class, and as the character traits for effective British rule changed over time, cultural historians of education like Newsome are able to furnish detailed evidence of shifting, indeed competing, masculine paradigms. The manliness of godliness and good learning, influential at schools until the 1860s, he associates with Samuel Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character* of 1825. Coleridge portrays manliness as "the opposite of childishness: to be manly was to be mature, to be conscious of the duties of manhood, and so to cultivate the powers of intelligence and energy that one's moral character [...] should aspire to that perfection of human intelligence in the Christian faith" (1961, 196-7). Newsome traces the origin of the term, muscular Christianity - closely associated with the fiction of

Charles Kingsley and Hughes - to an anonymous article in the *Edinburgh Review* of January 1858, where it is linked to "the deep sense of the sacredness of all the ordinary relations and the common duties of life" placing great value upon "animal spirits, physical strength and hearty enjoyment" (198-9). The cult of athleticism at the public schools, strongly ingrained by the turn of the century and exemplified by Wodehouse's worship of cricket, represents the full secularisation of the masculine ideal on a physical rather than spiritual basis. Such paradigmatic shifts were sometimes regretted by the proponents of earlier forms. For example, Newsome notes that Thomas Hughes became "very distressed to see in his late middle-age how sadly misdirected the glorification of sport had become" (214)

The tendency amongst the ruling class for a girl's education to be conducted domestically and a boy's at boarding school feeds into a subtle dichotomy in the construction of adventurousness in feminine and masculine terms, despite a common reliance upon the traits of courage, resourcefulness and resilience. Grenby acknowledges the "rather clumsy compromise between wanting to make the adventures of heroines as exciting as those of heroes, yet not being prepared to entirely efface the 'proper' divide between men's and women's lives" (190). Doughty too acknowledges the balancing act implicit in the representation of Robina Crusoe who "is having adventures on her island" and yet "enacting a microcosm of settlement" (2014, 64). Free from the restrictive entanglements of domesticity, boy's own adventure ranges more widely in the variant forms of masculinity that it explores. Indeed, according to my reading of adventure fiction, many honourable codes of masculine behaviour can coexist in its texts, allowing considerable diversity in the role models.

Just as I exercise caution in privileging one prevailing construction of masculinity, I prefer to eschew a mechanistic definition of cultural assimilation. With reference to Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Joseph Kestner goes as far as to suggest that adventure literature is a cultural force working towards "imprinting codes of masculinity" (2010, 1). It is true that Jacqueline Rose postulated that the history

of children's fictions should be written "in terms of the relationship to language which different children's writers establish for the child" (1994, 78). Yet seeking to control the language of discourse is a different matter from being assured of its effects. Books can be interpreted differently upon re-reading; for example, Jeffrey Richards has noted that P.G. Wodehouse loved *Eric* as a child, but came to grow critical of it and mocked its style in his own school stories (1988, 70). The re-reader does indeed have multiple selves - as witnessed by George Meredith's complex verdict upon *Treasure Island*, which appeared to unearth his childhood readings of similar books: "the best of boys' books, and a book to make one feel a boy again". Since I treat the yarn as a form of crossover fiction or mixed-age text I have avoided extensive debate about the characteristics (if they exist) that distinguish children's literature from other forms. In any case the child-centred aspect of the story paper has already been comprehensively addressed in Kelly Boyd's *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper* (2003). I have also intentionally side-stepped philosophical disputes about whether language reflects the world or is constitutive of it, since my focus is upon how texts are designed to develop the implied reader's ability to interpret the real world. And in my view, "developing" is less all-enveloping than "imprinting" as a description of the writer's influence upon the reader's response; even the term inculcating, which I employ, with its sense of impressing such-and-such upon the reader's mind falls short of leaving a permanent, ineradicable residuum of thought. Granted, an author of a yarn may be able to exploit the credulity of a boy reader; there is perhaps an adolescent gullibility implied in the slang, Edwardian sense of "ripping" as splendid. But he cannot impose a reading in the modern technological sense of "ripping" as cloning. I instead follow Francis Spufford's definition of reading in *The Child That Books Built* (2002). Spufford suggests that although "the words we take into ourselves help to shape us", they are not "a sequence of numbers, not variations on a limited set of digital possibilities, but item after item of news from the analogue world of perception, each infinitely inflectable in tone and content" (21-

22). So when referring to the interpretative process of the male reader I want to retain Spufford's analogical/digital distinction between the human brain and the machine. Human deciphering does not follow the exact process of digital encryption. If I were to position my conceptualisation of the reading act, it would be as *dialogic* in the sense ascribed to Bakhtin's term by David Rudd: a dialogue with texts from a particular historical and social location, "such that a work is always dynamic, always subject to struggles over its signification" (2013, 22-3).

The question may therefore be legitimately asked, how can code-breaking be a useful metaphor for the literary reception of masculinities? Yet even when a mechanistic model of cryptography is rejected, it still holds true as George Steiner asserts in *After Babel* (1992) that deciphering "is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication" (xii, Steiner's emphasis). For human beings, the very mastering of written language is a form of deciphering, a skill that is normally acquired during childhood. As Spufford also observes, a book is "just a long, long string of symbols (66) and "a software emulation" of another person's mind "running on the hardware of our brains" (67); the alphabet merely "a set of arbitrary signs standing for the sounds of the spoken language" (67); and spoken language itself "an arbitrary code in which the sounds that the human lips, larynx, and tongue can produce – the phonemes – stand for the grammatical units, or morphemes, into which meaning is divided" (67).

When education reform in the late nineteenth century statutorily required the arbitrary code of speech to be studied as a written code, then the connection between inscription and secrecy becomes manifest. That literacy and secrecy are mutually constitutive, at least, is the striking thesis of Neil Postman in *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994), which argues that childhood is only sustainable as a distinct state in a society which highly prizes a print above a televisual culture. Postman sees the invention of the printing press as ushering in a world where the structure of interests (the things thought about), the character of symbols (the things thought with) and the nature of community (the area in

which thoughts develop) are fundamentally different (23). Adults and children move beyond being tied into the here-and-now, a shared oral culture in which experience is common, concrete and ungraduated. As literacy takes hold, it gives power to "the idea that each individual is important in himself, that a human mind and life in some fundamental sense transcend community" (28). Personal identity is given primacy over social relations. Individuality is shaped by the "unyielding linearity of the printed book – the sequential nature of its sentence-by-sentence presentation, its paragraphing, its alphabetized indices, its standardized spelling and grammar"; a format that inculcates "a structure of consciousness that closely parallels the structure of typography" (30). For Postman - in an analysis which I find compelling - the very concept of childhood emerges from the formalizing of education around reading, for "[i]n a literate world, children must *become* adults" (13, Postman's emphasis).

The other ingredient in the development of childhood as a distinct state is for Postman the emergence of a sense of shame. Reading is naturally discursive, freeing the reader to experience and conceptualise alternative social and psychological states. Ineluctably, communal behaviour is subjected to scrutiny and alternative modes can be abstractly considered. This leads to the fostering of self-consciousness, the desire to regulate behaviour and the popularity of books about manners. *The Disappearance of Childhood* cites Erasmus's *De Civilitate Morium Perilium* as an early example of conduct literature "for the edification of the young" (49); centuries later, in response to the development of literacy in the Victorian period, *B.O.P.* is taking a similar pedagogical course. Postman sees literature as inevitably the repository for secrets: "in a literate adult world to be an adult implies having access to cultural secrets codified in unnatural symbols" (13). Setting aside his diatribe against cultural change in modern America, Postman's ideas clearly have applicability to the development of literacy in Victorian Britain. The 1877 Crystal Palace prize-winners' ceremony in this light might be seen as a ritualized celebration of literacy itself in its sequencing of the

young into candidate, subject-in-process and graduate by their "elders and betters". The secret processes of invigilation, marking and assessment attempt to regulate the transition of the youthful deserving poor into the ranks of literate adults.

The equation between the written code of language and secrecy at the elementary level of social literacy is even more applicable at the elevated level of cultural sophistication required to complete a complex classical translation. Honey lists the Victorian rationalisation for the supremacy of Greek and Latin in their education system: the moral value of exact scholarship; a training of the mind that would prove transferable to all intellectual activities; the development of the memory; fluency, the command of good language, readiness and presence of mind; the need for laborious perseverance; a complete aesthetic and historical frame of reference (1977, 127-130). And for the intellectual elite of late Victorian Britain, for whom an examination system foregrounding classical translation had taken root, there is a clear parallel to be drawn with the cultural conditions in which espionage flourished. In *Pedagogical Economies*, the main critical exposition of the examination in nineteenth-century literature, Cathy Shuman surveys its appearance in works by Matthew Arnold, Trollope, Dickens and Ruskin "as an element in literary discourse – as topos, as plot structure, as figurative intersection" (2000, 5). By contrast, I shall be exploring the cultural dispositions formed by an education system which privileged the vigilant reading and interpreting of Greek and Latin classical literature; and how, figuratively, that decoding of a complete aesthetic and historical frame of reference is an act of espionage. For the intellectual hothouses in which young men had to be protected from straining themselves beyond mental endurance over a cipher have strong affinities with the mental strain borne by college men before Finals.

The parallels are borne out in books about cryptology. David Kahn's comprehensive history, *The Code-Breakers* (1996), highlights the importance of cryptanalysts in seventeenth-century France who as members of the



Buchanesque-sounding black chamber or Cabinet Noir regularly read the ciphered dispatches of foreign diplomats (162). Black chambers then spread across Europe; in late eighteenth-century Vienna, the privileges and characteristics of young male cryptanalysts bear similarities to the “Mandarin” civil servants produced by the nineteenth-century British public schools, as described later in the thesis chapter about school fiction. In their early twenties, of high moral calibre, the Viennese recruits were fluent in foreign languages and possessed some knowledge of algebra and elementary mathematics. Success in the breaking of codes led to high salaries, reward in the honour system and access to the monarch (165). Being in “intelligence” possessed ontological status – the full realisation of cognitive powers - as an idealised state of masculine alertness.

The hierarchical link between the classical languages and cryptography is underlined by *Codebreakers* (1993), the inside story of Bletchley Park where, during the Second World War, German, Italian and Japanese signals were broken, intercepted and summarized. The more complex work was often given to classicists. Patrick Wilkinson argues that there was “some rhyme and reason for a classical scholar to be allotted such works. He has been trained from his youth to wrestle in examinations with passages in unseen translation in which he has to guess, from his general knowledge and from the context, the meaning of unknown words” (63). Another Bletchley Park veteran, William Millward, describes the “innate” abilities needed: “It means reviewing known facts, sorting out significant from insignificant, assessing them severally and jointly, and arriving at a conclusion by the exercise of judgement: part induction, part deduction. Absolute intellectual honesty is essential” (17). Millward’s assessment chimes very closely with A.E. Housman’s description of the ideal classicist: “To read attentively, think correctly, omit no relevant consideration, and repress self-will, are no ordinary accomplishments” and require “just literary perception, [...] experience which must have been won by study, and mother wit which he must have brought from his mother’s womb” (Steiner, 1992, 26).

By definition the glamour of having worked at Bletchley Park is a retrospective phenomenon because of the original need to withhold shocking secrets from the general population. The heightened self-consciousness of dealing with esoteric knowledge is often replicated in both the atmosphere of the yarn and the predicament of its protagonist, and contributes to that sense of suspense that sustains the adventure genre. These characteristics are exemplified in some of the yarns I examine: the ontological burden of being marked out having stumbled upon privileged knowledge - as when Carruthers and Davies in *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) uncover German invasion plans on the coast of Denmark. Or the premonition of undertaking a spiritual battle against evil - as when Hannay unmasks the Black Stone in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, a ring of sinister German spies, who skewer agent Scudder's body to the floor. Or the changed relationship of the protagonist to his environment as secret knowledge accumulates (as when Kimball O'Hara is trained for espionage and distanced from his freewheeling existence as an orphan of empire). Or the protagonist's movement from outsider to insider status (as when Tom Brown is reconciled to the Arnoldian paradigm of godliness and good learning by abjuring the crib). Or the stress of having constantly to maintain a front in homosocial relations (as when Lord Jim maintains a career as a water clerk yet is obliged to move on whenever his failure in manliness aboard the *Patna* is exposed). Or the glamorous existential loneliness of being the bearer of secrets (as when Jim Hawkins unmasks the imminent mutiny when eavesdropping in an apple barrel).

In matching the plot of famous romances to the experience of a cryptographer I am implying that in boy's own adventure the fiction is mimicking or symbolically enacting the hierarchical status of code-breaking as the pinnacle of close reading. Indeed if the plot of the Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian adventure tale were to be caricatured, it could be as a story in which a puzzling inscription (a problematic exam paper, a treasure chart, a potsherd engraved with Greek, Latin and Gothic English text, or a pocket book concealed in a tobacco jar

at Richard Hannay's apartment) comes into unsuspecting male hands, setting out a test that must be accepted, which is simultaneously a quest for self-knowledge. Robert Fraser catches something of the battle for knowledge in the quest romance, but argues that "the consummation of the quest consists of the verification of some factual, as opposed to moral truth" (1998, 16-17). By contrast, I insist upon the moral or self-valorising aspect of verification as the rationale of the yarn. Put another way, the implied reader is encouraged to join in with this intense scrutinising of text and thereby undergo the same ontological shift in masculine status as the protagonist, and to grow ethically in the process. To cite an example, it is through Richard Hannay's application of the keyword "Julia Czechenyi" to break respectively the vowels and major consonants of Scudder's cipher that his own masculine status is enhanced from colonial outsider to Home Counties, country-house gentleman. Facility with close reading is rewarded - at least, this is the moral for the schoolboy reader. The breaking of a secret code represents the breaking into, or meeting of, a particular standard or criterion of masculinity. This is why Usborne can wryly acknowledge that "[n]o parent or schoolmaster could go wrong recommending to a boy the reading and study of John Buchan" (1974, 82).

Having established the processes encouraging the literary "decryption" of masculinity in any given text, more needs to be said about how adventure tales interact as competitive discourse. When Margaret Bruzelius observes in passing that "[r]omance abounds in formulas" (2007, 14) or Gillian Beer refers to the romance's capacity for mutation (1970, 58), they gesture towards the yarn's capacity for playing against established tropes set up by earlier fictions without fully conceptualising the intertextuality. In configuring the relationship, I argue that analogically if not digitally (given my rejection of a mechanistic base to the inculcation of masculine values), the yarn functions like a metamorphic or self-modifying code, generating endless permutations from earlier source texts. So, for example, the debate between Robert Louis Stevenson and his father over

whether Ben Gunn should be clothed in goatskin dress or the tattered remains of ship's canvas has a symbolic significance in codifying a new, amoral value system. The choice of clothing will place Gunn either in hypothetical or antithetical relationship to the repentant castaway Robinson Crusoe, and Stevenson chooses to do the latter.

In categorising romance texts as a genre and outlining their relationship to each other, the concept of codification in its overarching sense of digest or pandect proves helpful. In fact, all three meanings of code in Rodale's *The Synonym Finder* (1986) can be combined to furnish a top-down model for the yarn. Following this hierarchy, moving from synthesized body to constituent parts, the yarn is firstly a capitulary or body of law, secondly an ethic or value system, and thirdly a secret language or writing (1986, 183). Each yarn with its variant of approved masculinity can be characterised as but one single treatise or entry within the classification scheme of manly endeavour. Collectively, types of valorisation, Christian, imperial or sporting, influenced by divergent psychological, social and geographical contexts, conform to a specific ethic of masculine behaviour, equivalent to the second definition in Rodale. The sum total of these elaborations of masculinity will combine to create the complete library of valorised conduct, which constitutes the overarching civil code, the first definition. Both Bakhtin and Bourdieu I find helpful in defining the collective interaction of the yarn. In the field of cultural production, the position-taking of the individual elaborations will be affected not only by their status at first publication but afterwards dialogically by the readings undertaken by later generations of critics according to their own evolving literary codes or value systems. Certain characteristics of a text will inevitably be emphasized at the expense of others. I suggest that the formulaic and figural construction of the yarn actively encourages this comparative assessment more than the domestic realist novel. *In toto* the boy's own adventure - the literary form that arose as a result of the

decline of Mudie's - is a circulating library in the sense of the continual movement of its texts in relation to one another as interpretative criteria change.

### **The post-1918 period and the critical decline of the public school code**

In arguing that cultural competence depends upon familiarity with the code in which a work of art is encoded, Bourdieu goes on to suggest that the "the conscious or unconscious implementation of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation [...] is the hidden condition for recognizing the styles characteristic of a period" (1986, 6). Bourdieu's statement implies its negation: that familiarity, or at least sympathy, with a code can be lost. In some instances, the loss may be gradual. When Simmel described adventure as outside normal experience in 1911, he was not suggesting (as Paul Zweig had come to argue by 1974) that the "modern world's dismissal of adventure as an entertaining but minor experience is unprecedented" (vii). But cultural perceptions can also change rapidly as a result of social convulsions, as did Bourdieu's own. Personally engaged as an academic with the internal crisis in France in 1968 that started in the universities and led to a cultural revolution, he referred to it later, as Grenfell notes, as "the critical moment" (2012, 18).

The First World War was another such polarising event. Beforehand, such was the success of the school story across a range of periodicals that "by the time the Great War started, the image of the English Public School and the sort of boy who would be educated in one had entered the national consciousness" (Parker, 1987, 15-16). Parker further argues that "England's need during the War was reassurance that young men were laying down their lives gladly for a just cause, that the old public-school traditions of chivalry, self-sacrifice, fair-play and selfless patriotism were being maintained on the field of battle" (26). Yet by the late 1920s, war memoirs started to appear, like *Goodbye to All That* (1929) by Robert Graves, which in its very title pronounced a curt break with the past. A historical rupture with the values espoused in the Victorian and Edwardian adventure story

was taking place – a transition that explains the chronological endpoint to my periodization. The loss extends to sympathy with the register of language in which boyish heroism was described. So marked is the modern distance from the “high diction” in which war time exploits were clothed at the time that Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) has to provide a full page of translations. For example, Fussell reminds his reader that “to be cheerfully brave is to be plucky” and that “the dead on the battlefield are the fallen” (22). It is as if, to borrow an insight from George Steiner’s appraisal of literary modernism’s effect on our capacity to appreciate pre-Raphaelite poetry, modern readers have become “word-blind” through a major change in the habits of sensibility; as though, “literally [...] a language had been lost or the key to a cipher mislaid” (1992, 16).

Furthermore, beneficiaries of a public school education (since even criticism of the system was differentially left to alumni) started to pronounce in stark terms on its deficiencies. The literary critic and Old Etonian, Cyril Connolly, in *Enemies of Promise* postulated a Theory of Permanent Adolescence, blaming the public school for keeping the “greater part of the ruling class” [...] “adolescent, school-minded, self-conscious, cowardly, sentimental, and in the last analysis homosexual” (1973, 253). A more recent public-school man, Peter Parker, takes Connolly’s argument to its natural conclusion by suggesting that the noble sentiments of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* and its successors were inadequate to the rigours of modernity and mechanised warfare. Worse still, the title of Parker’s book suggests that the noble sentiments were dishonest, an old lie; a coded reference to Wilfred Owen’s poem, “Dulce Et Decorum Est” that rejects the Latin tag from Horace, to be found in the army chapel at Sandhurst College, that it is right and fitting to die for one’s country.

Yet even after the revolt by public-school men against the values of their fathers, in the world of letters there remained a residual respect for the hierarchical position of classical languages. Connolly - whom Gross describes as

"one of the last English men of letters who drew on Latin naturally" (1991, 322) - wrote amusingly if slightly defensively in favour of the Mandarin style (an improvement upon journalese), whose "cardinal assumption is that neither the writer nor the reader is in a hurry, that both are in possession of a classical education and a private income" (2002, 31). In an essay, "Literary Style in England and America", Evelyn Waugh took perverse pleasure in belittling the macho Americans, Hemingway and Faulkner, as effeminate writers because, unlike English boys, they did not commence Latin at the age of nine, so "never acquired a basic sense of the structure of language" (1977, 109). The ability to decode classical texts and to apply lessons from the syntax and rhythms of Latin to the patterning of the English sentence, then, still set a male apart from his childhood as somehow more masculine.

By contrast, the universities did witness a paradigmatic shift in which deference to the intellectual superiority of studying Latin and Greek disappeared. Failing to possess fluency in Latin no longer disqualified anyone from appraising - and appraising negatively - the literary qualities of a story paper, like *B.O.P.*, which took the knowledge of it for granted. It was after 1918, particularly at Cambridge, that the supremacy of Classics was challenged by a new generation of professional critics who, as Terry Eagleton observes in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, "stemmed on the whole from an alternative social class to that which had led Britain into war" (1996, 26). F.R. Leavis led a polemical assault in favour of English studies as the touchstone of moral seriousness. The magazine *Scrutiny* (1932) he spearheaded "redrew the map of English literature in ways from which criticism has never quite recovered" (Eagleton, 28). His wife Q.D. Leavis postulated in *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), that "in the eighteenth century there existed a unified reading public with common critical standards" (quoted in Gross, 1991, 286), a notion since discounted (Gross, 286-7). From these elevated norms, the popular romance and its improving variant the middle-brow yarn appeared a critically reprehensible decline.

To give a not untypical critical attitude towards Kipling (who provides the chronological and thematic spine to the thesis) it is only necessary to turn to Q.D. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public* to see the adventure story dismissed as unworthy of consideration by serious readers. She wrote that Kipling was to be found on the bookshelves of the inferior type of schoolmaster (1932, 37). As Leavis consigns to the same bookshelf the Fettes master and author, Ian Hay, one suspects that lurking behind this *ad hominem* attack is the spectre of a pedagogue at the wrong type of public school: conservatively patriotic, imperialist and conventional in his enthusiasm for the honour of the House, and so forth. The attack ignores the guying of that type of inferior schoolmaster in Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* (1899). Falsely, Kipling is grouped with a less significant writer as the purveyor of a redundant code whose values when cracked are found to be primitive and outmoded.

Q.D. Leavis's aversion is possibly motivated by two factors. Firstly, by the view expressed in Peter Parker's *The Old Lie* that "[t]he Class of 1914 had been prepared both implicitly, by the codes to which the schools subscribed, and, explicitly, by the junior branch of the Officers' Training Corps, for the eventuality of war" (1987, 17-8) – a suspicion that might be strengthened by the knowledge that while Ian Hay was writing his account of army life, *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915), Q.D. Leavis's husband, F.R. Leavis, was serving with the pacifist Friends' Ambulance Unit. Secondly, by what Martin Green in *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1980) terms "the aversion and recoil from imperialism [...] which work at the motor root of serious literature" (338). "Seriousness meant" to the English student Green, "T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, F.R. Leavis" (342). The adventure story was not completely neglected since Joseph Conrad was admitted by F.R. Leavis to canonical status in *The Great Tradition* (1948) of the British novel. When in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Marlow is described as spinning yarns "in the likeness of one of these misty halos that, sometimes, are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (2007, 6),



that penumbra of indeterminacy ensured that Conrad's writing was classified as oppositional to Kipling's.

Even with the decline of literary canonicity as a concept, when the masculine adventure yarn has been reconsidered at all (Bristow, 1991; Kestner, 2010), critical interest has concentrated upon the cultural forces working towards "imprinting codes of masculinity" (Kestner, 1). Underpinning the critical approach in Bristow and Kestner is the concept of hegemonic masculinity, "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (Connell, 1987, 184). The concept of hegemony draws on the work of Gramsci which postulates a war of manoeuvre in the realm of ideas that leads to bourgeois values being presented as normative, whereas their hidden function is to reinforce capitalism. Hegemonic masculinity extends the argument by contending that certain ideals of masculinity become normative in society leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of other expressions. The notion of hegemony has been very influential in academic discourse; indeed, Nicholas Daly has argued that "the impact of the work of Gramsci on British cultural studies has meant that popular culture is more often theorized as a field of struggle rather than any particular set of texts and practices" (2000, 5).

Not only can the theorizing sometimes appear mechanistic, but it also has the potential to function as a shorthand or code which limits the interpretative richness of texts. In *Reading After Theory*, Valentine Cunningham cautions against the application of critical constructions such as Vladimir Propp's algorithmic model of folktales or Barthes's five codes of narrative to the point where theorizing as mapping leads to reductiveness (2002, 127-133). For example, Kestner applies the penis/phallus equation – the penis signifying biological maleness and the phallus, power – to texts such as *Captains Courageous* or *The Riddle of the Sands*, contending that they "end by believing in the phallus equation" (15). Yet it is not immediately clear from where, in a close

reading of the novels, this assertion about power can be specifically derived. This is not in itself to dismiss Freudian or Lacanian readings; later, I examine the cigar, that most Freudian of symbols, as a recurring signifier of the penis<sup>6</sup>. However unless the reading arises from the specificity of the fictional context, a pre-determined critical code is in danger of being foisted on the texts.

### **The wartime *B.O.P.* and vigilant reading**

The concept of a controlling ideology organizing and directing the behaviour of young men influences the conclusions made by Peter Parker's *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos* which explicitly links the "immensely successful" phenomenon of the public-school story in boys' magazines with the willingness of "young men from all classes" to march off to glory, "instilled with the public-school ethos and encouraged to follow in the footsteps of story-book heroes" (18). Although less insistent, Carpenter too suggests that "the breezy optimistic adventure story" with its "belief in heroism for its own sake" may have contributed to the causes of the First World War (1985, 15-16). Yet one of the principal objections to hegemonic theory is the difficulty in establishing empirical evidence that the ideology of the powerful is socially reproduced through the process of reading. To take only one example of the problem, Parker suggests that the "fatuities" of Newbolt's imperialist poem, "Vitai Lampada" continued to "exert a baleful influence on popular patriotic verse and thought to the Somme and beyond" (59). Yet the historian Andrew Thompson in *The Empire Strikes Back?* (2005) contends that in the 1980s, when *The Old Lie* was first published, the historiography necessary to analyse the genuine influence of the empire on Britain was "patchy and perfunctory" (xi); the evidence of what the masses thought about empire is too ambiguous and the conceptual framework of "social control" too flimsy (240); and more generally, with regard to the influence of boys' story papers, there is no way of establishing the impact of imperial adventure tales upon the young with any degree of

certainty (105). Fellow historian, Kwasi Kwarteng, has fundamentally challenged the notion of central British coordination in the expansion of the Empire overseas, arguing instead for “anarchic individualism” (2011, 3). Yet, since Parker’s charge is serious, and the centenary of the First World War will inevitably lead to a re-assessment of the arguments for and against hegemonic influence, I want to contribute to the debate by undertaking a close reading of a historically significant artefact: a copy of *The Boy’s Own Annual, Thirty-Ninth Volume, 1916-17*, deposited with the Imperial War Museum.

Apart from the dedication to “Owen Marson, Bournemouth, Christmas 1917 from a loving Mother & Father” on the frontispiece, there are no clues to its provenance. The *Annual* is solid, durable, if not sumptuous, and unobtrusively built to last: clothbound and printed on quality paper which is soft to the touch. On opening the cover two further pages of illustrations are revealed featuring sports and pastimes (water-polo, punting, rowing, yachting, sea-angling and fly-fishing) more associated with the leisured classes than the masses. Another turn of the page reveals a colour plate showing official crests of the Royal Navy – 88 insignias drawn carefully with respectful detail. Next comes a page announcing “The Boy’s Own Annual” with the Latin motto beneath, and below it the publication address, Bouverie Street, London. The lettering is surrounded by over a dozen black-and-white illustrations of boyish or manly activity. Overleaf, the story paper’s writers and illustrators are proudly listed as if on an advertising hoarding covering a large quayside building. A group of well-to-do boys looks up in admiration at the names, an impression that reinforces the fact that by 1917 it was in retreat from the original purpose of providing an affordable paper for all classes, priced to compete with the penny dreadful. From 1913, for reasons of financial necessity, it had become a 64-page sixpenny monthly (Cox, 85), aimed principally at a well-off constituency of boy readers.

Nevertheless, the story paper retains the staple ingredients from its glory days: a serialised school story; an adventure yarn with the “Bedween” in the

Syrian Desert; a correspondence page giving answers to the questions of named enquirers; regular entries of the Field Club; an article on reading the whole of the Bible; numerous cartoons, photographs, short fiction, puzzles, problems, competitions, factual pieces. However, *B.O.P.* was, of course, obliged to run its standard features against the backdrop of a national emergency, which could not have escaped even the most carelessly inattentive schoolboy. Not that the *Boy's Own Paper* saw its duty as escapism. Indeed, the Thirty-Ninth Volume of the *Annual* positively reinforces support for the war effort, and readers, like Owen Marson, if not encumbered with the history of *B.O.P.*, could be said to be burdened with the weight of expectation that the public school ethos now placed on them. Jack Cornwell, working-class hero of the Battle of Jutland and posthumous Victoria Cross winner, is celebrated as an example for more prosperous lads to follow, playing "a man's part more bravely than, perhaps, many men might have done" (138). The black-and-white illustrations that surround the Latin tag are no longer limited to sporting prowess. Pictures of a British fighter pilot and a dreadnought reinforce the sense of an imminent responsibility awaiting the sixth former. The suggestion is that "whatever boys do" might now include enlistment. Small illustrations may be missed by a boy speeding to his favourite article. Not so easily ignored is the full-page depiction of an adult VC winner, the Piper of Loos. On 25 September 1915, Daniel Laidlaw rallied his Scottish company with no regard to personal safety in a successful assault on an enemy position by mounting the parapet and playing the bagpipes. The illustration maintains the convention that personal heroism can still influence the outcome of battle, a Victorian trope still coming to terms with the extraordinary rapidity of death in industrialised warfare.

Balanced against this intrusion of the war, however, is the safe (and illusory) predictability of the world constructed for young readers, a world quite different from the one discovered by subalterns. Although the war is allowed to ruffle the surface of that world, it does not impinge sufficiently to suggest that the

organising social principle set up by private schooling - in which success in life is dependent upon success in examinations - will change. If a quantitative analysis were made of the influence of the War by simply weighing the pages of such material compared to those that feature civilian concerns, the impact would be small. Despite *B.O.P.*'s patriotic support for the armed forces and glamorised representations of British soldiers, despite its emphasis on sport and healthy outdoors activity, despite its endorsement of practical, scientific hobbies like natural history or photography, the *Annual* circles, I suggest, around the subject of social codes and linguistic decipherment. The dominant motif is code-breaking.

Two typical articles well illustrate *B.O.P.*'s emphasis on the importance of close reading. "Alick in Blunderland" by Fred Edmonds is a humorous pastiche of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* tales, positioning its protagonist in that Arcadian world of fantasy delineated by Humphrey Carpenter. Young Alick Careless, kept in detention in a deserted classroom, is magically transported before a panel of seven old judges in an "Examination Department" (Figure 2) and forced to attempt answers to a printed script of questions.

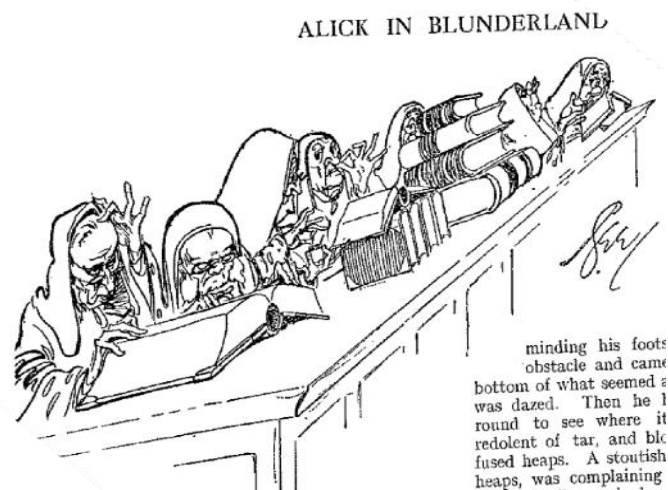


Figure 2 Seven Old Judges in an "Examination Department", *B.O.P. Annual*, 1916-17

For such crimes as translating "Quam cito purporeos deperdit terra colores" (how quickly the earth loses its glorious colours) as "Quam cito formosas populus alta comus" (how quickly tall people lose their luxuriant hair), Alick is

sentenced to spend the rest of his life in Blunderland, until he can correct a real blunder. Alick's stranding in limbo, his perpetually ungraduated state, is only a jocular representation of the predicament of the privileged youth unable to cram well enough to pass professional entrance requirements. Granted, privilege has accorded him the opportunity, denied most boys, of moving beyond the mother tongue and grappling with another language sharing the Roman alphabet: Latin. Yet Alick's future amongst his peer-group is still dependent upon taking his chance competitively and mastering its intricacies. A similar emphasis upon scrutinising powers is also apparent in the factual "School Etiquette. Customs that are Unwritten Laws at Winchester, Eton, Harrow, etc." Bayford Harrison's article outlines the unbreakable codes of behaviour that mark out one elite institution from another, the secret signals of hierarchy in how clothes are worn, which "may be unsuspected by the man in the street, but the boy in the school can detect them without lifting his eyes" (101). This interest in signification can be found too in Gathorne-Hardy's *The Public School Phenomenon* (1977, 192), reflected in a photograph of Durham College schoolboys, reproduced in Figure 3. In the scene "there are at least ten articles or variations of dress designating different positions in the school hierarchies", providing a veritable pageant of status anxieties. In a challenge to the assumption that the purpose of the school etiquette article is simply to titillate state school readers outside the charmed circle of these quasi-masonic rituals, Isabel Quigly provides a reminder of the intense snobbery that existed within one school, Eton, with former friends dropping each other suddenly and completely after an entrée to grander boys (1982, 148). Bayford Harrison may in fact be providing a guide to the patterns of signification within and across public schools as well as talking to outsiders.



Figure 3 Durham College Schoolboys, c.1900. *The Public School Phenomenon*

It may even be that the comfortable exclusivity of *B.O.P.* in wartime, amounting to the intergenerational induction into a club, has increased now that non-members, young working-class Jack Cornwells, are catered for by cruder, formulaic depictions of imaginary schools like Greyfriars in the *Gem* and the *Magnet*. The original two-tier pricing policy had been abandoned under which weekly parts were aimed at lower-class shop-boys and apprentices and a plush monthly directed to middle-class families. Avuncular joshing within a privileged circle of men and boys sweetens the unpalatable truth that Latin prep must be undertaken if a youngster wishes to gain the high rank and influence of a judge. And noticeably, across boys' story papers, the lawyer, more than the teacher or clergyman, recurs as an alpha-male, probably because of his mastery of both spoken language in cross-examination and written code (supported by a series of Latin and English tags) in legal precedent. So, moral exhortation is, as it were, built into the texture of the yarning. Support for the war is consonant with the overall tone, but, I argue, does not change it. My judgement that *B.O.P.* can *both* be found to endorse the morality of war *and yet* shield its readers from its

mention is influenced by one final image from the *Annual*, an optical illusion (Figure 4) which has helped to crystallise my critical approach to the yarn in this thesis. An instruction panel guides the boy reader through a process which allows him to see progressively both six and seven cubes in the same image. This is followed by a further stage when either six or seven are held firmly in his gaze as the image is turned sideways and moved from left to right (35).

This act of close reading, introduced by a grown-up mentor to a boy-apprentice in the art, is an education in the complexities of adult interpretation. Symbolically, the existence of perpetual ambiguity in human perception is being signified, as both adult and child are confronted by a visual paradox which playfully and teasingly sets boundaries to their joint acuity.

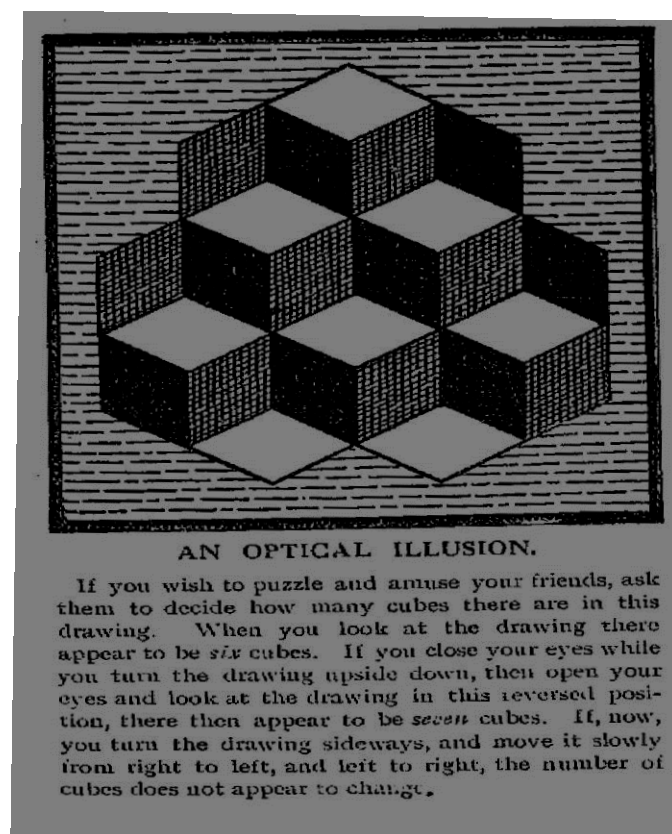


Figure 4 A Drawing with Six or Seven Cubes. *B.O.P. Annual 1916-17*

The puzzle reinforces the need to be vigilant in reading the world but also to be vigilant to the interpretative limits of that reading, a philosophically complex topic



for a boy's annual. By extension, I would suggest that the yarn, like the optical illusion, contains more than one perspective. This realisation should caution against an over-simplistic categorisation of the boy's own adventure as didactic. In her analysis of verbal irony, Sue Walsh makes a similar point about the danger in children's literature criticism of foregrounding the "uncomfortable relation between 'irony' and the 'child' and the language that the latter is deemed both to require and represent" (2003, 33). In contrast to such approaches, the *Annual* seems to take in its boyish stride the topsy-turvy nature of inscription which is not fundamentally representative of the world yet fully implicated in its discursive reproduction.

Walsh proceeds to argue that the existence of irony in children's literature undermines "any persistent notion of language as representational, or of ideology as something that the critic can detach herself from and point out to others" (33). As stated earlier, a discussion of whether language reflects or constructs reality lies beyond the remit of my thesis. However, Walsh's intervention is useful more broadly to pinpoint the contradictions inherent in identifying ideology as either an isolated component or an overarching strategy within a fictional text; like optical illusions, yarns are generally open to a multiplicity of competing interpretations. And in conceptualising this methodologically, I draw upon and develop the work of Valentine Cunningham, who writes in *Reading After Theory* about the importance of tactful reading: "a rational, proper, moral even, respect for the text over all theorizing about text" (2002, 169).

Cunningham's approach is neither "a paean of praise" for nor a "jeremiad" (3) against literary theory, for he recognizes that any reading of literature is dependent upon reading competences which are schemas or models about the world: reading is inevitably "a supplement to theory and theories" (4). His concern arises when "[t]heory invites you to profess a single kind of interest in a writing, to shut out, if only *pro tempore*, other readings, other [sic] reading selves than just the one" (124). Instead of tactful reading, I apply the term vigilant

reading to the texts examined in this thesis. By vigilant I means several things. Most obviously, a sensitivity to the vigilance towards textuality that marks out the yarn from other forms of adventure story. And sensitivity to the vulnerability within the vigilance with which the boy Tom, boy Jim, boy Kim or boy scout learns to read their worlds; a carry-over from the experimental challenge faced by any child encountering the arbitrary symbol system which is language written down.

But more than this, I am endorsing a vigilance about the complexity of the yarn and its capacity to encompass simultaneously contradictory readings. Vigilance in the face of the very assertiveness of the yarn, its splash and boldness, like the *B.O.P.* optical illusion which in spite of its vividness holds in tension two incompatible representations. Vigilance to the fundamental discursiveness of the yarn where an assertion implies its negation, as in the interplay between imperialism and fear of invasion in its texts. And I believe this vigilance to the possibility of divergent interpretation even needs to be applied to the membership badge of the *Boy's Own Club*. Is its significance so unambiguous as to represent a hegemonic structure of imperial subordination? After all, at the badge's heart, the story paper's moniker hovers invitingly over a map of the world realized largely in red, the colour in which by convention Britain's imperial possessions were rendered. Like Mercator's projection (the standard map for marine navigation in the West from the sixteenth century) the badge distorts the landmass of the earth, overemphasizing Europe, particularly the United Kingdom. And the three letters *B.O.P.* are situated proprietarily on Latin America, Africa and the fringe of India.

Yet, in the only specific children's literature analysis of the yarn that I am aware of, called *Real Ripping Yarns* – a television documentary (Armstrong, 2014), celebrating the original spoofing of the boy's own ethos in a B.B.C. comedy series (Palin and Jones, 1976-79) – Kimberley Reynolds foregrounds the physically active aspect of the ethos, such as sport, science and risky hobbies. And Jack Cox gives his chapter about *B.O.P.*'s miscellaneous factual articles,

"[h]ow-to-make-it material, full plans and diagrams, and the most detailed hints for making a success of any project" (50) the title of the Latin tag. So the badge implies two contradictory readings. Firstly, that the boy possessing Latin may one day (to paraphrase the Kipling of "If –") possess the world and all that is in it, by laying claim to it as the rightful young successor to the Roman Empire. And secondly, that the boyish universe should expel such adult concerns.

### **Chapter Structure**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, dealing chronologically with subgenres of yarn being written between the 1850s and the First World War. Chapter One considers the school story against the development of the examination system from the mid-1850s, probing the intertextual battles taking place between muscular or evangelical, imperialistic or sporting models of masculinity. Chapter Two examines the rite of passage at sea as the adolescent protagonist, turning from schoolbooks, struggles to read the behaviour of reliable and unreliable men, focussing upon how the challenges of conceptualising masculinity are textually presented. Chapter Three investigates crises of identity in the colonial encounter as cultural hybridity challenges the construct of the White Man. Chapter Four explores the domestic landscape fantasy, foregrounding how imperialist anxiety becomes enmeshed within an infantilising tendency in a nostalgic longing for the enchanted spaces of boyhood. Chapter Five traces the national anxiety about invasion that runs parallel in adventure fiction to imperial hubris, examining the intertextual tricks that the authors play, drawing on earlier yarns, in creating the new trope of counterfeit Englishness. Chapter Six discusses thematic developments in two First World War short stories by Kipling: "Regulus", in which he appears to accept the limitations of the Classics-based pedagogy inculcated into the young men now dying in the services; and "Mary Postgate", which, in dealing with the tragic and futile death of a young airman, shows Kipling addressing sympathetically the emotional life of a woman, a

psychological watershed in his post-War short stories. Chapter Seven and the Conclusion round off the thesis with an aerial view of the boy's own ethos: literally in the post-War cult of the airman as signified by T.E. Lawrence's shift from desert hero to aircraft technician and then figuratively in summary statements about the cross-currents and shifts in masculine construction across my periodization. My conclusions are made against the background of a famous 1940 debate about the propagandist intention of juvenile story papers between George Orwell in his essay "Boys' Weeklies" and Charles Hamilton, who under the pseudonym Frank Richards wrote the Greyfriars stories for the *Gem* and *Magnet*.

As my thinking about code-breaking (that is, about language-as-symbol) developed, so did the applicability of the work of cultural theorist, Kenneth Burke, who in *Language as Symbolic Action* characterises man as "the symbol-using animal" (1966, 7). Burke further defines man's use of language as hierarchical; governed by an awareness of "that peculiarly human marvel, the negative" (9); informed by the spirit of hierarchy; and directed towards perfectionism. He subdivides language into the scientific and the dramatic, the latter being the approach adopted in story, whose primary stress is "upon such hortatory expressions as 'thou shalt and thou shalt not'" (44); that is, conduct. Burke emphasizes that if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, it must necessarily be a selection of reality and therefore a deflection of reality; any text attempts to persuade, directing the attention of the reader through a conceptual filter Burke calls a "terministic screen" (45). I came increasingly to see the locales in which the yarn plays out, such as the sea, as symbolic theatres in which different terministic screens or discourses for masculine conduct are enacted. So although all three sea yarns that I cover, *The Coral Island* (1858), *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Captains Courageous* (1897) concentrate on the boy hero learning to navigate their respective ships, they construct very different filters for helmsmanship as a metaphor for life-conduct. In an attempt to remain vigilant in my interpretations to these varying perspectives, early in each chapter there is a

focus on a close reading from a primary source to open out a discussion of the salient characteristics that I wish to foreground. After the extract has been examined, the chapter proceeds (normally chronologically) to a comparative assessment of three or more key texts, including that from which the extract was taken.

### **The Significance of Rudyard Kipling**

Finally, it will be helpful to say a little more about why Kipling has been the writer considered most widely in this thesis, beyond this being the natural consequence of his having contributed to almost all of the types of romance story I cover. Firstly, in reappraising, indeed arguing for, the psychological complexity of the yarn, it is helpful to centre upon an author who has, as Angus Wilson suggests, had a strange critical ride since the highpoint of his reputation in the first decade of the twentieth century (1977). Having had a number of staunch critical supporters, as well as detractors, and having found a precarious niche as the perpetrator of the binomial relation of the white man to the Orient in post-colonial theory, Kipling has inspired comment in a range of secondary sources which will be drawn upon.

Secondly, the young protagonist pushed prematurely beyond the limitations of his (or her) age into an adult's role in an unforgiving world is a recurring theme in Kipling's fiction; it is only necessary to consider *Captains Courageous* and the *Puck* tales (1906-10) to observe that it is a central fictional preoccupation beyond *Kim* (1901) where it receives most attention. Kipling's understanding of (and therefore his writing for and about) children is acknowledged to be subtle and complex. Barbara Wall in *The Narrator's Voice* describes Kipling as "probably the most innovative of all writers for children" (1991, 133). Angus Wilson contends that "Rudyard Kipling was a man who, throughout his life, worshipped and respected (a rare combination) children and their imaginings", arguing that this empathy is "a clue to the elusive magic which

lies at the heart of most of his best work" (1977, 1). Indeed, Wilson's comments are borne out by Kipling's own description in *Something of Myself* (1937) of his technique in writing the *Puck* tales that I discuss in Chapter 4: "I worked the material in three or four overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth, and experience" (1990, 111). With his intuitive understanding of the different levels of intensity and discovery (and of loss) for the adult and the child in rereading, Kipling invites an exploration of his own work on these complex terms. He acknowledges, in the above extract, not only that re-reading takes a central place (perhaps more than for adults) in children's reading practices; but also that, as McKenzie notes in his Introduction to the *Puck* tales, it is possible to write to adults through children (1993, xxxi). Kipling therefore complicates very graphically the distinction between literature for children and adults. This duality is reflected in the fact, as Johanna Brinkley Tomlinson has noted in her article "As natural as oaks growing", that "in the case of *Puck of Pook's Hill*, the stories met their first audiences in not just one but three different periodicals – *The Strand Magazine*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *McClure's Magazine* – none of which specifically marketed itself as a children's magazine" (2014, 275).

If one work captures this duality it is Kipling's most famous poem "If -", in which he sets out seventeen graduated tests of masculinity. The verse appears in the second set of *Puck* stories, a book with a nursery title, *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). As I suggested earlier, the poem can be interpreted as a paternal endorsement of imperialist expansion, the sort of patriotic flourish that the wrong sort of schoolmaster would foist on his class. Yet another poet, W.H. Auden, in his essay "The Poet of the Encirclement", points out the flaw in this approach. If the schoolmaster had given "If -" a vigilant reading, Auden argues, "he would have to say, 'Yes, *if*. Unfortunately. I do not keep my head ... etc. I realize now that I am not a man.' Instead, of course, he said, 'Admirably put. That's exactly what the

boys need to realize” (1989, 351). In this more nuanced reading, the poem holds in tension breezy speechifying and a coded admission of masculine failure.

“If -” powerfully captures the implied adult and child at cross-purposes, a misreading of motivations across a perceptual gulf. Such fraught complications of the contact zone between adult and child recur in Kipling’s work. It seemed, therefore, appropriate to give him a central place in my study, since he has a highly sophisticated understanding of boy’s own adventure fiction as a place of negotiated meaning: both tract and parable, rhetorically assertive and secretive, combining expository and puzzling elements, fusing realism and fable. More emblematically, Kipling stands for the complexity of the yarn as a form, a genre whose code may have been temporarily mislaid. It is hoped that this dissertation, by making an original contribution to an understanding of the linguistic complexity of its primary texts, will contribute to the serious reappraisal of the yarn, which suffered reputational damage in the trauma of war, but not surely as irremediably as once thought.

## Chapter 1: The Awful Examination – The School Story

This then was the awful examination paper which was to determine his position at St. Dominic's, or else expose his ignorance to the scorn of his masters. How he wished he was on the other side of it, and that the ordeal was over.

Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's*

### An Induction at St. Dominic's

"'However am I to know?'" murmured Stephen, in despair. 'I was never here before in my life. Oh, dear, I shall never pass!'" (1955, 25). A small boy on his first day at an imaginary Victorian public school peruses an examination paper that sets an impossible question about the school's history and geography. He is the younger son of a widow, and has had only female company at home since his brother started boarding there. His mother's brother has taken charge of their education. He has chosen not to fill the paternal gap himself, or engage tutors for the boys so that their domestic life can continue. Instead he has persuaded her (in line with a social change that had taken root in the early nineteenth century) that a permanent curtain is in need of drawing between the worlds of home and education: a public school is the *right* place for them in preparation for their entry into a man's world. Stephen is due, like all new boys, to meet the headmaster ("that terrible personage") but the interview is delayed for twenty-four hours. A mysterious lame figure, whom the gullible boy takes for a junior master, hands him a paper with seven questions which must be completed overnight and taken to interview. The answers must be solely his own work; even showing the paper to anyone else would be an act of dishonour.

"'Question 1. Grammar. Parse this sentence, 'Oh, ah!' and state the gender of the following substantives; 'and,' 'look,' 'here'" (25). The significance of the question (a practical joke) is lost on its victim, Stephen Greenfield - a boy as vacantly impressionable in boarding school ways as his name implies. Although alone in his predicament, Greenfield is facing a textual encounter of growing



social significance in the Victorian period. Indeed, this is possibly why Reed decided to replicate, within his serialised *B.O.P.* tale, *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's*, the particularised language of the examination paper. It was a format known to and feared by an increasing number of schoolboys, although the content of the test would be carefully graduated according to the social status and the future class position of its subjects. As historians of the examination such as John Roach in *Public Examinations in England, 1850-1900* have documented (1971), Victorian England put in place, extended, refined and codified the examination's processes, since when the examination's protocols as a bureaucratic tool and its dominance as a grading mechanism for the professions have only spread. Yet beyond the work of historians, the literary importance of the examination has been somewhat overlooked (Shuman, 2000, 6). In this chapter, I concern myself with the examination as the reification of a very precise nineteenth-century male discourse and as a metaphor for the boy's own adventure story. In my formulation, the examination is the critical activity within an educational regime that places close reading and the facility to respond systematically to adult questioning in a written paper as the defining qualities of achieved masculinity. Additionally, the textual intensity of one boy's introduction to public school life reflects the preoccupations of the yarn. Stephen Greenfield's predicament, his enforced flight from domesticity, his immediate subjection to a trial in the form of a competitive test, his sense of being required to penetrate secrets contained within a ritualized script of symbols, his self-consciousness that either honour or dishonour will be symbolically reified by the assessment protocols; these pressures experienced at school are embryonically those of the protagonist in the yarn, translated later to other settings.

Even with an older brother present to soften the wrench from domestic life, Stephen is alone in his impossible predicament, his hermeneutic quest to derive sense from nonsense. The seven questions – grammar, history, history and geography, compound theology, pure theology, mathematics, miscellaneous

- with their comic jumbling of real subjects and their parodied snippets of real terminology serve to intensify his sense of isolation. The story, serialised in the *Boy's Own Paper* in 1881, is generally accepted to be a milestone in the development of boarding school fiction. It was written when the first day at public school (a shipwreck on the shores of a brave new world whose strange and savage customs must be deciphered then endured) was already a socially established rite of passage. Literary antecedents stretched back to 1857 and *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Having been merely a day-boy at The City of London School, its author, Talbot Baines Reed, was writing with intuitive insight about an experience into which he had never been inducted. He was also writing for an audience, the very first readers of the *Boy's Own Paper*, which was divided between the privileged sharers of Stephen Greenfield's public school ordeal and those educated at less prestigious voluntary, private or Board day schools. Yet Reed felt confident (and the story's enduring popularity bore him out) in expressing the hardship of a boy's first adventure in an all-male world, his sense of emotional dislocation, of undergoing an ordeal, through the metaphor of examination. The trope was understandable because, to different degrees, testing by examination - a ritual of self-fashioning with which the implied reader could identify - had become a common childhood experience for boys across the hierarchical Victorian class system.

### **The Social Ascendancy of Competitive Examination at Public Schools**

To understand fully why an examination script troubling a small boy at a boarding establishment should be of such interest to a young readership in the 1880s it is necessary to look at both the growth of competitive assessment and the social influence of the public school in mid-Victorian Britain. The historical survey will also assist in explaining why the quest to define oneself against text, in lonely competition with other boys, is so important more generally to the structure of feeling of masculine adventure fiction of the mid-nineteenth century

and beyond. Still unsurpassed as an introduction to the history of competitive assessment in the period, John Roach's study opens with a defining statement about their contemporary importance from the 1936 autobiography of E.E. Kellett: "If in fact I was asked what, in my opinion, was an essential article of the Victorian faith, I should say it was 'I believe in Examinations'" (1971, 3). Indeed, Kellett's headmaster was so confident in the inerrancy of the examination test that lack of success imputed moral failure to those who did poorly. Roach chronicles "the very sudden and sweeping victory won by the examination idea within some two decades – roughly between 1850 and 1870" (4). In 1853 appointments to the Indian Civil Service were opened to competitive examination. In the Home Office limited competition began in 1850 and open competition in 1870. External examinations to grammar and private secondary schools commenced after 1850 and to the University of Oxford in 1857. Lower down the social scale, the Society of Arts introduced examinations for adults studying in Mechanics' Institutes in 1854, and from 1859 the Science and Arts Department initiated grants to students who had performed well in science examinations. In 1862, the Revised Code imposed examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic as a condition of grant for elementary schools.

Although a form of examination extended downwards socially, there was no immediate intention of using competitive assessment to increase inter-class mobility in what was a highly stratified society. In his chapter survey of British education from the sixth to the twentieth century Raymond Williams reminds his reader of "the determining effect on education of the actual social structure" (*The Long Revolution*, 1961, 131), noting that the labouring poor had, by and large, been left out of account, despite notable exceptions where poor boys of exceptional promise gained a complete education through school and university. Williams follows the development of the grammar school, established initially to teach the ecclesiastical *lingua franca* of Latin and support the Church, into the centre for liberal education within a Christian framework, offering "the Seven

Liberal Arts (the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, the *quadrivium* of music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy)" (130). Reed, a very precise thinker underneath his tone of boyish geniality, may actually be alluding to these historic strands in his seven spoof questions. Williams goes on to suggest that the transition to an examination-based education at the public schools in the early decades of the nineteenth century, whilst raising standards also "had the effect of reinforcing the now marked limitation of the universities to entrants from a narrow social class" (138). The type of education to which one had been exposed would now have a reciprocally determining effect on one's place in the social structure, at least for the governing classes.

The 1867 Taunton Commission was influential in putting in place the new order. It anticipated three grades of secondary school. The highest was for upper and upper-middle-class boys until eighteen giving a liberal education in preparation for university and the older professions; it is to such a school that Stephen Greenfield has been admitted. His social situation is pithily captured by W.H. Auden in an essay, "The Greeks and Us": "Once upon a time there was a little boy. [...] At seven he went to a boarding school and most of the next seven years were spent in translating Greek and Latin into English and vice versa" (1989, 3). The next was for the middle-class boys until sixteen in preparation for the army, the newer professions and lower grades of the civil service. The last was for lower-middle-class boys until fourteen in preparation for careers as farmers, tradesmen and artisans. When the 1870 Education Act extended state responsibility for universal education, forms of assessment were additionally put in place for the "lower orders" at elementary schools. As a result Victorian society saw a widening spectrum of modes of examination from the rudimentary inspection of basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic at Board schools to the award for Greek versification in prestigious competitions such as the Gaisford Prize at Oxford University. The type of written response expected from a boy,

the level of sophistication in linguistic facility that he was expected to display, derived predominantly from his social position.

Perhaps inevitably, as the battle over who should hold executive sway amongst the upper and middle classes revolves around pedagogic questions about the function of literacy, the history of the nineteenth-century examination does not proceed far without anecdotal reference to writers. Even though the introduction of competitive assessment did not fundamentally disrupt the existing class structure, it was still subject to opposition on the ground that exam success did not vouchsafe the suitability of the candidate's moral character, since it could be achieved by cramming. Conversely, failure to meet the pressure of performing under the unnatural conditions of the examination halls could destroy the future of some gifted candidates. A.E. Housman illustrates the fate of a gifted classicist, unable to master his Finals, whose climbing of the ladder to a Professorship was made laborious by several years' drudgery in a Patent office after the humiliation of examination failure. The writer Anthony Trollope, who combined novel writing with an illustrious career in the General Post Office, was vehemently opposed to their introduction in the civil service, despite acknowledging that failing to do more than confirm a candidate's status as a gentleman, by considering his practical suitability too, could lead to mismanagement. His autobiography describes how the tests of competence that attended his own entry into state employment were fudged in a gentlemanly collusion between employer and candidate (Roach, 5-6). A hard-working and resourceful state functionary, Trollope was, however, no defender of jobbery and his distaste was more for competitive than qualifying examinations (Shuman, 2000, 82). At heart, Trollope is distrustful of examinations because they rely on a bureaucracy driven by the demands of the schoolmaster rather than the demands of real work; because they exemplify a reforming zeal whose outworking can seem arbitrary, misdirected and mechanistic; and because they interfere with organic individual development. He believed that English gentlemen tended to be late developers and that promotion

in the civil service should be on the basis of seniority rather than individual brilliance (Glendinning, 1992, 73). Trollope's objections, nevertheless, were an outmoded response to an unstoppable social change. The reforms were successfully introduced by men like Sir Stafford Northcote and C.E. Trevelyan who believed that "a system based on competition was morally preferable to one based on patronage" (Roach, 32).

From the 1850s, then, there was a growing trend towards the appointment and promotion to public office of men who had excelled in competitive written assessments at school and university. Indeed Northcote, Trevelyan and their supporters "had a direct interest in finding employment for the educated men whom the universities and schools might be expected to produce in ever increasing numbers" (Roach, 32). Inevitably the cultural values of high-mindedness, impartiality and intellectual distinction became entrenched amongst those with responsibility for developing a state bureaucracy. So it is no surprise that the most influential cultural critic of the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold - who developed his own tripartite system of classification for Victorian society, the Barbarians (aristocracy), Philistines (middle class) and Populace (working class) - held a post as a government inspector of schools. Arnold is influential because he typifies a major transition to social influence based on capacity in the form of intellectual capital rather than status, with its trappings of wealth and land-ownership. The aptitude to discourse on "sweetness and light" (his term for the best art that a culture could offer) and adjudicate on the nation's schooling are, as it were, two sides of the same coin tendered in the currency of effortless intellectual superiority. Arnold's self-confidence is rooted in the reformed type of education developed at the public school by headmasters like his own illustrious father, Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby.

In her book, *The Heirs of Tom Brown* (1982), Isabel Quigly helpfully defines the catch-all term public school - a definition which my thesis follows - and anatomizes its function over the period covered by this study in shaping the

elite which ran country and empire. As national requirements changed, so did the type of young man produced at the establishment; the transformation is reflected in the school-story literature. Despite this change, one fact remained constant. The secondary boarding school, "endowed [...] and carried on under some kind of public management" and "offering a classical education and preparation for the universities" (12), inspired respect in a hierarchical society (and resentment from some of the privileged elite, like Old Etonian George Orwell, who had passed through its gates). The type of schooling that the British establishment favoured for its male offspring was unique, entailing isolation from domestic life between eight and eighteen and, as T.C. Worsley remarked, from "all human contact with nine-tenths of their fellow countrymen" (Quigly, 8). For the privileged one-tenth, that radical separation - even sundering - engendered a complicated relationship with home. As A.N. Wilson reflects, "[t]he tragi-comedy of the English class system, in which everyone was trying to 'better' themselves, is that parents gave their children upbringings and education which were calculated to make them ashamed of their origins; or, if that is too strong a word, calculated to make them at home anywhere but home" (2007, 15). The result was a deep emotional connection with the Alma Mater and its continuing significance far into later life, with career choices and social affiliations often referring back, more than in other developed countries, to where a man had been educated.

For some boys sent home from their parents' outposts in imperial service, the public school provided a domestic surrogacy that supplanted family ties. In Kipling's case, for example, that schism was particularly fraught, but life-defining. He moved from an idyllic Indian childhood to a Portsmouth boyhood in a hated evangelical boarding-house to a college in Devon, celebrated in *Stalky & Co.*, too down-at-heel to have the same cachet as Rugby<sup>7</sup>, since it was run on commercial lines for the sons of army officers. Kipling's determination to provide an idealised template for schoolboy behaviour, his passive-aggressive dislike of the public school ethos, evidences the intercalation of conduct anxiety with status anxiety,

which profoundly affects the school story and other forms of yarn. Since each school had its own unique codes and conventions, as Bayford Harrison demonstrates in the *Boy's Own Annual, 1916-17*, the Alma Mater provided a tradition as rich as some family histories and fostered a liking for rigid form and ritual in its alumni. The profound emotional connection to a school could also affect masters, creating an intensity of commitment, sometimes quasi-domestic, in an almost exclusively male environment. Parker records two teachers, Evelyn Southwell and Malcolm White, both killed in the War, who lived in a garconnière in the grounds of Shrewsbury and were known as "the Two Men". White sent a telegram from the front: "Have left bats, auto-strop-strop and soul at Shrewsbury please send all if possible" (1987, 204-5). The allusions neatly fuse the physical and spiritual in an achieved masculinity that the public school was designed to inculcate, playfully symbolised here in the apparatus of shaving.

The spiritual bond jocularly suggested by White chimes with the charismatic influence of many headmasters, who, for historical reasons arising from the original ecclesiastical purpose of foundation schools, would normally be in holy orders. Public schools in the eighteenth century did not possess the good reputation they garnered in the nineteenth. Some schools had been regarded as sources of iniquity, leading aristocratic families to educate their scions at home under private tutors. The turning round of such establishments required leaders possessing fortitude, diplomatic skills, stamina and intellectual distinction. Influential heads needed to embody the change that they wished to see and communicate it forcefully to their charges, so exhortation sometimes thundered from the chapel pulpit. The resurgence of the top public schools in the period covered by this thesis is therefore inextricably linked with their being places of moral, religious as well as intellectual intensity; places where self-examination even for a new boy like Stephen Greenfield is an unavoidable but necessary formative ordeal. They are also repeatedly, in stories showing generations of boys facing pedagogic authority, places that take themselves surprisingly



seriously in inverse proportion to the limited genuine drama of everyday life. Indeed, from Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* onwards, the school tends to become two things simultaneously: the crucible of some preferred sort of testing for the individual male juvenile; and the petri dish for the experimental examination of the spiritual health of the nation, its social condition, its ideal state, even its global destiny.

### **Hughes and *Tom Brown's Schooldays*: The Founding of a Genre**

Intensity, moral seriousness and its representation of the resurgence of a public school under the guiding vision of a charismatic headmaster, certainly; but also the successful representation of going away to school as a foundational adventure: such are the distinguishing features which account for the perennial success of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Although far from being the first story to be written about a school, it was the novel that popularized the genre. The tale was so immediately popular that it ran through five editions in its year of publication, 1857. According to Jeffrey Richards, "its place as the *fons et origo* of the school story remains secure" (1988, 23). In view of its foundational status, I want to examine the influence of Thomas Hughes's work in this chapter by re-conceptualising it in the language of cryptography as the plaintext of the school story. That is, I approach the novel as a treatise in support of a specific type of education translated into a series of parabolic adventures. Subsequent tales, viewed chronologically, will then be contrasted with it as recodifications of its preoccupations. Later writers of the school story might be likened to code-breakers, who wish to intercept the cultural values being communicated in *Tom Brown* and substitute their own. Indeed this chapter will employ the vocabulary of crypto-analysis to throw light upon the internal contradictions in the representation of masculinities in the school story. And it will also evaluate *Tom Brown* as a foundational boy's own adventure yarn in the rejuvenation of the romance tradition.

It is therefore reassuring in undertaking this secondary critical exercise to note that Michael Palin's and Terry Jones's tele-series of adventure spoofs, *Ripping Yarns*, commences with "Tompkinson's Schooldays" (1976), as if it is the *fons et origo* of the strangulated masculine seriousness that pervades other manifestations of boy's own adventure, such as the colonial trek or the invasion scare story, which he also lampoons. And when Palin objects to - and satirises - the preachy quality of Thomas Hughes's eulogy to Arnoldian values, he is not alone amongst commentators. Parker notes that "although issued as fiction, it was clearly propagandist in its intent" (1987, 49). He goes on to argue that *Tom Brown's Schooldays* starts well but, as Doctor Arnold becomes dominant, loses its pace, exuberance and charm to "end in a slurry of soggy moralising" (118). In his defence of the novel which examines *Tom Brown* in its complex historical context, Andrew Sanders acknowledges an earlier dismissal by Kenneth Allsop who described it as "a coupon for instant tradition" and as "a brochure of the popularised, romantic, catchpenny Dream School" in the 1960s, a decade that Sanders suggests was given to debunking and iconoclasm (*Tom Brown's Schooldays*, 1989, vi)

Although *Tom Brown* is a text too complicated, contradictory and at times pessimistic in its responses to rapid pedagogical change to be described as a coupon, Hughes appears unapologetic about preaching. In the Preface to the Sixth Edition, the author insists that he "can't see that a man has any business to write at all unless he has something which he thoroughly believes and wants to preach about" (1989, xl). To an extent then, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is a tract for the times, concerned with presenting a case for how the ruling elite should educate their sons. As a mid-century narrative it has yet to observe what Jacqueline Rose notes as "one fairly consistent progression in children's writing", which she describes as "a gradual dropping of the conspicuous narrative voice" (1994, 59). The progression for Rose is perfected in *Treasure Island*, where any designs that the author may have on the implied reader are dissolved into the

"*verisimilitude*" of adventure (Rose's emphasis, 80). Yet *Tom Brown*, according to my definition, is yarn-like not only in its affinity with the tract but also in its ambiguous status as being more than a boy's book. For in his Preface, Hughes reflects on his work in a manner that suggests he is responding to the interest of other men in how British schools should be reformed. The philosophical angle augments for adults the stated purpose of the novel which is to deal with the values that a father would want to pass on to his son at the point when he departs for public school.

Those values are embedded in an idealised, backward-looking society set in the Vale of White Horse, Berkshire, over which the Brown family has presided as the squirearchy over many generations. They are essentially Trollopean in the depiction of a High Tory, organic community, where social roles are pre-defined, which might suggest - as has already been shown to be true of Trollope himself - a disquiet over competitive examination. So intent is Hughes on situating the young Tom in a fading rural paradise (far preferable to mid-Victorian Britain), that few, if any, subsequent school stories take as long to arrive at the hallowed establishment's gates. The wider social vistas of the younger generation, whom Hughes repeatedly addresses directly, are explicitly criticised through the figure of mechanised travel. The train and packet steamer are portrayed as vehicles for an industrialised quest for new experiences in "racing railroad times", whose pampered youth "don't know your own lanes and woods and fields" (6). Even the new travel connection of home to school is lamented. It is apparent that Hughes prefers a Pickwickian stage-coach to an iron horse, reminiscing about his younger schoolboy self being dropped off when term ended at a cross-roads and transported home by "the family coachman, singing 'Dulce domum'" (7). Hughes privileges an older, organic connection between school and "home, sweet home" when the purpose of school is not self-aggrandisement or getting on competitively. The Brown family are similarly positioned as a middling, unassuming family, "subduing the earth in most English counties" (2) - the

allusion to Genesis suggesting the fulfilment of an enduring, God-given ordinance. In his sermonising, Hughes directs the contemporary reader towards a paradisaical rural state that he feels has been lost.

In spite of his overriding desire to preach, Hughes manages to lay down the foundational experiences of a public schoolboy as he develops from uncertain new boy to respected sixth-former, a paradigmatic progression that could be then built upon by Reed and Charles Hamilton, the author of the *Greyfriars* series, for later generations and different audiences. Hughes ranges throughout the school, from its grounds to its chapel, to its residential houses and dormitories to its studies and classrooms, then, having established the topography, adds human geography by depicting the fagging system, bullying, enmities, friendships, illness, death, natural history, sport, fighting, prep, lessons - and masters, both inspiring and dishonourable.

If not exactly a brochure for boarding school life, since the events described include bullying and the intimation of sexual relations between some boys, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* had an educative role in preparing a prospective attendee to adjust to life away from home. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy remarks in *The Public School Phenomenon* that *Tom Brown* was read as a guide, "both as to what a school should be like, and as to what it would be like and how to behave when you got there" (1977, 88). It establishes the debate over normative standards, constructing one particular code of schoolboy behaviour. Although in Hughes's hand the statute of precepts has not yet discouraged the mention of sisters and mothers, there are clearly taboos. Homesickness is not to be admitted to. Verbal expressions of male friendship are sanctioned but the confession of religious scruples limited only to close friends. Fighting is condoned when limited to boxing, sport to be entered into vigorously, fagging seen as a legitimate drudgery and bullying presented as a regrettable test of backbone. Then, in a moral descent cribbing is depicted as dubious, ragging teachers as

reprehensible, breaking bounds as deviant, drinking as ruinous and "taking up" or consorting with younger boys as damnable.

This taxonomy of schoolboy behaviour is profoundly pessimistic. It mirrors Thomas Arnold's own warnings of the "evil" inevitable at a boarding school for boys, a term that Fabrice Neddham demonstrates as recurring in his private correspondence between 1828 and 1842, when alluding to Rugby during his term as headmaster (2004, 308). Instituting the change he wanted to bring about leads Arnold into what Neddham usefully delineates as "a predictable discrepancy between the school's prescription of an idealised form of masculinity and the boy's own negotiations of that gender role" (306). The divergence between theory and practice is a product of what might be seen as an incongruity in Arnold's methods. Neddham repeats Arnold's well-known prescription for combatting evil: "what we must look for here", he once told his prefects, "is 1st, religious and moral principles; 2ndly, gentlemanly conduct; 3rdly, intellectual ability" (308). But Neddham also notes that at Rugby, "superiority was attained when a boy reached the top of the official hierarchy which was based on academic achievements"; as a result, poor performing pupils in Latin and Greek did not rise to the status of prefects, becoming physically-developed "losers" who developed their own alternative system of values, based on disruptive bullying, bodily strength and sporting skills. So although Rugby school continued the process by which boys in their family circles had been "taught to talk, act and react in conformity with their male-role standards", it also "put their still fragile form of masculinity to the test" (313). Prefects were sometimes physically intimidated by their charges.

Appraising the complicated factors which make Tom Brown's Rugby a new pedagogic experience should give pause to an over-simplistic analysis of the public school crucible in which a boy's masculinity is to be tested. Tom faces the predicament of a child hero dislodged from a time-honoured social settlement in the country. He may not be literally orphaned like Stephen Greenfield, but is still hermeneutically orphaned in being thrown back on his own intellectual and

psychological resources in reading a novel and threatening world. Any domestic, organic relationship of father to son, any slow process of assimilating manly values through filial relationship is ruptured and replaced by a pedagogic quest at a boarding school, where advancement comes from the textual analysis of classical literature, rather than from a Trollopean paradigm based upon the seniority of age or hierarchy of land ownership.

For these reasons, I depart from Peter Parker's assessment of "a speech much quoted and very properly ridiculed" (1987, 50), in which Squire Brown muses about what to say about Rugby - although it is clearly an important textual crux:

Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, but he isn't sent to school for that - at any rate, not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma; no more does his mother [...] If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman and a Christian. (1989, 73-4)

Superficially, at least, the speech might appear to demonstrate a patrician complacency in the Squire, his meditation basking in the sunny assumption that English gentlemanliness is a settled social state. But, as depicted by Hughes, there are shadows falling upon the shires and the passing of the old order, at least for the social elite, is being influenced by the radical emergence of the examination as a mechanism for grading social status and conduct. The Squire speaks for a traditional model of national life symbolised in the Vale by a fair, the Veast, "the healthy sound expression of English country holiday-making" that Hughes nostalgically acknowledges "we as a nation have got beyond [...] and are feeling for and soon likely to find some better substitute" (41). The school world which Tom is entering describes moral and religious principles being worked out within a reformed relationship to Greek particles. As Jeffrey Richards reflects, *Tom Brown* "is a mirror of the changing nature and structure of Victorian values, a vital point of intersection between ideas that had been dominant and ideas that were

to become so" (24). Just as he plays down the social disturbance of the period, Parker also underestimates the personal dislocation reflected by the fact that Squire's rumination is not fully put into words. The meditation constitutes an unbridged gap between an adult looking back at his schooldays and a boy yet to go, the point at which a father acknowledges that his role is delegated to an institution. The boy must "find his way home", as it were, to paternal values through separation and initiation. Hughes implies that the Squire's actual spoken homily is brief (74), reflecting the reality that, as the parting shot from an oral and rural culture, his father's views may not be uppermost in Tom's mind. That the homily may not have registered much reinforces the superseding of oral by written discourse in the yarn. Indeed, by Hughes's admission, his book *is* the written discourse that replaced what a father should want to tell his son when departing for public school.

I would also argue that Tom's progression towards manly understanding is graduated by a complicating of the growing boy's character, from representing the organic, animal spirits of rural Berkshire by adding more urbane and scholastic qualities. The education of Tom Brown symbolically enacts the sort of integration of physical, moral and spiritual qualities in the Christian gentleman that the public school was aiming for. Hughes prevents the transition from seeming too priggish by the use of fighting as the ruling metaphor of the book. Indeed more than muscular Christianity, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* embodies fighting Christianity. The Browns are introduced as "a fighting family" (3). Recalling his days at Rugby in an address he gave in 1891, Hughes suggests that his dominant impression "was the feeling that in school and close we were training for a big fight [...] a fight which would last all our lives, and try all our powers, physical, intellectual and moral, to the utmost" (x). The roasting of Brown at an open fire by his arch-enemy Flashman for his refusal to give up a Derby lottery ticket and the subsequent overthrow of the villain by Tom and his

friend Harry East, reinforces the fighting metaphor. Torture is bested by decent pugilism in a physical victory which sidesteps sanctimony.

However, animal spirits are not fully valorised in the novel since both Brown and East are subsequently ostracized as rebels. Brown fails to develop "character and manliness" (211), a Rugby paradigm which constructs masculinity as fundamentally about morals and scholarship rather than physicality. Rather than expel him, Doctor Arnold sets up a corrective, nurturing relationship between Brown and George Arthur which forms a new chapter in Tom's moral development. The influence that George (for whom Scriptural characters are as real as school friends) brings to bear on Tom is that of a more sophisticated temperament, whose cultural competence in the reading of situations is advanced. The differences between the boys are foregrounded one evening in their study as Brown and Arthur prepare for the "time-honoured institution of the Vulgus [...] that is a short exercise, in Greek or Latin verse, on a given subject, the minimum number of lines being fixed for each form" (259). Tom follows the traditional method of completion relying on crib books that allow him to patch together motley phrases into an "incongruous and feeble result of eight elegiac lines" (261). George matches the exercise to the high calling of a genuine liberal education, working hard to capture the set subject within eight elegant lines, eschewing Gradus or other help as far as possible, so as "to clothe his idea in appropriate Latin or Greek" (262).

Arthur's attentiveness to translating is shown to be of a piece with the scrupulous interpolation of Scriptural insight into his devotional life. Within this early Victorian period, facility in languages is presented as only part of a more fundamental piety within the paradigm of manliness, deeper than solely the ability to pass examinations and display intellect. A changed relation to the written word, drawing upon the long Christian tradition of rereading, is posited as necessary for Tom in the development of healthy self-examination as a counterpart to his healthy extroversion. The boys have already moved to



unusually deep intellectual and spiritual intimacy, reading a passage of the Bible together, sometimes with East too, and discussing it. On one occasion, Tom takes a dislike to Naaman, an Old Testament character who trims his behaviour to the demands of a foreign religion. Arthur's near-fatal brush with fever suspends the normal rules of discourse, creating the opportunity for George to implore his friend to abandon crib for intellectual self-help. When Tom equivocates, George quotes the Biblical crux outlining Naaman's moral vacillation, leaving open the question whether Brown's use of cribs is just such a compromise.

Tom Brown is, therefore, driven by friendship and conscience from his almost incorrigible pragmatism to higher standards of pedagogy – and to textual wrestling with intractably difficult Greek and Latin. The metaphor of fighting finally extends to include education in its narrow sense: fighting with the particles of language to achieve proficiency in the Classics. A matrix descending from a charismatic head to encompass Christian piety and Classical scholarship replaces the older version of Trollopean gentlemanliness located solely in social status. Spiritual intensity has re-energised the shires with a resilience that can take on the brutalising squalor of Mammon in Victorian Britain. At the conclusion of the novel, Tom Brown returns to Rugby to mourn the death of his mentor, Doctor Arnold. As Mark Girouard has observed, the 1869 Edition illustration depicts him as a "knight in mufti" (1981, 168) with the implicit Arthurian associations I examine later in writing of the invasion scare story. The school story hero has reconfigured Christian gentlemanliness. The Squire has become a knight-errant fighting industrial capitalism and the public school the birth-place of national renaissance.

This is a noble vision, or perhaps even a tall tale, for it reflects the Christian Socialist values of Hughes rather than the historical reality of Arnold's Rugby. It is also closer to the expectations of middle-class parents for their sons in the 1850s than to the ideals of Arnold, as if Hughes is unconsciously updating his childhood experiences. When placed in historical context, the strands of *Tom*

*Brown* as a documentary account unravel. Indeed, Hughes is forced to acknowledge this fact in his 1869 Preface, when unsuccessfully rebutting two charges from respondents to the novel's first publication. First, it is pointed out by them, supporting Neddham's contention, that older boys were bullied by tougher fourteen-year-olds (xxxviii) and, second, that Rugby alumni encountered at the University were "'a solemn array,' 'boys turned into men before their time,' a 'semi-political, semi-sacerdotal fraternity'" (xli): that is, prigs. In *Godliness and Good Learning*, David Newsome notes that the headmaster's 1844 biographer, A.H. Stanley, on whom George Arthur is thought to be based, confessed that the picture of Rugby life which *Tom Brown's Schooldays* presented was a "complete revelation to him" (1961, 37). According to Newsome, for a truer representation one must look to F.W. Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little* (1858), which is "a truer reflection of Arnold's ideals than Thomas Hughes's masterpiece" (37). Hughes has therefore skilfully filtered the intellectual and moral regime of Rugby through the personality of Brown. Or to use another analogy, rather like the elegant late-medieval cipher disk described in David Kahn's *The Code-Breakers*, an inner copper plate of letters has been placed against an outer copper plate and twisted to create a letter substitution (1996, 127-8): as a result PIOUS has been rendered as TOUGH or DEVOUT as STRONG. The sensibility of the 1830s has been changed to suit a later generation, and to retrieve that earlier worldview it is necessary to turn to the pages of *Eric*. But when doing so, it should be also noted that while *Tom Brown* has not replicated Rugby, it has anticipated perhaps *the* exemplary yarn, *Treasure Island*. For Hughes has written an historical novel featuring a squirearchy, focusing upon the nature of gentlemanliness, philosophising about good and evil in a masculine quest where achieved manliness requires the intense scrutiny of (and is mapped against) a manuscript document.

### **Farrar and *Eric*: A Pietistic Interlude**

While Hughes's novel has been consistently in print since 1857, *Eric*, published a year later, has faded from view in the twentieth century, despite having passed through thirty-six impressions by 1903. *Eric* might be regarded as the school story Hughes would have written had he not taken care to refract the Rugby regime through the prism of a muscular and anachronistic Christian Socialism. By comparison, Farrar's Evangelicalism is introspective and profoundly unworldly. In fact, of all public school novels, *Eric*, or *Little by Little* has come in for the most vociferous criticism from fellow writers, even fellow practitioners. Several responses, both contemporary (for the novel was subjected to immediate criticism for its emotionalism) and subsequent are recorded in Jeffrey Richards's account of the work in *Happiest Days* (1988, 70-102). Charlotte Yonge called it "that morbid dismal tale"; Roger Lancelyn Green disparaged its "terrible warnings, soaked in nauseously cloying piety"; even the judicious Harvey Darton remarks that "[n]early everything that can be said against maudlin sentimentalism, against sincere and pious self-delusion, can be and has been said against this astonishing book." Hugh Kingsmill made possibly the most devastatingly accurate assessment, referring to it as "the sort of story Dr Arnold would have written if he'd taken to drink". Even Farrar had misgivings, admitting, as Rowe Townsend notes in his Introduction to *Eric*, that "the lachrymosity is, I know, too much, and arises from the state of mind in which I wrote" (1971, 12).

Yet its author cannot be dismissed as a minor eccentric at the fringes of Victorian cultural life. Of all writers of renowned or notorious school tales, Farrar stands out as the most representative of that class Coleridge termed the Clerisy, the educated intellectual and religious caste with responsibility for taking the moral temperature of the nation. Newcome suggests that Farrar was a late representative of a generation of earnest Christian undergraduates at Cambridge in the 1840s, several of whom became "great clerical headmasters" and others, bishops (1961, 27). Farrar was an illustrious scholar, being elected to the

Apostles debating society and being bracketed fourth in the classical tripos. After completing *Eric* and *St Winifred's* (1862), his two notable school stories, Farrar had a distinguished career as a churchman and theologian, rising to the position of Dean of Canterbury. Nor can he be dismissed as a hell-fire dogmatist, since he was a proponent of universal salvation. Margaret Markwick, a recent commentator to see the positive side of *Eric*, records that Farrar's theological position resulted from Biblical research that sought to demonstrate "an inflated and exaggerated translation of the Greek" (2007, 45). Quigly (1982), Rowe Townsend (1971) and Richards (1988) also take pains to establish that *Eric* is not a work totally without redeeming features in subject matter or quality of writing.

The complaint by other writers (some educated in the same system) that there is something morbidly self-polluting in the novel's preoccupations might serve to suggest that Farrar is offending against an unwritten code about how a public school education should be depicted. Biographical evidence from his son, Reginald, suggests that it "was written from reminiscences of a school in the Isle of Man" (Quigly, 1982, 71), which was King William's, attended by Farrar himself and a contemporary, James Wilson, the future distinguished headmaster of Clifton College. Wilson later wrote "Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little*, was no caricature of this school, though it was a caricature of the human boy. The bullying and cruelty from which we both suffered in the first two years was almost incredible" (Wilson, 2001). In fact the novel bowdlerizes the reality, but this did not prevent Farrar from being attacked for bringing King William's into disrepute. My reading of the novel gives prominence to its coding in a euphemistic sense: what Farrar might or might not be saying through Hebrew about what boys most definitely should *not* do. When placed within a linguistic hierarchy that is grounded in the intellectual life of early Victorian Britain, *Eric's* rarefied positioning becomes clear as a novel requiring more of its reader than *Tom Brown*, demanding sensitive literary antennae that can pick up and interpret allegory. For Farrar, as a Greek-Hebraic scholar, stands in an elevated intellectual position compared to Hughes, since as

Auden observes, "[t]he Classical Side [...] had its nice distinctions: Greek like the Navy, was the senior, the aristocratic service" (1989, 3).

The Preface to *Eric*, setting out Farrar's one single object (to vividly inculcate inward purity and moral purpose), shows the same intention as Hughes's Preface; this is preaching, gesturing again towards the chapel-pulpit sermon as the dominant discourse. Yet Farrar lacks Hughes's understanding of how to build sympathy for his protagonist, Eric Williams. The narrative voice in *Eric* constantly frets over Williams's behaviour like the overzealous invigilator of a perpetual moral and spiritual examination, intrusively commenting upon it in a manner which has disappeared from children's literature over the ensuing century and a half. That voice (which seems to carry the conduct anxiety of its author so forcibly) may seem difficult in itself to modern readers, used to a coded distinction between real author, implied author, narrative voice and characters. Still, there are similarities between the two novels: *Eric* describes the moral decline of a youth who has much in common with Tom Brown. Eric Williams is high-spirited, handsome, sporting and popular. Whereas Brown's decline is arrested through the friendship with Arthur, Eric proves too headstrong to reform his ways, despite making several resolutions to do so, after the sentimental death of the pious Edwin Russell, George Arthur's equivalent. In *Tom Brown*, there is an ontological shift which fuses red-blooded adventure with scholarly religiosity. In *Eric* there is no earthing of the literary by a celebratory physicality found in the metaphor of fighting Christianity. In Jack Cox's view this led it to fall "flat as a pancake" among the very boys it was meant to impress (44). Despite its ethical intentions, Farrar's novel does not create a boy-hero with real blood flowing through his veins.

*Eric's* failure as a yarn, then, is linked to a literary abstractedness. It is the school story *par excellence* for serious-minded intellectuals, a solemn semi-sacerdotal fraternity. Jeffrey Richards makes a similar point in referencing the overriding influence of Milton, a poet that the young Farrar at King William's

committed to heart. Richards argues that "*Eric* is conceived on an epic scale, its model Milton's *Paradise Lost*" (78-9), an explanation that at least accounts for the novel's grand obsession with the battle for a schoolboy's soul. This intertextual authorial coding of *Eric*, however, adds to the novel's obscurity, rather than providing a meaning-system open to the reader. Markwick argues that it represents "the schoolmaster-cleric's amalgam of school life with theology" (2007, 44) and "should be read as an account of the progress of the human soul, not as a schoolboy yarn" (48). Markwick contends that *Eric* would have been understood on these terms by Victorian schoolboys, which helps to clarify why it was a popular book for over 40 years (44).

Farrar's clerical other-worldliness would explain the difficulty he has in transparently making an appeal for moral purity. His meaning gets lost behind a terministic screen, a linguistic complexity which would challenge an experienced Miltonist or an Old Testament scholar. *Eric* uses a Hebraic crux to talk about sexual continence. In Chapter IX Williams is taken to task by the narrative voice for failing to complain about "indecent talk" that is being perpetrated in Dormitory No. 7 by another boy, Bull, a disreputable refugee from another school. Farrar cannot bring himself to name the activity, taking refuge, as it turns out, behind a strange Old Testament gloss. Williams confides his misgivings to his pious friend Edwin Russell; and pointedly Farrar indicates that the boys have already discussed the issue of swearing some time before, thereby signalling that something else might be in the air. Russell admits that his late father has warned him of such behaviour as that practised by Bull at public schools, noting that previously he had been utterly ignorant of "such coarse knowledge as is forced upon us here" (Chapter IX). He then refers Williams to Dr. Rowland's chapel sermon two weeks earlier, about Kibroth-Hattaavah, the desert place where the Israelites consume unnatural food, quails, that Yahweh has supplied and where they die of plague. Kibroth-Hattaavah can be variously translated as "the graves

of those who lust, are greedy or crave meat”, figuratively pointing to either individual or group behaviour at Roslyn School.

Two commentators, Gathorne-Hardy (1977) and Parker, assume Farrar is fixated in an outmoded way with masturbation, or self-pollution as the *Ripping Yarns* television documentary (2014) more authentically terms it. Gathorne-Hardy only considers *Eric* with the stated intention of discussing “the Victorian schoolmaster’s obsession with sex and sin” (84) and perhaps too easily presumes that in deconstructing Kibroth-Hattaavah (a place, it should be noted, of collective destruction), “we know at once it must be masturbation” (86). Parker, unwilling to consider seriously Farrar’s “ludicrous fiction”, does usefully note that the Victorian pedagogue had edited *Essays on Liberal Education* (1867), and highlights Farrar’s opposition there to the study of those parts of classical literature that dealt with pederasty (89-90). Nevertheless a century later, in his 1956 introduction to *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov - stung by the accusation of having written a dirty book - makes the same disapproving connection as Farrar (or at least a parallel ironic point) in a startlingly blunt appraisal of “English public school boys who after a night of homosexual romps have to endure the paradox of reading the Ancients in expurgated versions” (1995, 316). If Nabokov, clearly another expert linguist, is right, Farrar may, after all, be conducting, in his privileging of Hebrew over Greek and Latin, an oblique attack on juvenile homosexuality.

Once again, conduct anxiety and a hierarchical taxonomy of language are intertwined in the school story in a discourse about acceptable codes of behaviour. Yet Farrar’s vocabulary, the linguistic code in which he discusses adventure, is generally (but not exclusively) thought too intellectual, too “Greek” for his contemporary audience; and this signals a significant irony, since the cultural disposition which Farrar epitomizes had its real application in code-breaking. William Montgomery, who helped to decipher the Zimmerman telegram that led America to enter the First World War, was a cryptographer in the Farrar mould. Montgomery was a member of St John’s College, Cambridge and a

specialist in early church history. His most memorable work, as Kahn notes in *The Code-Breakers*, was a translation of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1910, so brilliant that it was said that "no German work has ever been rendered into English so idiomatically and yet so faithfully" (1996, 286). Kahn tells how Montgomery's "familiarity with Scripture unriddled a problem that had baffled most of the other staffers" (286) when a blank postcard from a prisoner of war in Turkey reached his father with the obviously fictitious address, 184 King's Road, Tighnabruaich, Scotland. Montgomery rightly suggested that this might allude to First Kings, chapter 18, verse 4, which when applied to the Turkish situation gave comfort that the prisoner of war was safe but in need of food. Vigilant readers such as Montgomery may well have come to a personal, definitive understanding as to the import of Kibroth-Hattaavah. But for most readers a truer, down-to-earth successor to *Tom Brown* is the work of the most significant fiction writer for the early *B.O.P.*, Talbot Baines Reed.

### **Reed and *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's: The B.O.P. Formula***

"Question 7. Miscellaneous. Give a brief history of your own life from the earliest times, being particular to state your vicious deeds in chronological order". In addition to being a practical joke by an older boy, Stephen Greenfield's final question could be taken to constitute a side-swipe at the suffocating piety practised by Farrar. Talbot Baines Reed was not impressed by the other man's work or his designs on boys' consciences. He announced this dissatisfaction in the articles he wrote for his cousin, Edward Baines's newspaper, the *Leeds Mercury* (Cox, 44). Posited in a fake exam question (an intertextual reference that seeks to undermine *Eric*), Reed's objection to the unbalancing of the scales in school fiction away from adventure is even more forcefully rebutted in his own voluntary story-telling for *B.O.P.* before his premature death at forty-one in 1893.

Reed's opposition was far from an objection to the religious and moral values that underpinned Farrar's worldview. His concern was with the outworking



of conduct anxiety as expressed in fiction and it was a practical rather than a theoretical concern. More effectively than any other early author for the *Boy's Own Paper*, Reed moved from being merely convinced of its mission to provide appropriate role models in the school story to actually delivering them. His involvement is evident from the first issue: No.1, Vol.1 published on January 18, 1879, priced one penny. The front page carried an article, "My First Football Match", the sport being Rugby, having originated at Dr. Arnold's school, and the article being attributed anonymously to an "Old Boy", much as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* had been. The writer was indeed Talbot Baines Reed, and if there was a private allusion to the *locus* of the genre's founding novel in the celebration of Rugby Football, it was perhaps in the hope that a similar literary popularity could be achieved for the new weekly.

The story paper's price, one penny, gives a clue to the market in which it was competing. In early Victorian times the penny dreadful had followed the sensational tradition, which as well as dealing with tales of the unexpected, chronicled stock underworld types, such as highwaymen and pirates. But as the century progressed, as Dunae observes, "the connotations of the term had changed, instead of referring to long-running serial publications which had been read by both sexes and all ages, the term came to be applied almost exclusively to boys' periodicals of the lowest stratum" (1979, 134). Weekly parts now featured characters with unnatural abilities, like Spring-Heeled Jack, or unconventional appetites, like Sweeney Todd, alongside rebellious juveniles. The circulation wars between the publishing firms of the Emmett Brothers and Edwin Brett in the 1870s (to name but two) that produced such fare created competition for ever-increasing thrills. This led to the main boy protagonists of each house, Tom Wildrake and Jack Harkaway, forsaking school for exotic adventures overseas with their former companions. The historian John Springhall estimates that the circulation of *Boys of England*, featuring Harkaway's dare-devil

escapades, rose by 1871 to 250,000 copies (1991, 87) which, given wide sharing, would mean a weekly readership of one million.

If it were to compete successfully, *B.O.P.* was therefore going to be dependent on a curious synthesis of religious idealism and worldly-wise publishing élan. As Richard Noakes observes, "the new periodical would have to ape some aspects of these lower publications" (2004, 155). Reed earned his livelihood from print culture as the director of a press and his father was on the committee of the Religious Tract Society, so both men knew the marketing proposition: seductively high production values with a bias towards incident and away from explicit religious proselytising. Idealism and wiliness combined to release a product conducive to the zeitgeist: uplift, the atmosphere of elite public schools presented to boys through imaginative recreation, because Reed was reliant upon the reminiscences of friends who had attended Radley College, an independent boarding secondary school, established in 1847 with teaching and administrative structures modelled on an Oxford college.

Of the half dozen serials Reed wrote for *B.O.P.*, *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's*, appearing in instalments in 1881, is the one for which he is remembered. Like other serials, *The Fifth Form* made the transition to book form in 1887 and was reprinted until the 1950s, and it inspired many imitators. Its durability lies in Reed's success in improving upon the repetitive incidents and flat characterisations of school stories in the penny dreadful. At the level of narrative, an exchange is offered to the reader: realism for sensation, consistency of tone for extravagant description, and subtle characterisation for humorous caricature. *The Fifth Form* is the text in which Reed perfected many of the plot elements that were to become standbys in the following decades: in Stephen Greenfield's older brother, Oliver, the upstanding pupil wrongly accused of a social crime, cheating in a competitive examination; his humiliation, proud isolation and final vindication; the decline and final exposure of the school wastrel, Loman; inter-year or group rivalries, between the fifth form and the sixth form and, in the

fourth junior, the Tadpoles and the Guinea-Pigs; the broken and restored friendship, between Oliver and another outstanding scholar, Wraysford; low-life villains, often publicans and gamblers, who ensnare out-of-bounds schoolboys; boating accidents, storms and heroic rescues. Another factor in the success of his stories is the possession of a necessary skill in the competent novelist: conveying distinctions of personality through believable dialogue. In this aspect, Reed develops the genre from the competent foundations laid down by Hughes. He also follows Hughes's founding text by being aware of the attractiveness to young minds of the chivalric romanticism of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.

Yet in other respects Reed's discourse is competitively different from Hughes' – the tone of Farrar he dispenses with altogether. Hughes is writing with a view to an adult readership and asking condition of England questions as they pertain to the education of the ruling class. Reed is not writing polemically; he is addressing the poor quality of England's story papers for boys and working to establish a successful alternative formula. Hughes feels obliged to root his analysis in the shires. Reed starts his work in a suburban setting with a brief and embarrassing goodbye at a railway station between widowed mother and Stephen when the issue of flannel vests is raised by her too loudly. Hughes will invite the reader to skip a chapter if it is not to his taste. Reed must work to hold the interest of a wide age-range of readers. So whereas Hughes follows the chronological movement of Brown and friends up the school, Reed regularly shifts focus between the battles of young schoolboy gangs, the Tadpoles and the Guinea-Pigs, who provide knockabout humour, and the more individualised older boys, their friendships and preoccupations. At St. Dominic's, the activities of the sports field provide welcome variety and, since the moral consequences of their breaking bounds must be reinforced by threatening the social equilibrium of the school, a malevolent public house landlord is on hand to provide dramatic menace. He is a working-class outsider, however, so unlike *Tom Brown* there is

little sense of evil emanating from a boyish peer-group and no requirement for pulpit sermons.

Overall, in *The Fifth Form*, explicit religious exhortation gets jettisoned. It emerges in one scene, easily caricatured but atypical, when Stephen is invited to tea by a young master, Mr Rastle, who has noticed how Greenfield's Latin formwork bears an exact resemblance to another boy's. Questioned about this fact, Stephen in a trembling voice admits his guilt, and resigns himself to his fate, a flogging, as Tom Brown or Harry East might have done, only to find Rastle making light of the similarities, and gently suggesting that he trusts in his own abilities. There follows a short discourse on the facts of spiritual life from the pedagogue, and an invitation to rely on the Holy Spirit as a guide and proper interpreter of life at a public school. Cribbing is no longer the absolute moral shibboleth of good learning. One might say that Reed has intercepted the code in which Hughes's and Farrar's moral strictures are recorded, found them over-intense and substituted his own calmly-worded decipherment. And when the matter of faith arises amongst pupils in the school, just enough is implied in comparatively reticent discussions between the youths to suggest hidden spiritual reasons for conduct.

Reed plays down overtly religious moralising in his recalibration of the school story, subtly shifting the meaning of the textual examination to suggest the capacity to cope with life's unseen trials. Oliver Greenfield must, like Tom Brown, pass through a graduated moral test, and he is contrasted with Loman, who, like Eric Williams, enters a downward spiral, through breaking bounds, drinking in a public house and gambling, which leads to blackmail by the landlord. Oliver is falsely accused of stealing the exam paper for the Nightingale Prize the night before, which Loman has taken since he must win the scholarship to pay off his debts. When Oliver wins the Prize he is suspected of foul-play by his classmates and is sent to Coventry by them, and then triumphantly vindicated as a true scholar. The test of fortitude that Oliver has passed is hard-coded into the

title of the story, since St Dominic is the patron saint of the falsely accused. The school magazine, *The Dominican*, faithfully and journalistically records the twists and turns in plot, providing a frame within a frame: a fictional school magazine charting its protagonist's moral examination within a story paper for boys motivated by conduct anxiety. In taking the best tropes from his precursor's works and resetting them in the context of regular weekly instalments, Reed reset the school story to adapt to changes in the field of cultural production, as a primer (as it were) for Board school readers. Although in his 1940s essay, "Boys' Weeklies", Orwell wrongly posits *Stalky & Co* as the prototype for the Edwardian mass-produced school-story of *The Gem* and *The Magnet*, for surely it is properly Reed's fiction.

### **Kipling and *Stalky*: The Empire Strikes Back**

"[W]e aren't a public school. We're a limited liability company payin' four per cent. My father's a shareholder, too [...] We've got to get into the Army or - get out, haven't we? [...] The rest's flumdiddle. Can't you see?" (Kipling, 1987, 186) A worldly-wise sixth-former, Flint, utters this ruthless exposure of the cash nexus lying behind "the Coll", a Devon boarding school for the sons of army officers. The institution in question is a fictionalised version of the United Services College at Westward Ho! near Bideford, North Devon, which Kipling attended between 1878 and 1882. The words put into the mouth of Flint would, of course, have been regarded as sacrilege by traditional clerical, public-school headmasters, and designedly so. The 1899 publication, in book form, of the first *Stalky* stories - after separate instalments had appeared in middle-brow magazines for an adult readership - marked a radical new direction for the school-story genre. "The Coll" sometimes feels like a scene of guerrilla warfare between boys and masters, a little prep, as it were, for the skirmishing that the subalterns-in-training will face on the North-West frontier of India and the hillsides of Afghanistan. And *Stalky & Co.* reads like a series of ambushes perpetrated upon

the conventional public school story. With the slang term, flumdidle, an anti-snobbery grenade is lobbed specifically at the armature of the examination system and the welding of Classics to gentlemanly respectability.

Whatever the differences in outlook between Hughes, Farrar and Reed might be, their stories are still offering competing discourses in an essentially Christian exposition of masculinity. To different degrees of emphasis, the Bible remains the privileged text underwriting the values they espouse. The grandson of Methodist ministers on both sides of the family, Kipling was well-versed in the Scriptures and therefore able to train his unmatched arsenal of literary techniques and imaginative tropes upon the entrenched Christian version of boarding-school morality. Feeding his non-conformist animosity was the belief expressed in poems such as the 1886 "Arithmetic on the Border" that at a time when empire demanded the production of tough and worldly officers, expensive private schools simply produced fodder for Afghan snipers where "two thousand pounds of education / Drops to a ten-rupee *jezail*" (Brooks and Faulkner, 1996, 258). *Stalky & Co.* represents an idealistic attempt to propose a more appropriate pedagogic system for an imperial power, using deliberately coarse-grained and shocking material - for, as Martin Green observes, "Kipling often makes his best work difficult and unpleasant" (272). Subversively adopting religious language, Kipling later referred to the tales as "tracts and parables for the young" in the autobiographical *Something of Myself* (1937). In the private inscription to a copy of *Stalky* in 1925, he wrote "[t]his is not intended to be merely a humorous book, but it is an Education, a work of the greatest value."

Kipling's reference to tract and parable has an aptness, since the hostility to the conventional Public School Code stands out clearly to those readers willing to put in the interpretative effort to decipher it. Only in the first sentence of the first chapter, "In Ambush", of the 1899 version does the omniscient narrator provide a helpful prompt to normative behaviour: "In summer all right-minded boys built huts in the furze-hill behind the College" (1987, 29). Since the huts are

constructed beyond the permitted bounds, *Stalky & Co.* has lost no time in announcing its topsy-turvy values, and on this one occasion pronouncing them to be a new orthodoxy. But from this point on, plot, characterisation and dialogue carry forward the moral inversion.

A translation of the hero's nickname provides a necessary crux through which to interpret the whole series. In the college slang, its hero, Arthur Lionel Corkran is known as "Stalky", which means "clever, well-considered and wily, as applied to plans of action; and 'stalkiness' was the one virtue Corkran toiled after" (13). The definition makes explicit the implication of the second paragraph of "In Ambush", when Stalky detects the "pugs" of the school-master Mr. Prout on the floor of their hide-out. Instead of using the English "foot-print", Kipling employs the Hindustani term for the track of a beast, turning the large-footed pedagogue ("Hooper" to the boys) into an ungainly jungle animal, which has clumsily revealed its presence to the quarry. Through the introduction of a hunting or scouting metaphor, a battle for the control of schoolboy habitat starts to play out as a simulated war-game. In opposition to the school fiction which retrospectively celebrates the best days of one's life or elevates the significance of school as an institution, *Stalky & Co.* insistently presents education as a training-ground for adulthood. Kipling inverts the temporal structure of Hughes (where growing into manliness is all-important), by moulding his protagonists to fit the template of what their fathers, as imperial servants, have already become. More than this, through the linguistic trace of an imperial spoor, as it were, lurking in an English sentence, Kipling suggests that survival at work (at least for the young soldier) depends on deductive skill far more significant than parsing Latin. Against this examination in practical resourcefulness, classroom cramming for the Army examination pales as merely a bureaucratic procedure.

"In Ambush" presses home this message. Knowing that the outdoor lair that he shares with his friends M'Turk and Beetle (with whom he rooms in Study Five) has been discovered, Stalky goes to alert them, stopping only to canvass

the gullible Mr. Hartopp for membership of the Natural History Society, an institution which the boy holds in contempt. Joining it grants the trio a freedom pass until they can establish another lair, which they do illegally by trespassing on the grounds of a Colonel Dabney, an Irish landowner, where they smoke and drink. Befriending the retired army man, the three boys lure Prout, King and the school sergeant, Foxy (who are distracted by the desire to find where they hide out) on to the Colonel's land, where the masters are humiliatingly accused of trespassing. The tables are turned on the teachers. "In Ambush" sets a pattern; an intervention by a teacher is taken to be invasive, and the boys, led by Stalky, improvise a retaliatory prank as a reprisal. Yet their reactions seem a little too remorseless to be the work of youth. *Stalky & Co.*'s most vociferous contemporary critic, Robert Buchanan, had a point when he described the trio as "not like boys at all, but like hideous little men" (Lancelyn Green, 1971, 245). Like the Farrar whose works he holds up for contempt, Kipling is not above indulging in a little wish fulfilment in how he makes the boys behave, by giving them non-boyish characteristics.

In his study of Kipling's writing, William Dillingham recounts the anecdote of the author taking a mischievous delight in his creation by reading parts of *Stalky & Co.* during its composition to his old headmaster, Cornell Price (2005, 211). Kipling's laughter is perhaps cathartic, a humour that liberates from the stifling conventions of the Christian pedagogue. Religious masters are a constant butt in the stories. In "Slaves of the Lamp, (Part I)", published in the 1899 version, the credulous maths master, Mason, humiliates himself with the Head by believing Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle's falsely prayerful confession of stealing, which is sealed by their giving Mason a copy of Farrar's *St Winifred's* as a sign of repentance, an act of "constructive devilry" (62) in the Head's ambivalent words. "The United Idolators", added in 1929, devotes time to the humiliation of Mr. Brownell, a relief teacher picked up from the Central Anglican Scholastic Agency. From the moment he finds Head of Games, "Potiphar" Mullins, openly smoking on



the sands, Brownell is cast adrift from the bracingly masculine ideology of "The Coll" where tobacco represents a sixth-form privilege on the road to manhood, not a totem of moral decline. Brownell is convinced of the latter pathway; that smoking inevitably leads to other practices which require the Animal Boy to be expelled, and inevitably the unworldly Anglican dogmatist lasts only a term.

Farrar's two school fictions come in for explicit intertextual bombardment as a stereotype of mawkish and supposedly feminine religiosity. M'Turk insists that there will be no "beastly Erickin" - no pastoral sensitivity towards younger boys. Constrained by the recent scandal involving Oscar Wilde, Kipling seems concerned to avoid delineating any close relationship between two boys in his tales, hence the conflation of intimacy with beastliness, the transparent code for homosexuality. The result is the inseparable but emotionally disengaged triumvirate of Study Five. Although Farrar, because of his lachrymose intensity, proves an easy target, Hughes may have been within Kipling's sights even if *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was bombproof on account of its perennial popularity, vitality and proto-Imperialistic Englishness. The group of malefactors in Hughes's founding text - Brown's mortal enemies - are once referred to as Flashman & Co., so the keyword Stalky & Co. acts as a cipher for the implied reader to decode Kipling's opposition to the world-view of Hughes and Farrar. Certainly, Kipling's hostility to the Public School Code runs deep, for Angus Wilson notes that even while a schoolboy, Rudyard was penning burlesques of the *Boy's Own Paper* (1977, 70). Dillingham suggests that the tale "An Unsavoury Interlude" in which the trio, incensed at being accused by another House of not washing, shoot a cat and place its torso in their rafters provides a central clue to the *Stalky* philosophy. The tale furnishes a "rich and expansive metaphor" (2005, 207): public school morality stinks.

Kipling invests such imaginative energy in taking all the inherited conventions of the school tale - the attitudes towards breaking bounds, smoking, drinking, a love of one's House, commitment to competitive games, fagging and

the prefect system - and overturning them, that one must ask why he was motivated to deal so powerfully with what might be regarded as a marginal subgenre of adventure fiction. Perhaps the answer lies in the dead subaltern, posited in his verse, dropped by an Afghan sniper. When death occurs in *Stalky & Co.*, it does not provide a pious lesson, or an idyll, as when at Rugby "[o]n the Saturday Thompson died, in the bright afternoon, while the cricket-match was going on as usual on the big-side ground" (Hughes, 1989, 305). In "A Little Prep." the death of an Old Boy, Fat-Sow Duncan, shot on service with his regiment in India, becomes a topic of conversation at "The Coll." when an obituary in the form newspaper cutting is put up on a notice-board. Stalky wonders how it feels to be shot. This is the reality that many of the boys at the school will face when they leave for imperial service in the army. The best possibility of survival lies in the preternatural wariness displayed by Stalky when Prout's tracks are discovered. This is the world as it really is, Kipling seems to be saying, not as a religious or other idealist might wish it to be.

The most devastating strategy that Kipling applies in opposing religious idealism finds expression in the treatment of the headmaster, Bates. As much as Dr. Arnold, Bates receives hero-worship from both his current pupils and the alumni of the Alma Mater, but here the similarity ends. The depiction is based upon Cornell Price, the actual headmaster during Kipling's school-days, a complex figure, who far from being the martinet that might be expected at a cramming school for the forces, had been an associate of the pre-Raphaelites. We learn that Bates is not in Holy Orders, an unusual state of affairs in nineteenth-century pedagogy. The college has a chaplain, Gillett, but he too takes a role in the workings of school life that diverges from the conventional. Described as Jesuitical - back-handed approval, it would seem, of his sophistication in the matter of human politics - Gillett acts as the linchpin of Bates's informal but powerful system of intelligence. Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle become junior informants, feeding back the moral temperature of the school. The

most sympathetic adult in the tales, Gillett diplomatically influences the masters against antagonising the Study Five trio, and always respects the private space and adolescent feelings of Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle, to whose door he alone of the school staff is a frequent and welcome caller. The extent of his worldly pragmatism can be gleaned by the practice of purchasing books of sermons in town for use in the college chapel, another of Kipling's literary jokes that places reading in a subordinated relationship to action, so distinguishing *Stalky & Co.* from the godliness and good learning of *Tom Brown* and *Eric*. Gillett's real religious inclinations, if they exist at all, are never exposed.

Kipling complements his thorough remodelling of the matrix of school morality with a uniquely compelling development in the speech acts of his boy heroes. The formal 'Arthur Lionel Corkran' becomes the slangy 'Stalky'; the boy literally defines himself by reference to a private language spoken and endorsed by fellow pupils: he is wary of masters whenever their actions impinge upon his much-prized autonomy; that is, stalky when being stalked (as the boys have visibly been by Prout). Slang therefore takes on the mode of resistance to pedagogic authority. It supplements the guerrilla war we see played out in the chapters of *Stalky*, where huddles and knots of boys and masters, on landings, under windows, in hidden eyries and in the bunkers of study and staffroom, pry and protest, then plot and play out their stratagems. Through his realisation that the war of influence raging between pedagogues and pupils happens principally in the mind, Kipling establishes in *Stalky* an antidote to pious discourse. This is displayed on almost every page through the incessant linguistic inventiveness that Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle share both as a marker of shared intimacy (a coded form of legitimised love) and a form of white noise that drowns out the public school pieties of their arch-enemy, Mr. King. It is a trend evident in school fiction that the development of adventure at the expense of moralising sees a parallel burgeoning of slang; in Kipling's word-play that trend reaches its highpoint.

“*Je cat, tu cat, il cat. Nous cattons!*” M’Turk conjugates the intimate persons of modern French when the trio throw up together as a result of riotous behaviour, *cat* being the contemporary slang for vomiting. The rebellious experience of boys - necessary rebellion Kipling implies - represents itself in the privatising of language away from pedagogic influence, challenging the patriarchy of Latin with bastardised French. Unlike Brown, Arthur and East, Stalky, M’Turk and Beetle clearly would never converge on Latin and the abandonment of crib-books as the defining (godly) crux of manliness. This is not to say that the Study Five trio are cultural philistines. So many of the references that enliven their speech derive from literary sources - from W.S. Gilbert, Fenimore Cooper, Marryat, Chandler Harris, Surtees, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and Dickens. What separates *Stalky & Co.* from other school fiction is this hyper-textual bravado, the vividness of the slang-punctuated and quote-peppered dialogue, a sound-world which draws the reader into the compellingly imagined universe of three schoolboys at a very unconventional establishment.

Admittedly, the verve of the stories is also necessitated by the technical challenge faced by any professional writer when producing stand-alone narratives for monthly illustrated magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. Hughes was a lawyer, Farrar a divine and Reed a printer; Kipling, on the other hand, represented a new class of writer who earned his livelihood from the pen. Fellow contributors to the American magazine, *McClure’s*, were Stevenson, Doyle, Twain, London and Cather, and to the British, *The Windsor Magazine*, Bennett, Nesbit, Jerome and Haggard – an imposing group in which to compete for attention. To hold interest, a short story writer for adults, like Kipling, has to pace narrative in a different way from the novelist for children; he cannot rely overly on the formulaic, indulge the *longueurs* of sporting commentary or expect exciting plot to compensate for sketchiness in characterization. However, one indulgence is permissible, and a fascinating one for the literary critic to observe: the possibility of returning later to the same *locus* with the intention of writing about it anew

(and probably from a more mature perspective). The nine originally-collected *Stalky* stories were those of a man in his early thirties, and they are still coloured a little by the blasé tone of the Indian tales that brought him fame in his twenties. By 1929 Kipling was able to add five chapters to the *Complete Stalky & Co.* In 1917, he published "Regulus" in *A Diversity of Creatures*, producing a "Coll" tale now darkened by the war and the death of his own son, John, which deals seriously with the Latin-based pedagogy of the public school and offers a valedictory celebration of the Imperial code of honour.

I shall examine "Regulus" in detail in a later chapter of *Ripping Yarns* and argue that it represents a development in Kipling's art, because he is able to confront more fully the psychological impact of physical suffering on a schoolboy, Winton. At this point in my argument it is helpful to state that Kipling is already motivated by what I have termed the predicament of the child, on the point of adolescence; however, the depiction of that predicament in the 1890s skates over hidden depths of feeling. When musing over Duncan's death, *Stalky* quietly asks the school sergeant about the state of the body: "They cut 'em up sometimes, don't they, Foxy?" (182). This horror, far worse than any cruel act that could be perpetrated by a youthful Flashman, feeds the profoundly pessimistic notion that no pedagogic lecturing is of any use to young men who must get into the Army. For sheltered schoolmasters to lecture boys who must come to terms with this possible future ordeal is from an imperial perspective almost sacrilegious, a form of moral trespass. "In Ambush" ambushes pettifogging school protocols, pronouncing them inadmissibly out-of-bounds in terms of the values ordained by the fathers of the boys; men who would willingly die for their country. Humorously, but also in the guise of a parable, Kipling presents Prout and King, accompanied by an embarrassed Fox, trespassing on Colonel Dabney's land in pursuit of boys and flummoxed by the retired army man's tirade. A flustered Prout claims to act *in loco parentis*, but is routed by the furious Dabney, his Latin moralizing used against him: "Well I've not forgotten my Latin either, an' I'll say

to you '*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*' If the masters trespass, how can we blame the boys'" (1987, 45).

Dabney's devastating retort in which Latin is used as a weapon against its teachers subverts the talking down by age and rank that is part-and-parcel of school life, undercutting pedagogic authority two ways through the triumvirate's rebellious collusion with the Colonel, an older man and landowner now talking down to schoolteachers. As well as being classically Stalkyesque, this prank also brings to bear a complex of associations on the role of schoolmaster. The Latin tag, drawn from the same Juvenal Satires as the *B.O.P.* motto, may be translated "Who will watch the watchmen?" Again the primary context is to do with ensuring sexual fidelity in an immoral society, and specifically controlling the behaviour of women, possibly a slur against the masculinity of domestic schoolmasters. The guardians of the moral guardians, Kipling implies, are soldiers, the schoolboys' fathers, who in the imperial context bring into competition with Latin a multiplicity of other languages, as will be explored in the colonial encounter. In the school canon, *Stalky* is possibly the only book to relativize Classics in relation to Oriental languages (remembering the Hindustani etymology of pug), a portent, fulfilled in T.E. Lawrence, that Arabic tongues will assume a greater glamour<sup>8</sup>.

### **Hamilton and *Greyfriars*: The Public School Syndicated**

Eric Blair, writing under his pseudonym, George Orwell, believed falsely that the chief populariser of the public school tale for a Board school audience, Charles Hamilton, stole his slang from Kipling. A fuller examination of the 1940 exchange between Orwell and Hamilton that took place in the pages of Cyril Connolly's journal, *Horizon*, must wait until Chapter Seven of the thesis. It is instructive, nevertheless, to observe an Old Etonian intellectual discoursing knowledgeably on story-papers for the working class in a formative essay in the development of cultural materialism, and getting his facts wrong. Although, to the consternation of his teachers, Eric Blair did not proceed to university, he

exhibits the bias towards intellectual display that upper-class pedagogy prepared him for. Hamilton, although middle class, displays by contrast a characteristic of the labouring class, pouring out under a range of pseudonyms, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest, Ralph Redway, Winston Cardew, Hilda Richards and, most famously, Frank Richards, one-and-a-half million words a year (Turner, 217-8) for a new brand of story paper. The Greyfriars tales are significant in the development of the school story because they are principally read by working-class boys who are far more ignorant of the public school than Orwell was of boys' weeklies.

A figure like Hamilton (who almost single-handedly emulated the industriousness of the syndicates that had produced the penny dreadful) could only have emerged as a result of marked changes in the literary field. In Kelly Boyd's words, "[t]he publication of boys' story papers mirrored [...] trends in the magazine industry as it shifted from individual entrepreneurs in the Victorian period to highly capitalized proprietorship within the context of the limited company in the twentieth century" (2003, 25). The major figure in the reconfiguration was Alfred Harmsworth, later Baron Northcliffe, the founder of the *Daily Mail*. Having learned the journalistic trade on the staff of the popular news digest, *Titbits*, under George Newnes, Harmsworth established a London publishing house at 26 Paternoster Square and, in the 1890s with his brother, entered the popular market for story papers with *Boys' Home Journal*, *Boys' Friend*, and most significantly, *Marvel*, which cut the sale price to a halfpenny and marketed itself explicitly as a healthy contrast to the penny dreadful. The family publishing venture developed into *The Amalgamated Press* and in the new century nurtured the prolific talent of Hamilton in the *Gem* from 1907 and *Magnet* from 1908. Effective marketing of these populist story-papers ended any pretensions of *B.O.P.* being a periodical for mass weekly readership, causing its retreat into monthly publication in 1913.

The Harmsworth brothers made money by anticipating the sort of reading material craved by the newly literate market assisted by the Board Schools of the 1870 Education Act, and developing a network of distribution that delivered it almost to the doorstep. Hamilton was like the Kipling of India in this one respect: that his career as a writer was assisted by an industrial technology, the railway system. A beneficiary of industrial modernity, Frank Richards nevertheless reveals himself in the riposte to George Orwell in *Horizon* to be a political conservative. The development of Greyfriars and other public schools that he delineated for a mass readership reveals an intriguing phenomenon: the replacement of the fantasy violence of the penny dreadful with a personal code of honour derived from an elite education system that the typical reader of the *Gem* and *Magnet* would have had no connection with at all.

Like Reed, Hamilton effectuates the full endorsement of the public school system only possible to one who did not have the "privilege" of experiencing it first-hand. Yet whereas Reed made some attempt to base his work on the recollections of friends about one specific school, Hamilton generalises to the point where his schools are fantasy-representations utterly unlike the real thing. Verisimilitude is irrelevant to Hamilton because he is writing for a core audience with no knowledge to bring to their reading. Greyfriars, St. Jim's and other mythical institutions retained their imaginative hold by encouraging readers to place themselves within the elitist school as a form of satisfying day-dream. As Turner and Orwell note, Hamilton carefully grades boy-characters so there is at least one that the reader can identify with, which was the trick that Jeffrey Richards also attributed to Reed (1988, 106).

As a successor to Reed, Hamilton's work provides a curious paradox. Allegiance to Greyfriars might be seen as a triumph of the *B.O.P.* ethos since working-class boys were brought within the elevating ethos of the public school. However it represents only a Pyrrhic victory since the mass-produced *Gem* and *Magnet* severely curtailed the direct influence of *B.O.P.* and the tales of Greyfriars



and St. Jim's promulgated no Christian agenda. From a literary perspective too, Hamilton simplifies the world of St. Dominic's. Although one memorable character survives in the person of Billy Bunter, a strangely likeable amalgam of avarice, gluttony, pride and sloth, the language in which school is established for the reader has metamorphosed into a strange, almost automated script that facilitates Hamilton's extraordinary verbosity.

So on one level, Greyfriars caters for literary limitations that Board school attendees were expected to evince, a subject explored in Susan McPherson's "Reading Class, Examining Men: Anthologies, Education and Literary Cultures" (2011) about the texts utilised in educational primers in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. McPherson provides convincing evidence from textbooks and exam scripts that candidates for higher entry into the civil service were expected to display the ability to convert classics of English poetry into prose and summarise the meaning, while entrants to menial grades were only expected to provide plot summaries of well-known tales. Yet on another level, the working-class habitués of Greyfriars were conducting another, more sophisticated if unorthodox exercise, by taking relatively unsophisticated material, internalizing its values and applying them to a totally different world. The cultural historian, Jonathan Rose, in "Greyfriars Children" (*The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class*, 2001, 322-330) provides several examples of how, in the words of Robert Roberts, "Greyfriars became for some of us our true Alma Mater, to whom we felt bound by a dreamlike loyalty" (324). Rose demonstrates that sympathy with the hegemonic purpose of *B.O.P.* could coexist with political non-conformism since avid readers sometimes became socialists. One memoirist, Paul Fletcher, goes as far as to suggest that the fantasy of Greyfriars provided a concreteness to ethics that he did not find in the Bible (323). This documentary evidence, which complicates assumptions about reading's behavioural impact, I shall return to in Chapter Seven.

### **Wodehouse and *Mike at Wrykyn*: This Sporting Life**

I have demonstrated how Kipling provided a model of resistance to the Christian moral orthodoxy within school fiction and that Hamilton's wish-fulfilment fantasy for working-class children did not imperil left-wing politics. There is yet another model or competing discourse that needs to be acknowledged, produced primarily for upper-class boys and serenely ignoring any morally improving purpose, since being "more light-hearted in its tone" than *B.O.P.* (Turner, 1975, 101). The other major writer, apart from Kipling, whose school fiction constitutes a relatively early phase in his *oeuvre* is P.G. Wodehouse. He authored several books in the genre before the First World War and the best known are those featuring the sporting prodigy Mike Jackson and his school friend Psmith. Wodehouse's tales reflect a major change at the public school in the sort of individual it feted and aimed to produce: the athletic "blood". Quigly notes that at the time Wodehouse was writing, the public school "worshipped games to a degree so remarkable that it is now hard to credit it" (50). In *Mike at Wrykyn*, first published in 1909, sport replaces religion as the major preoccupation. The young Jackson is introduced to the reader at his home before starting at Wrykyn and the characteristic highlighted is not his temperament, as it might have in stories of the 1850s, but his prowess at cricket. The Jackson men are cricket mad, as was Wodehouse. In the biographer, Robert McCrum's penetrating assessment "[s]port continued to give Wodehouse a code for the expression of real emotion" (2005, 175). That cricket is a code like the godliness and good learning of Hughes and Farrar provides a surface resemblance between the texts. And it is true that as with Tom Brown, home life provides a counterpoise to the value system of the school; and as with Eric Williams, we watch the decline of Mike, but only in the specific sphere of academic failure owing to the cricket obsession. At this point similarities to the work of Hughes and Farrar end. The moral stakes in this Edwardian tale are not what they were fifty years earlier.

As the rules of honour in the Public School Code at the time Wodehouse was writing had changed, he sets out to distinguish his story from earlier ones by a number of departures from the conventions of earlier tales. Critically, *Mike at Wrykyn* opens with a domestic scene in which the Jackson family are gathered at breakfast; the very normality of home life goes a long way to deflate the seriousness of school life. It is at this breakfast that the reader learns that Mike, after months of canvassing, will go to Wrykyn, the Alma Mater of his father and older brothers. Mike is fifteen and joining at a comparatively late age, which allows Wodehouse to avoid writing about the challenges faced by a younger boy. Mike is also going in the summer term, which allows an immediate engagement with cricket, a subject that is written about in a summery tone, allowing Wodehouse to circumvent the traumatic, first-term aspect of school life.

It is clear in the manner of his departure from previously trodden paths that Wodehouse is aware of the formulas used by well-known predecessors and is intent on deconstructing those tropes and refreshing the genre. The tone of the story is light to the extent that he knowingly and genially intercepts and recasts elements within the formula he inherits. For example, the apparatus of pious adult concern for the moral welfare of youth is delegated at Wrykyn to Mike's older brother, Bob, who feels obliged to take the new boy aside and lecture him about good behaviour. In the home episode Bob has been firmly put in his place as the least talented cricketer of the four Jackson sons, graded not according to scholastic ability or personal piety but by aptitude at sport. The lack of tact with which Bob goes about his brotherly duty mirrors his middling cricketing ability; Mike is appalled by this condescension. Wodehouse describes how his brother's intervention has the reverse effect on Mike: "[i]n the dormitory that night the feeling of revolt, of wanting to do something actively illegal, increased. Like 'Eric', he burned, not with shame and remorse, but with rage and all that sort of thing" (1990, 35). Farrar's novel is cited to reinforce two departures from that morally intense pedagogic exemplar. First, Wodehouse presents sibling rivalry as a

perfectly normal adolescent reaction. Mike then comes across as a perfectly average adolescent who experiences emotions that the implied reader might be expected to identify with, and so creating an imaginative identification with the protagonist of which Farrar is incapable. Second, the narrative voice distances itself from the emotions depicted; where the narrative voice in *Eric* often accelerates into a moral panic, the commentary here idles in neutral. The juxtaposition, like Kipling's, assumes knowledge of Farrar's work, and in Wodehouse the effect is sly and comic.

Even though cricket has replaced religion as a touchstone of conduct, zeal in cricket, unlike evangelical zeal, is represented as potentially unbalancing a schoolboy. The limited come-uppance that Mike is forced to endure arises from the realisation at home that precocious selection for the first eleven has deflected Mike from his studies. His father's solution is to transfer him suddenly to Sedbergh, a school with no sporting tradition. When serialised in 1907-8 in the *Captain*, the switch to the new school simply continued in a further chapter. But since reissue in 1953, life at Sedbergh has appeared in a separate book, *Mike and Psmith*, perhaps in honour of Wodehouse's first imposing comic creation, a worthy forerunner of Bertie Wooster. It is an honourable tradition of the school tale that a boy whom a newcomer meets on arriving on his first day has a major influence. Mike meets Wyatt when arriving at Wrykyn and the more experienced youth arranges for him to have a net in front of the cricket captain soon after – for nets in the cricketing tale have the same relation to a match as Latin prep has to the Classics examination. At Sedbergh Mike encounters Psmith, who has decided as an affectation to add a silent P to his humdrum surname (following the examples of ptarmigan, psalm and phthisis), in the attempt to establish a new dynasty of Psmiths.

In his indolent grace, Psmith provides the opportunity for comedy that is founded like his name on linguistic display. He resembles Stalky in being more a grown-up than a boy in outlook, an embryonic man-about-town. The affectations

of language and dress place Psmith as a fop or dandy in a lineage traceable to Restoration comedy, pre-dating Victorian moral earnestness. More specifically, in the pantheon of comic stereotypes enumerated by the biographer, Robert McCrum (citing Wodehouse's authority), he is the Knut descended from "the Beau, the Buck, the Macaroni, the Johnnie, the Swell and the Dude" (McCrum, 2005, 84). Psmith is never at a loss for words, making repeated allusions to the sort of poetry popular at public school or to the Classics.

As well as being humorous, the linguistic proficiency that is the hierarchical marker of the public school is used by Wodehouse precisely to neutralize the religious and even literary seriousness of Victorian school fiction. Peter Parker, when arguing for the hegemonic intensity of school fiction up until the First World War, fails to make the necessary connection between the fragmentation of the story paper market and the sophisticated linguistic play possible in *The Captain* (read by public schoolboys), but not *The Gem* (read by board schoolboys). Parker alludes to Psmith's question, on meeting Mike: "Are you the Bully, the Pride of the School, or the Boy who is led astray and takes to Drink in Chapter Sixteen?" Parker sees this as simply confirming that "Hughes set the pattern for novels about public schools" (119), without acknowledging that Wodehouse's intertextual joke acts as a cipher to that mid-nineteenth-century code of godliness and good learning and renders it redundant to *The Captain's* readers. Psmith's allusion is, in fact, an ironical antidote to the *Tom Brown* tradition. It provokes the thought that some Edwardian schoolboys were quite capable of debunking the *Dulce et Decorum* school of patriotism too, and not merely passive recipients *en masse* of schoolmasterly pieties. It also reinforces Sue Walsh's point about the danger of assuming that the child has a different, simplistic relationship to language from the ideologically-aware critic.

### ***The Shaping of Jephson's: The Public School Code in Wartime***

To round off a sequence of tales spanning sixty years of the school story, I want to briefly examine a serialisation within the *B.O.P.* 1916-17, "The Shaping of Jephson's". Significant enough to merit its cover page featuring in the *Real Ripping Yarns* television documentary (Armstrong, 2014), the tale is also workmanlike enough to serve as an exemplar of how the treatment of authority, language, morality, sport, the school environs, social class and time are changing in wartime. Its author, Kent Carr, is referenced in the 1916-17 Annual as having written other stories for *B.O.P.*, so was an established contributor but has faded from view. "The Shaping of Jephson's" may itself represent a further development in the deliberate recoding of the school story, since it was written as conscription changed the composition of Britain's army, and the hero, Mike James, is a board-school boy relocated from his working-class origins into a fictional public school, St. Cyre's. Michael Paris notes that in juvenile war fiction from the Battle of the Somme onwards, the leadership qualities of the officer hero are at last counterbalanced by stories that acknowledge that fighting ability and heroism do not totally depend on social class (2004, 48). Tellingly, James is described as a soldier by his headmaster, Doctor Carmichael, but the war that the boy fights is on home turf in school against class hostility.

James has arrived at St Cyre's on the whim of a society lady who has bequeathed a public school education to him under the guardianship of her nephew, General Sir Hilary Ffowkes, an Old Boy, administered through the agency of a prim, snobbish and parsimonious agent, Mr. Jackson. Unlike *Tom Brown*, only a chapter is needed to place Mike at St. Cyre's, by which time enough home context has been given to establish that the big fight that James will face is not just social acceptance, but (as he is clearly a pugnacious hero), the mastering of the codes of the public school as officer material in the mould of his guardian. A passing reference to the war raging in Flanders notes that St Cyre's is still producing "the breed which is helping England win the present War" (291). Such

points are not laboured and, after almost sixty years of Tom Browns, no longer need to be. Indeed, one could liken the ease with which scene-setting is now managed in the school story to a set of cribs from a decrypted codebook allowing writer and implied reader to fill in details as to background, breeding, character, allies and villains to speed up the narrative.

“The Shaping of Jephson’s” can be shown to draw upon patterns or motifs from other stories I have examined, and in one or two cases to have intercepted and reconfigured earlier coding. The background of General Sir Hilary Ffowkes, a subaltern V.C. winner on the frontiers of India, gestures towards Imperial Kipling; Mike (like Kimball O’Hara, an orphan transplanted somewhat unwillingly into a boarding school) is given a facility for mathematics (like Kim again) as a marker that he is made of the right stuff, even if no classicist. Any residual doubt over whether the working-class boy should even be at St. Cyre’s is squashed by the viewpoint of the “universally loved and respected” (284) Doctor Carmichael, whose place at the top of the school matrix of authority is valorised by a very non-Arnoldian Oxford Blue to appease the Edwardian love of sport. Furthermore, Carr does not duck the truth outlined in Colin Shobree’s *Public Schools and Private Education* (1988) that the Victorians conducted a raid by statute on the original purpose of the public schools as educational foundations for the poor. Severe but just, the Head’s eminent good sense is shown by a strong prefect system; one such sixth-former sleeps in each dormitory to prevent “any heckling of a more serious kind at night” (288), thereby saving boys and readers from the unwelcome ministrations of a Farrar-style commentary. Indeed, Carr has learnt from Reed that the best way to inject pace and characterisation into a narrative is through nuanced dialogue across a range of school-types (and therefore subject positions). Nor is religion totally excluded from Mike’s make-up but, as with Reed, carefully positioned early on: “[b]y his deeds and not his words the world would know his faith” (290). The shadow of loneliness cast by his class-difference is dealt with by drawing strength, in perhaps the oldest of school

tropes, from the Sunday sermons of Doctor Carmichael "about the One who would not fail or forsake even the youngest and loneliest of little school-boys" (290).

However well-disposed most of the boys are towards James (despite acknowledging his lowly background), the former board-school pupil has become isolated because he cannot reciprocate schoolboy tuck because of the mean-spiritedness of Mr. Jackson, who limits his allowance. This is a throwback to what Turner notes as the one basic plot running through the Gothic thrillers: "that of the young and rightful heir deprived of his birthright by evil-scheming relatives or guardians" (1975, 19). "The Shaping of Jephson's" is, of course, able to better the penny dreadful or Greyfriars daydream of a poor boy making good by enacting Mike's successful passage through St. Cyre's - a fully-realised school very much in the Reed model. Indeed James faces a similarly protracted moral examination to Oliver Greenfield, accentuated by his social isolation, passing from accusation over an act he did not commit to vindication. On the way, he has to counteract and win over two upper-class boys, Cusack and Tuke-Pennington, whose animus is fuelled by class hostility. The resolution of differences (underscored by James's unexpressed but palpable Christian belief in the power of reconciliation) takes place in the last chapter on the cricket-field where Cusack and James, restored to the First Eleven, combine with the captain, Tuke-Pennington, in an epoch-making victory, as "the hand of the pavilion clock threw a shadow over the figure VII" (639). The narrative appears to take, appropriately for a wartime story, a democratic approach to the schoolboy, with sport acting perhaps as a proxy for war and its requisite, shared effort.

Inevitably, the exigencies of war require yet another recodification of the relationship between languages in the school story. In his preparation for the school, James has been tutored in "Latin and Greek and an English which, though differing from Cockney is quite as easily acquired provided one is given the chance of hearing it spoken" (285). Carr suggests that beneath the skin all boys are similar in disposition only for that commonality to be blurred by the cultural



imposition of class norms reflected hierarchically across languages. Yet on the relation of Greek to English and of sport to intellectualism, the tale still exhibits ambivalence. Jephson, the master of an unruly House, which James steps into as prefect to put in good order, possesses an Oxford Double First in Classics and has "translated Euripides into very perfect English" (362). But he is not respected because he is no good at games. Godliness and good learning is no longer a sufficient template for masculinity. Although Mike's practical godliness still aligns him with Tom Brown, considerable change has taken place in the school story over the relationship of good learning to sport, and in the treatment of class. Heroism, the central quality of the protagonist in school fiction, which distinguishes the honourable from the dishonourable schoolboy, has been obliged to mutate by social changes affecting the cultural field of production.

## **Conclusion**

To summarise the argument in this chapter, I have sought to locate the intensely textual preoccupation of the nineteenth-century adventure story in its renaissance at an all-male establishment, the public school. Isolated from home comforts, disoriented and uncertain, Stephen Greenfield has been presented as anticipating the position of many adult adventurers whose lives are turned upside down when a piece of paper - a code-book, a treasure chart, an ancient parchment or even an innocuous telegram proposing duck-shooting in the Baltic - comes into their hands. That piece of paper will incite a formative adventure, both a quest and an inner journey to self-knowledge at the end of which the protagonist is not quite the same man. In ensuing chapters I shall explore the introspective intensity of British adventure fiction that is bound up firstly with the sense of destiny that the public school inculcated in its products and secondly by their being subject to repeated grading by assessment.

The chapter has also presented the relentless expansion of examinations across the classes. In a deferential society, the snob value of a liberal education

with its hierarchy of languages, Greek, Latin and English caught the imagination of all readers. The *Boy's Own Paper* was able to leverage this interest in its mission to raise some readers from the penny dreadful. With the coming of cheap popular newsprint, the *Gem* and *Magnet* reframed and simplified the school story a generation later for a mass audience. The level of reading competence required for each version of the genre mirrored the stratified nature of the education system.

I have also suggested that underneath its naturalistic surface, the school story's plot conventions operate as formulas that can be reconfigured to support a Christian, imperialist or sporting paradigm. As there is something essentially discursive about the school story, since its purpose is sometimes as much to influence adult opinion in support of a particular mode of education as to entertain boys, I have demonstrated that major texts in its evolution, such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *Eric* and *Stalky & Co.*, can be seen as playing off each other intertextually, as if in the continuing development of metamorphic code. The following chapters will reveal how the tropes of the adventure romance mutate in new settings, and how, even though too old for the classroom, its protagonists still act as if driven by (code of) conduct anxiety, by submitting themselves to moral self-examination.

## Chapter 2: Education Isn't Begun Yet – The Maritime Adventure

"They've dragged him around from hotel to hotel ever since he was a kid. I was talking to his mother this morning. She's a lovely lady, but she don't pretend to manage him. He's going to Europe to finish his education."  
"Education isn't begun yet."

Rudyard Kipling, *Captains Courageous* (1897)

### Introduction

In writing about the inter-textual play of school fiction, I posited different codes of manhood, derived from the spectrum of Christian practice, imperialism or sport, competing for survival in the Darwinian jungle of Victorian publishing available to text-hungry generations of boys. The school was not the only or indeed the most dramatic setting for the testing of masculinity. Ever since the 1870s when Jack Harkaway, boy hero of Edwin Brett's *Boys of England*, exhausted avenues of mischief at his boarding school by setting fire to it, juvenile readers of story papers had been introduced to life at sea as the next site of tearaway adventure, where pirates and shipwreck would be encountered as a matter of course. The adolescent need for such escapist literature is probably perennial. Francis Spufford argues that "wild and tacky" stories that dispense with rigour and proportion are valuable to the fourteen-year-old as they provide "time, space, empire, power; an existence answerable to your wishes as your own really is not" (178). Like Chesterton, he sees (penny) dreadfulness or tackiness as a channel for escapism. For Spufford, as for other modern adolescents, science fiction supplied this need. In the nineteenth century, the ocean was the antithesis of school and its restrictions, the scenario for exploitation by hack writers and their more illustrious colleagues, building on a tradition of storytelling dating back to *Robinson Crusoe*. Turner notes the strong stomach needed by Jack Harkaway whose life after school "was one of voyage, shipwreck and travel in strange lands" (88). Jack's associates are bastinadoed, knifed, given a plurality of wives, eaten alive; and a native girl is even tortured to reveal his whereabouts without him

being overly concerned. Turner sardonically notes how differently the heroes of the *Boy's Own Paper* would have reacted in these circumstances (89).

At school, as P.G. Wodehouse wryly observed (Quigly, 69), very little happens. Part of the problem with the predictability of Victorian school fiction was that, standing at the apex of an unchallenged matrix of authority, headmasters appeared morally obliged to assure the wellbeing of their charges. This entailed controlling and organising their universe. Conversely, there was no reason to expect a schoolboy to doubt the good intentions of his teachers, however ill-disposed their discipline might appear to make them. At school, it does not form part of the curriculum for a boy to learn to decipher the hidden motives of his masters, whose relations to him are essentially ritualized around the preparation for examinations. At sea, life is more precarious. As Jim Hawkins learns in his encounter with Israel Hands aboard the *Hispaniola*, a hair-trigger responsiveness to the intentions of a pirate is necessary to forestall a boy coming within a millimetre of death. For both writer and reader, the drama made possible by the potential mortal violence between man and boy created a more interesting theatre for fictional experimentation than the classroom. Indeed, because of its wider permutations, its deeper perils and its profounder psychological explorations, the sea yarn intensifies discourse about ideal masculinity.

In this chapter I shall explore the variant forms which that education-in-life takes for boy protagonists beyond the school gates. The illustrative excerpt in this chapter from *Captains Courageous* (1897) sees the trope of smoking used again by Kipling, but in a different manner from *Stalky*: to portray the gap between man and boy in guile and worldliness. After some preparatory remarks about the sea in literature, the discussion will turn to a close reading of three primary texts: Robert Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881), then *Captains Courageous* again. My focus will be on the vulnerability of the boy in the face of the complex of behaviours (charm, worldly-wisdom, yarn-spinning and mortal violence) encountered in the

man. I shall comment upon the interpretative shocks within the text that move a child from innocence to experience as knowledge of manly duplicity grows. I shall even posit that the clues given *within* the texts to the boy-protagonist as to how he might best respond in constructing a workable code of masculinity constitute a crib to the implied reader *outside* the texts too.

Crib has a specialised meaning in crypto-analysis that is more than a surreptitious translation. It is defined in *Codebreakers* as “textual or other evidence which, by suggesting parallels of order, subject-matter, or expression, provides clues for breaking a code or cipher signal” (1993, xv). I shall explore smoking as a crib, suggesting these parallels of order or dialogic clues across texts, because smoking is traceable back to *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* as a symbol of achieved masculinity. Hughes references a cigar at the defining moment when what a man knows is shown to be different from what a boy knows. As Squire Brown ponders what to tell Tom about life at a public school (choosing in the end to say little), he puffs away at a Trichinopoli cheroot (1989, 73). The sea-story provides probably the best theatre for showing how smoking is variously contextualised as a clue to how implied boy readers might break codes of masculinity as they develop into men. During this process of maturation, the fictional adolescent, turning partly from books, learns to read the practices of men. Yet turning from books and turning back to them are symmetrical actions in boy’s own adventure, because, as I shall demonstrate, the full rite of passage to manhood necessitates a rapprochement with pedagogy. After coming to terms with, and maturing into, the constitution of post-pubescent manhood, the young protagonists of the sea-story must place book-learning within a wider, extra-literary range of experience.

### **A man, a boy and a cigar: an education at sea**

At the opening of Kipling’s *Captains Courageous* a group of men bewail the failings of Harvey Cheyne, the neglected son of a self-made American millionaire.

Spoilt, loquacious and underemployed, the boy hangs around them, eager for masculine approbation, clad in the still-infantilizing dress of cherry blazer, knickerbockers and stockings. Their grousing has no professional edge, as the men are not placed *in loco parentis*, unlike the harassed schoolmasters who lambast Stalky and his disreputable accomplices in the common room of the United Services College. Whereas Stalky is, in that later book's parlance, too "stalky" for the masters, Cheyne is conversely too "fresh", lacking the English boy's wiliness, or maturity. As perhaps implied by his surname, Harvey's predicament is being chained to his mother, who, the men acknowledge, does not pretend to manage him. The conversation takes place in the smoking-room of a transatlantic liner, and its participants are practical men-of-the-world rather than teachers. The boy is outward bound to Europe to finish his education, but the men affirm that by their standards his education has not begun yet; their conduct anxiety is directed to what he will amount to after leaving school. Harvey breaks in upon their musings, his unwelcome habit. When asked to go away the boy refuses, asking the men if they paid for his passage. The unwelcome truth is that nobody can push the boy around because he is the son of a self-made millionaire, too busy in "piling up the rocks" (1995, 3) to parent his son. Pulling out a wad of his father's money, the boy demands a game of poker. Ridding themselves of Harvey will require wiliness, achieved through the proffered gift from a cynical German that confirms the boy's innocent, pubescent state.

The gift is an overpowering West Virginian cigar. It takes the place of Harvey's half-smoked cigarette (a failed gesture towards masculine insouciance). The men know that he will not be staying long to ingest it. Vividly, Kipling contrasts callow youth with worldly guile. The boy-passenger holds forth. He insensitively wishes that the liner runs down a schooner from the small fishing fleet that it is passing through, blissfully unaware of the duty code that binds the crewmen invisibly to all fellow seafarers. The men - outwardly polite but inwardly watching their quarry - await the moment when queasy pride will rush him out on

deck to "sieve out his soul" (6). In so doing Harvey will fall from the liner to be rescued by one such fishing schooner, and this will be the saving of him. Ironically, in the simple act of removing an unwelcome boy from their company, the crew inadvertently are the agents of his transformation. Upon the decks of the *We're Here* (a name that symbolically enacts the urgency of Cheyne's need for taking in hand) he will work his passage and effect his regeneration.

Smoking is the inciting incident of *Captains Courageous*, which Kipling places in a Godless parable about the perceptual gap between man and boy that is nevertheless replete with Biblical associations of sanctification through water and the moral redemption of a sour, Jonah-like boy. To smoke or not to smoke is not a shibboleth in Kipling's masculine code, so the washing aboard of Cheyne is in no sense retributive. And even for the *B.O.P.* faithful, smoking was a divisive issue: Cox notes that in 1904, its editor Hutchinson had to quietly abandon a campaign against smoking so as not to alienate the fathers of readers (60). Cheyne is simply rising to a manly challenge (like Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk whose synchronised vomiting in "A Little Prep" has already been observed), which he cannot fulfil. Given Kipling's subversive attitude to Evangelicalism, it is not surprising to observe a schoolboy sin, smoking, converted into the *felix culpa* that sees a callow cruise-passenger happily fall to the decks of a fishing schooner and convert into a willing crew-member. When a "low, grey mother-wave" (6) sees Harvey swept overboard into the capable paternal hands of Disko Troop, captain of the *We're Here*, the narrative voice presents nature stepping in where maternal nurture has failed.

Yet for Kipling the topos of smoking goes beyond being simply a jibe against orthodox religion; it points to the underlying symbolic organisation of Kipling's novella and how he has chosen to position the work in relation to the Christian maritime novels of Marryat and Ballantyne. Leonee Ormond records Kipling's disappointment during the poor critical reception of *Captains Courageous*, that no-one noticed the stylistic transformations he had made: "For

this [...] did I change my style; and allegorize and parable and metaphor" (1996, xiii). Temptation, the fall and redemption are secularized in the novel. And as the temptation of Eve is the foundational text in Western literature for Satanic temptation, it may be no surprise - given Kipling's geo-political anxieties - to see that it is a wily German who offers the boy temporal contentment ("You will dry it? Yes? Den you vill be efer so happy", 5). A Virginian cigar, then, allegorically replaces the apple as the object of temptation. But for Harvey, unlike Eve, yielding to temptation does end happily; the cigar becomes for Harvey a masculine symbol that (however bitter its initial taste) transfers him from passenger to active voyager on the journey to achieved masculinity.

Not all writers could countenance the unholy trinity of salt, tar and nicotine. When Andrew Lang jestingly recalled the horrors of Greek at school making him want to run away to sea (1912, 82), his hyperbole ignored the practical problems of acculturation that might arise there for the truanting classical scholar. Unsurprisingly in *Eric*, for Farrar's overwrought imagination, life below deck proves to be a place of unconscionable evil for a refined public-school boy. When Eric Williams runs away from Roslyn, he takes refuge on the schooner "The Stormy Petrel", where he is subjected to many indignities, described with a sadistic relish, culminating in a rope-thrashing from the skipper. The description is unusually vivid, extending well beyond the punishments administered formulaically in school fiction.

Again the rope whistled in the air, again it glided across the boy's naked back, and once more the crimson furrow bore witness to the violent laceration. A sharp shock of inexpressible agony rang from his lips, so shrill, so heart-rending that it sounded long in the memory of all who heard it. But the brute who administered the torture was untouched. Once more, and again, the rope rose and fell, and under its marks the blood first dribbled, and then streamed from the white and tender skin (*Eric*, Chapter XII)



Only the intervention of a crew-member, "Softy" Bob, saves Eric, who flees (having been brought back to his Christian faith by his brutalisation) to his aunt's country estate where he dies a lingeringly maudlin but textbook, schoolboy death.

Farrar here incorporates one time-honoured denouement of the sea tale into his school story, the Biblical trope of the prodigal son (brought to repentance by harsh living), which can be traced back to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In this trope the vicissitudes faced by the mariner are the events used providentially by God for spiritual reconciliation. In *Eric*, Williams's scourging - shadowing perhaps the scourging of Christ - directs the novel to a rapprochement with the Christian motif of redemption. Eric's sea experience provides a mortal recoil from worldly brutality. In *Captains Courageous*, by contrast, Harvey's physical recoil from nicotine induces a secular redemption that is also a voyaging out into adventure, rather than the return to a safe, spiritual harbour. Smoking and voyaging out into adulthood become, in Kipling's maritime novel, mutually constitutive.

The situation is different in Kipling's school stories. The conventions of pedagogic discourse prevent smoking being more than a signifier of the adolescent need for wild and tacky experience. Whatever his private attitudes to smoking might be, the Head of *Stalky & Co.* is obliged to flog the trio when they are found breaking bounds to smoke. In the school story, the threat to the boy-body through flogging is ritualized around the breaking of rules, and limited to six of the best. Yet in the sea yarn a man may deviously offer a boy the cigar that will do him no good. He may also flog him within an inch of his life. The boundaries to legitimized punishment *in loco parentis* fall away and are replaced by the anarchic menace of what a man might choose to do to a boy. The sea itself comes to stand for wildness and mortal danger. The avoidance of any unbounded threats coming his way becomes the test of vigilance that the boy-hero must negotiate if he is to survive unscathed. Overpowered by tobacco fumes or other

stratagems of unreliable males, he must vertiginously swoon his way, as it were, towards manhood.

### **Interpreting the Robinsonade**

Later sea yarns have a similar metafictional relationship to Defoe's pioneering fiction as subsequent school tales have to *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. The Robinsonade, the sub-genre that Defoe's work inspired, epitomised the instructional tone of children's literature. Like Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *Robinson Crusoe* moved from being regarded as an adult book to being relegated to the nursery in special editions deemed suitable for children, sometimes through abridgement, but sometimes through the simple underplaying of complex, latent content. This transition provides a reminder of the problem encountered repeatedly in the discussion of boy's own adventure - that of the historically renegotiable boundaries between the adult and child reader. Yet with the Crusoe story, at least, it is possible to identify many later works that simplify the original by directing the content specifically at children whilst retaining the mythical potentiality of the shipwreck as a proxy for the human condition that Defoe had exploited so successfully.

Kevin Carpenter records five hundred and five island stories published between 1799 and 1910 (1984, 8). Exploiting an international phenomenon, the content and tone of the island story following *Crusoe* changed over time and across countries. Yet the consistent challenge remained for later writers of how to keep the allegorical meaning foremost in the excitable minds of their young readership. An attractive gambit for parents, schoolteachers and moral guardians was to play up the familial and duteous, industrious and God-fearing implications of the Crusoe *ur-text* in preference to the sensation-seeking and land-grabbing elements. The natural consequence - a version of the castaway story featuring either a domestic group or a pietistic hero - developed from the late eighteenth century, emerging in such popular tales as *Robinson the Younger* (1788), *The*

*Swiss Family Robinson* (1814), *Rival Crusoes* (1826) and Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1842). However, Carpenter contends that from the 1850s, with the publication of Kingston's first novel, *Peter the Whaler*, a new class of adventure emerged which divided the sexes, addressed itself to boys and, with the decline of overt moralizing and the growth of imperial fervour, metamorphosed into a "fictionalized day-dream" whose protagonist was the "perfect boy-hero" (12). The three works analysed in this chapter date from this later period and form part of the emerging class of adventure story featuring boy protagonists.

In arguing for a change in the tone of the sea-yarn, Carpenter follows the venerable critical position of Harvey Darnton, who as long ago as the 1930s proposed that from the 1850s the moral tale started to move away from being a "place for tear-shedding and the terror of sin" (Carpenter, 1982, 247). Yet it is important to remember that *Robinson Crusoe* is open to multiple interpretation as a text for adult readers, in addition to its status as the harbinger of moral tales for children, adding another layer to the way that the novel can be read and its subsequent influence assessed. For example, Martin Green's cites Defoe as an imperialist text in his binary distinction between canonical and non-canonical texts within the Leavisite Great Tradition of the English novel. Green posits that the novels in the Leavisite canon could be explained in terms of class conflict and industrialization. By contrast "it is the adventure novels which could be explained in terms of empire" (1980, xv):

My argument will be that the adventure tales that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more after *Robinson Crusoe* were, in fact, the energizing myth of English imperialism. They were, collectively, the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night; and, in the form of its dreams, they charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule. (3)

Nevertheless Green does not properly identify the light reading of Englishmen by naming specific novels, periodicals or story-papers. Furthermore, in contradistinction, Nirad Chaudhuri disputes Green's fundamental assumption by

suggesting that while "Clive was in India and Wolfe in Canada" [...] English literary men were engaged in writing *Tom Jones* and *A Sentimental Journey*" (1972, 28) and so concentrating on a domestic context. And, whereas Green's terministic screen, imperialism, is adapted by later critics, such as Bristow and Kestner, Virginia Woolf applies another in her account of *Robinson Crusoe*, seeing the domestic in the island setting. Woolf's expectation of finding its isolated hero romantically brooding "alone upon the nature of society and the strange ways of men" is rudely contradicted on every page by encountering "nothing but a large earthenware pot" (1969, 21). Woolf delineates the commonplace side to Crusoe, and is quoted in support by Paul Zweig in his chapter on Crusoe as the unadventurous hero, giving a detailed close reading that convincingly diagnoses the fixatedly risk-averse nature of Crusoe's personality (1974, 113-133). According to Zweig, Crusoe survives because he lacks traditional courage: "When he is cast up on the shore of his island to be, he is revealed for what he is: a nerve without a shell" (115). Unlike the boy heroes of *The Coral Island*, Crusoe abandons the use of a boat after one bad experience, then spends years camouflaging his hideout with walls made out of shrubs.

Suffice it to say then, that Crusoe the marooned islander cannot be easily pigeon-holed. Defoe's novel offers tropes that can be mined by literary critics in different ways. To sidestep an already well-developed critical discourse as to the imperialistic leanings of Ballantyne, Stevenson and Kipling and children's literature, elaborated for example in the work of Jacqueline Rose (1994), I want to approach the texts from a different angle. Rather than draw a parallel between the status of colonised people and children, I want to foreground the threat to the child-body by the adult man as emblematic of the perceptual gap between boyhood and manhood.

## **Boyhood and manhood: the perceptual gap in Ballantyne's *The Coral Island***

"And this," thought I, gazing in horror at the captain, who, with a quiet look of indifference, leaned upon the taffrail smoking a cigar and contemplating the fertile green islets as they passed like a lovely picture before our eyes – "this is the man who favours the missionaries because they are useful to him and can tame savages better than any one else can do it!" Then I wondered in my mind whether it were possible for any missionary to tame *him!* (217)

In this extract from Robert Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), a smoked cigar once again symbolizes the psychological distance between boyhood and manhood, but also - in contrast to *Captains Courageous* - the unregenerate status of a white man. The captain, a piratical sandalwood trader, has fired a withering shower of grape-shot from his ship point-blank into a dense mass of six hundred native South Sea Islanders. The narrative voice, of an adult Ralph Rover of indeterminate age remembering his childhood reaction to the atrocity, expresses irony. The mental processes, identified with the child Ralph ("I thought"), are complex. The boy foregrounds the unrepentant, incorrigible cruelty of a pirate who is delighted for purely selfish reasons that Christian missionaries convert indigenous peoples, thereby demonstrating an incomparable savagery.

The incident provides a turning point in the young Ralph's reading of the sinister captain who has removed the boy from the island, separating him from fellow castaways Jack Martin and Peterkin Gay and forcing him into the role of cabin boy. The Edenic world of the first eighteen chapters - fleetingly caught again by the "fertile green islets" - during which the boys master and domesticate the coral island has been lost for good: ended for Ralph as "a heavy hand grasped my shoulder, and held it as if in a vice" (1990, 195), and the captain exerts control. Up until this point *The Coral Island* has been one type of survival manual - an embryonic "Scouting for Boys" handbook in which the trio (unencumbered by captain, scoutmaster or indeed any authority figure) learn to forage, make fire, cook, build boats, navigate and fish. It now becomes another text book in which

Edenic boys must negotiate and survive the incursion of fallen men. *The Coral Island* opens with episodes from a primer for juvenile Crusoes, and transforms into unremitting struggle between black and white males with the triumvirate as participant observers. The horror, no less than in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), results from the behaviour of adult men. Yet horror's aftermath is countered by a belief in communal redemption.

Published the same year as *Eric* and a year after *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *The Coral Island* shares the instructional moral stamp of Farrar's work and the muscularity of Hughes's. Although Ballantyne's novel considerably reduces the amount of preaching at the reader – religious awe is expressed through the narrator's voice and Ralph is convincingly characterised – the Bible remains its touchstone of masculine behaviour. And Scripture operates, to apply Nodelman's conceptualisation again, as a pervasive shadow text. The call to make disciples of all nations resounds through the novel: *The Coral Island* is a redemption narrative even to the extent that mass conversions of South-Sea islanders provide its *deus ex machina*. The Christian *logos* both effects the gathering in of souls and affects the manner in which Ralph reads creation and his fellow creature, man. Ballantyne's tale describes how the Bible becomes Ralph's recovered codex.

Indeed, *The Coral Island* is very textually-indebted, and it initially pivots upon *Robinson Crusoe*. The novel's opening shadows Defoe's tale in one very specific manner, the first person narrative allowing Ballantyne to intercept Robinson Crusoe's clear argument against adventuring, which is presented in the earlier novel as a form of divine rebellion. Whereas Defoe makes much of the opposition of Crusoe's pious parents to his desire for sea-faring, Rover starts his adventure from a reassuringly approving familial context. Rover is the descendant of several generations of sea-captains and the narrative hints that he has been conceived and born at sea. Crusoe goes to sea almost on a whim in defiance of his father, but Rover goes to sea under the care of an old messmate of his father's, a merchant captain of *The Arrow*. Therefore, Ballantyne picks out a

crucial difference which allows the texts to be read against each other to establish a paradigmatic shift. It is such textual disjunctions in a cipher that increase its potential for decryption. To an alert reader alive to the Robinsonade as a precursor it would be possible to "crack the code" at this point, where the nineteenth-century text overrides its predecessor by making adventuring a Godly virtue, a metamorphic progression in the sea-yarn, from ambivalence towards seafaring to a positive celebration of it.

The influence of Defoe's novel can be felt again in the inventory of articles that the triumvirate has retained from the shipwreck, including the clothes they stand up in. These props are essential to the action. The pen-knife, pencil case, cord, sail-maker's needle, telescope, brass ring, oar and axe they possess are applied in the boys' mastery of the island. To reinforce the legitimizing of boy's own adventure, the implements are soon supplemented by the washed-up thick leather boots of the captain, which he has kicked off in the water. These fit Jack perfectly, "as if they had been made for him" (29), allowing him to take on, as though by divine fiat, the bearing and authority of a missing parent-substitute, without the encumbering presence of the man himself. Ballantyne's fiction therefore both endorses the Christian masculine status of the adventurer and merges man and boy in its idealised protagonist. Given Ballantyne's manly pursuits and his evangelical beliefs, it is no surprise that he was an early and popular contributor to the *B.O.P.*, submitting to Volume II, 1879-80, "The Red Man's Revenge", a lively tale of the Canadian frontier (Cox, 35).

Literacy is important too in connecting the young castaways to natural creation as well as positioning them against their novelistic precursor, Crusoe. Jack is relied upon to reinforce the importance of bookish knowledge to the proper development of any practical man, since critical knowledge of how to make a camp-fire results from his pre-shipwreck reading. *The Coral Island* pre-empts the tips for suburban schoolboys in Baden-Powell's scouting manual fifty years later by outlining survival strategies for a desert island. So successfully are the

practical lessons incorporated into Ballantyne's yarn that for long passages it is possible to forget that he was motivated by the same proselytising Christian motivation as Farrar. Indeed, when Edward Salmon in his 1888 article, "Books for Boys", commends Ballantyne for silvering the pill of instruction in his racy narratives (1976, 382), he is thinking not of religious moralizing but of scientific education. Far from labouring a connection between godliness and sobriety, Ballantyne emphasizes an extroverted pleasure as soon as the youngsters, after their stranding, get over their brief sadness at being alone. On the morning after the shipwreck, Ralph Rover experiences a materialistic epiphany: "gazing up through the branches of the cocoa-nut trees into the clear blue sky [...] my heart expanded more and more with an exulting gladness, the like of which I had never felt before. While I meditated, my thoughts again turned to the great and kind Creator of this beautiful world" (33). The spirit of thanksgiving which binds Ralph to the natural order also links the youths in an intense religious comradeship. At one point Rover alludes to the fact that the harmony they experience "was owing to our having been all tuned to the same key, namely, that of *love!* Yes, we loved one another with much fervency while we lived on that island; and, for the matter of that, we love each other still" (125). A musical key provides the metaphor for the religious bond between Rover, Martin and Gay (as men and boys), a counterpoint against which the unregenerate behaviour of black and white savages later plays out.

Although the boys learn to read their relationship to the natural order of Coral Island in what might be termed a communal "Trinitarian" harmony, deciphering the cruelty of men is a harder challenge. Directly before Rover is abducted, Ballantyne contrasts the tender physical co-operation between the three youths (as Peterkin's fear of water is overcome when he is pulled underwater by Jack and Ralph into a cave in which the boys can hide away) with the pirate captain's vice-like grip upon Ralph. Used only to decent truthfulness, the boy struggles at first to read his abductor. The intractable deceitfulness of the



trader requires an intermediary: an interpreter who takes the form of a repentant seafarer, a little in the mould of Farrar's Softy Bob. Bloody Bill acts as Ralph's mentor, alerting him to the discrepancy between what unregenerate pirates say and do. From Bill, Ralph learns that the captain is lying when he claims simply to be a trader, for he prefers piracy, and his apparent sympathy with missionaries is only because conversion makes the islanders tractable.

Reciprocally, Ralph's words affect Bill in the only boy-man relationship of any depth in the novel. As their friendship develops, they plot to escape the pirate schooner, and they disrupt a planned massacre of islanders by the pirates, leading to the deaths of the captain and his crew in a skirmish in which Bill too is fatally wounded. The dying pirate trains Ralph in how to sail back to Coral Island single-handed, before a death-deck repentance. In assisting Bloody Bill's conversion, Ralph rues his lack of past attention to Scripture until a text flashes into his mind: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (262). In a parallel process to Jack recalling the instructions from practical books, Ralph recalls the religious instruction of his mother, and a text from the Bible lost in the original shipwreck. Bill's repentance seems to usher in many more lost souls being saved as the boy's adventures draw to a close. The wholesale conversion of Polynesian tribes by peripatetic missionaries facilitates the return of the triumvirate to England, back from their beloved island.

The sense of *The Coral Island* as a redemption narrative has been lost in recent critical interpretations of Ballantyne's novel, at a time when Christian cosmology is less prominent. Martin Green's assumption (which characteristically lacks any ethnography of the actual reading practice of Victorian boys) that *Robinson Crusoe* is fundamentally an imperial myth has since been challenged. Inspired by the scholarly recovery work of David Vincent, John Burnett and David Mayall in reconstructing the memoirs of the British working class in the 1980s and 1990s, one cultural historian, Jonathan Rose, has found a more complex reality (2001, 106-110). The evidence of working people writing their own intellectual

history has revealed an influential trinity: *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Bible* being read as adventure stories because of their similarity to the popular chapbooks that circulated. These memoirists acknowledge their own initial credulity over whether the events described were factual. They describe their own slow, effortful growth towards the interpretative shock that the written word *can* be fictional (Rose, 93-97). When the reading practices of the first generation of literate children are analysed, the perceptual gap between boys and men in the historical record places in doubt easy assumptions about how they read; firstly about a monolithic response to the Robinsonade and secondly about an instant connection - in a culture strongly rooted in Christianity - between foreign adventures and imperialism.

The conceptualisation of the sea yarn as an imperialist primer is further complicated by a postcolonial critic's own response to *The Coral Island*. J.S. Bratton has argued that the imaginative patterning of the sea adventure is useful "in the transfer of their values to the support of the Empire" in a passage quoted approvingly by Joseph Kestner (2010, 24). In her *Oxford World Classics'* Introduction, however, she provides a different picture of how Ballantyne's novel affected her as a child:

[T]his was the book that, when I was 7 or 8, crystallized that acute enjoyment of reading which makes an individual into a lifelong student of literature. Its vocabulary was so much beyond me at that age that I was conscious of struggling, leaping from foothold to foothold with only a few words in each long sentence on which to balance; but the narrative grip, and more strongly the book's imaginative world dragged me through in a splutter of delight (1990, viii).

Although Bratton later argues that Ballantyne follows a racial hierarchy from Victorian anthropology based upon lightness of skin (xvii), her child-self responded to "the coral island itself, the perfect and paradisaical place" (viii). The child response is similar to that in "The Island", Francis Spufford's recollection of his own six-year-old "acceleration into the written word" (2002, 65). As child

readers, Bratton and Spufford are intent on the mastery of language at a very sensuous level; the quest to an island Eden stands as a compelling metaphor for the opening of the imagination through reading.

The coral island's status as a pre-lapsarian idyll initiating a child into what David Rudd has recently termed "the actual excitement of reading" (2013, 1) must be weighed against its construction as an imaginative template for hegemonic imperialism. In my judgement, the extract which heads this section demonstrates Ballantyne consciously using irony to disturb the correlation between commercial piracy and Christian mission work, suggesting that, on balance, *The Coral Island* is more concerned with language as having a pre- or post-lapsarian relationship with the world than in distinguishing between the exact sins of white and black. Before the arrival of men, the coral island can be read as harmoniously (even circuitously) in tune with God's creation ordinance, signified by the unity of the three boys. The world is in concord with the language of thanksgiving, and the boys are in concord with each other in a world still to be distorted by the lying of men.

When Rover is first abducted, the pirate captain interrogates him in a revealing encounter that highlights the gulf between guileless boy and worldly man:

I [...] told him the history of myself and my companions from the time we sailed till the day of his visit to the island. [...] After I had concluded, he was silent for a few minutes; then looking up, he said "Boy, I believe you". I was surprised at this remark, for I could not imagine why he should not believe me. However I made no reply (204-5).

The education-in-life experienced by Rover in the South Seas centres upon this interpretative crux; the loss of boyish innocence and the moral shock (needing an intellectual effort to take it in) that language can be used to conceal the truth. His quest for self-knowledge leads to an understanding that men fight and murder, and then dissemble. Forced departure from the paradisaical island

confronts Rover with scenes of violence so unremitting that he becomes inured to them. As Margaret Dutheil has argued, Rover's conduct anxiety about his own growing callousness "prompts a recognition of the narrator's own savagery" (2001, 106). As a salve for this moral decline, Ballantyne offers the word of God, but perhaps in offering it bypasses the need to provide real psychological depth to his characters.

It is at this point that the act of smoking may be helpfully employed as a crib to dialogically position *The Coral Island* against *Treasure Island* and *Captains Courageous*. Harvey Cheyne covets a West Virginian cigar. Rover, Martin and Gay are clean-living *B.O.P.* boys and the proffering of a cigar by the pirate captain is out of the question. Cigar-smoking, pathological indifference and the polluting of green islets provide the cluster of associations for the pirate, and a method of conceptually distancing him from Rover. The compassion fatigue that Rover acknowledges within himself shows both a reflectiveness that is not piratical and a sin-consciousness that resolves itself conventionally through the Christian teleology of repentance. But the *deus ex machina* of wide-scale redemption inhibits character development in *The Coral Island* in comparison with the maritime novels that come after it such as *Treasure Island*, which, as Lisa Sainsbury has recognised, "challenged the conventions of children's literature from within" (2013, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition). In Stevenson's paradigmatic break with Christianity, the invasiveness of cigar smoke for a boy is not so categorically rejected, marking, as will be shown, an advance in psychological realism.

### **Boyhood and manhood: the perceptual gap in Stevenson's *Treasure Island***

A strong smell of tobacco and tar rose from the interior, but nothing was to be seen on the top except a suit of very good clothes, carefully brushed and folded [...] Under that, the miscellany began – a quadrant, a tin cannikin, several sticks of tobacco, two brace of very handsome pistols, a piece of bar silver, an old Spanish watch and some other trinkets of little value and mostly

of foreign make, a pair of compasses mounted with brass, and five or six curious West Indian shells (1985, 22).

As in *Captains Courageous*, tobacco signifies the mysterious romance of masculine experience in *Treasure Island*, an allure evocatively captured when Billy Bones's chest is opened at *The Admiral Benbow* to reveal the material effects of the dead pirate. The shift in focus between *The Coral Island* and *Treasure Island* is well illustrated by the different use the novels make of an inventory of goods. Indeed, rather like Ballantyne's conversion of adventure into a virtue, Stevenson's reapplication of the inventory represents a metamorphosis in the code of sea-adventure. When Ballantyne lists a miscellany of articles which have been salvaged from the ship-wreck, the inventory prepares the boys to subdue their environment. Since they emerge from their ordeal regenerated in their Christian faith, the availability of these effects, as for Crusoe, might be seen as providential. The males in this paradigm are forced back into Godly dependence. By contrast an inventory in *Treasure Island* serves as the introduction to a Godless paradigm, in which the perceptual gap between boy and man is explored with a new psychological depth.

In his verse preface to *Treasure Island*, "To The Hesitating Purchaser", Robert Louis Stevenson was eager to appear to lay claim to the story-telling tradition of "Ballantyne the Brave" and to bring before the adult buyer - perhaps purchasing for a son - the memory of their own childhood reading of *The Coral Island*. It was a tradition of which Stevenson's staunchly religious father, Thomas, would have approved, but one which his son viewed privately with less enthusiasm. In a surviving letter to W.E. Henley, the man of letters, who provided the model for Long John Silver, Stevenson jested about the difficulty in portraying pirates without bad language: "Buccaneers without oaths - bricks without straw" (*Treasure Island*, 1985, vii). A further letter from Stevenson to Henley, dated September 1881, reveals a contempt for another religiously-inspired precursor: "[d]on't read Marryat's *Pirate* anyhow; it is written in sand with a salt-spoon: arid,

feeble, vain, tottering production" (Maixner, 1981, 126). Perhaps Marryat's work was vain and tottering because it purported to venture into the sphere of untrammelled adventure, then shrank back by (so to speak) conveniently appending a pat moral tag like the *B.O.P.* in an attempt to neutralise human depravity by Christianity. Unfortunately the letter to Henley does not spell out the reasons. Still, Stevenson was careful to hide these feelings from his audience of readers, although the plot of *Treasure Island* represents his riposte to the supposed deficiencies of Marryat.

Concealing and uncovering, dissembling and truth-telling are symbolically enacted within the narrative patchwork that traces Jim Hawkins's freewheeling journey from innocence to experience. Taking the island story to a new level of sophistication, *Treasure Island* condenses the story-telling method found in *The Coral Island*, that of a first-person, coming-of-age narration, tightening plot construction considerably. Stevenson dispenses with the boyish exploration of the natural world that safely places natural phenomena within an over-arching Christian theology. Avoiding the scouting handbook element of the sea yarn for boys allows Stevenson to foreground the perceptual gap between man and boy in memorable episodes that cluster around pirates. Again and again, events oblige Jim to confront the difference in motivation between a pirate and a respectable inn-keeper's son: when Bones's refusal to pay his lodgings at *The Admiral Benbow* worries Jim's father into an early grave; when a maimed beggar, Pew, transmutes into a maiming tormentor; when he watches Silver cold-bloodedly murder a reluctant mutineer on Skeleton Island; and when Israel Hands attempts to murder Jim himself. This inner voyage of discovery is as intensely realized as the outward events so vividly described, because the young Jim is forced prematurely into acting and dissembling too.

That Jim is interpretatively on his own without recourse to a reassuring adult voice like Bloody Bill or textual crib is the motor that makes *Treasure Island* such an absorbing tale. It is also what makes the novel consistently more

exciting than any school story, although I would argue that the two most suspenseful episodes, the rifling of Bones's sea-chest and Hawkins's eavesdropping in an apple barrel on board the *Hispaniola* convert the pedagogic modes of examination and viva into a new format. As darkness falls upon the *Admiral Benbow*, Jim engages in a frantic race against time far more serious than any classroom examination - with profound consequences for his survival let alone his adult status. His mother's pettifogging concern for taking no more currency than is due to them is contrasted by her son's instinct for reaching beyond the silver and acquiring the treasure chart, the reading of which will set up the adventure. Neil Postman notes that "[l]iterature of all kinds - including maps, charts, contracts, and deeds - collects and keeps valuable secrets" (1994, 13). It is through navigating a treasure map that Jim's masculinity is examined and his ontological status as an adventurer transformed.

The central episode of *Treasure Island*, made possible by this fumbling beneath the superficial dress of a seafarer to capture his dark secret, is the incident in the apple barrel. The conversation overheard by Jim is as significant in his self-development as Harvey Cheyne's happy fall to the decks of the *We're Here*. Jim moves from rummaging within one wooden receptacle, the chest, to "falling" into another, finding himself inadvertently eavesdropping on an extended conversation between Silver and a young hand whom the sea-cook canvasses to join the mutiny. The information that Silver imparts at last allows Hawkins (forced accidentally into a posture of deceptive concealment) to complete the interpretative circuit linking up the missing history of the pirates, including Billy Bones. Through a timed exercise that, in its demand for cool, interpretative acuity in the face of deadly peril, far outstrips the unseen translation of the examination hall, Jim's moral education about evil, his graduation into a world of moral relativism is completed. As a result, since Hawkins must now pretend that he is unaware of the impending mutiny, his relationship with Silver is reversed: "He did not know, to be sure, that I had overheard his council from the apple barrel, and

yet I had, by this time, taken such a horror of his cruelty, duplicity, and power, that I could scarce conceal a shudder when he laid his hand upon my arm" (64).

As Matei Calinescu notes, "[o]nce one identifies (rightly or wrongly) someone else's secret, one almost automatically posits an intention not simply to hide – to keep something private – but also to deceive or to trick, which in turn seems to legitimize the use of deception or trickery to penetrate the secret" (1993, 233). The scales have fallen from Jim's eyes as to Silver's ruthlessness, but he is perforce implicated in human deceitfulness in having to dissemble whenever the sea-cook is close, like a double agent. Stevenson's novel has become an intelligence war in which two contending factions, squirearchy and pirate confederacy, fight to unscramble the coded co-ordinates of the treasure map. *Treasure Island* fits Robert Fraser's delineation of the quest romance as a struggle for the acquisition of information which is "the property of another closed society, whose unique possession of it must be violated and broken down in the process" (1998, 17). But in this transformed island landscape no gathering in of souls lies over the horizon to prevent the intelligence war being a fight to the death. No Scriptural revelation occurs to influence Silver or to comfort Jim in the manner of a *deus ex machina*. *Treasure Island* permits a cosmic hole to exist within its moral universe, unfilled by Christian didacticism.

According to Juliet Dusinberre, in clearing the decks of pious lumber, Stevenson freed up the adventure story from moralizing: "the modern reader is so used to children's books which do not stop to harangue her about godliness and sobriety that it is hard to recapture the astonished delight which greeted *Treasure Island*, a story told by two voices neither of which appear to belong to the author" (1999, 82). The historic reading responses of memoirists noted by Jonathan Rose might, however, bring into question how certain it is possible to be about that astonished delight. How much of that emotion might be (like the emphasis by twentieth-century critical interpretations upon the imperialist bias of the sea yarn) a reading back of a contemporary preoccupation into the past? As a



young reader, Robert Louis Stevenson considered "eloquence and thought, character and conversation but obstacles to brush aside" as he dug "blithely after a certain kind of incident, like a pig for truffles" (Turner, 1976, 12). In any case, as Barbara Wall notes, the adoption of the first-person narrative had already enabled Ballantyne "to eliminate the digressions and much of the moralising which had plagued [...] adventure stories" (1991, 69). It is probably more accurate to suggest that *Treasure Island* represents a movement towards the secular not because of a different narrative tone but because of a rejection of a structural religious resolution.

Some critics argue that this change entails the abandonment of any code of masculine honour. According to Kiely, "to try to speak seriously of good and evil in *Treasure Island* is almost as irrelevant as attempting to assign moral value in a baseball game" (1964, 78). Fraser assents to this position, arguing that "[i]n this world, right and wrong hardly signify" (1998, 22). For Kestner, Hawkins achieves manhood, "but only by extreme transgression" (2010, 29). For Bristow the squire and doctor with whom Hawkins associates "are as wealth-grabbing as the despicable seamen in their plotting for gold" (1991, 29). Seen objectively, the treasure hunt indeed may seem less a salvage operation by the Squire's party than an amoral hunt for tainted gold. Whether the world seen through Jim's eyes - or indeed his assessment of his own behaviour - is quite so amoral may be open to interpretation.

It is this ethical open-endedness that makes *Treasure Island* so fascinating when viewed in its historical context. Hawkins remains loyal to the end of the quest. Even though Trelawney's foolish garrulousness about treasure in Bristol when recruiting the *Hispaniola's* crew is undoubtedly the cause of the planned mutiny, at no point do the squire and the doctor propose killing in order to secure a larger personal hoard. There are degrees of moral certainty in *Treasure Island*; Hawkins is clearly drawn to the pirates he encounters, but is as yet uncertain of their true designs upon him. The novel deals intensely with the fundamental

importance of successfully interpreting male behaviour in order to survive, and so is haunted by the human potentiality for evil. As with Eric Williams, Ralph Rover and Harvey Cheyne, underpinning the dramatic confrontation between boy and man lies the level of threat posed to Jim Hawkins's body. At the start of *Treasure Island*, Pew's twisting of Jim's arm, the first act of real violence in the novel, is a deposit in the bank of a boy's nightmares. That nightmare is never properly exorcised by establishing, once and for all, what Silver might have done to Jim, if necessity had called.

The possibility of further pain recurs in Jim's most honourable act. His most serious moral examination is to refuse to run from the stockade when advised to escape the pirates' clutches during a parley, by Doctor Livesey, who through his pragmatism becomes yet another putative father who fails to live up to the moral expectations of the orphaned Jim. What Jim fears, naturally, is torture, but he will not break his word, unaware that he represents the one bargaining chip that might see Silver safely back to England. Jim's response is the nearest he comes to fulfilling the boy's own code of masculinity, but his relationship with the duplicitous Silver is profoundly ambivalent and closer than to any other surrogate father-figure in the novel; as Lisa Sainsbury suggests, "Jim's instinctive desire to observe and come closer to Silver overrides moral obligations to Captain Smollett's party" (2013, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition). Indeed the adventurer in Jim and the martinet in Smollett instinctively dislike each other, and Hawkins only needs rescuing by Livesey because he has temporarily abandoned the Squire's party. Part of the thrill of Jim's adventures is the sense that there is no behavioural precedent to follow. Hawkins has to gesture towards keeping his virtue while locked into a *danse macabre* with one of the most charmingly degenerate of all fictional pirates. At the conclusion of this improvised dance, the "golden-haired", fairy-tale prince, Jim, retains his mythic boyish trajectory to an unearned fortune and Silver slips off the homeward-bound *Hispaniola* to continue his immoral, earthly journey.

In *Treasure Island*, the interpretative circuit about what Silver is like never gets properly closed for Jim. In contrast, on the Coral Island, whatever the travails of adventure might be, Ralph wakes to a potential Eden, whose sunshine causes him to reflect on a kind providence. *Treasure Island* concludes with Jim, self-made and safe again, refusing ever to return to his accursed island, and the sound of Silver's parrot haunting his dreams. In view of Stevenson's secret hostility to the moralising Christian sea story in his correspondence with Henley, an unregenerate pirate at loose on his further wanderings has more valuable, psychological currency than a gloomily repentant Bloody Bill. *Treasure Island* is not written on sand with a salt-spoon precisely because of its unwillingness to demarcate good from evil. Silver's "pervasive evil" is "located in the moments of absence" at the start and end of the novel (Sainsbury, 2013, Chapter 2), an evil that is as acrid, permeable and invasive as the whiffs of tobacco arising from a dead pirate's chest that a boy unthinkingly ingests.

### **Boyhood and manhood: the perceptual gap in Kipling's *Captains Courageous***

Having seen how tobacco is used symbolically in *The Coral Island* as a portent of white savagery and in *Treasure Island* as part of the alluring (and ultimately horrifying) otherness of the pirate, it will be possible to return to and position the wheeling Stogie more securely in Kipling's novella. At the start of *Captains Courageous*, Harvey Cheyne clearly represents the complete antithesis of the ideal boy hero; in fact, the making of him, under the custody of a model captain, Disko Troop, forms the theme of the novella, a *bildungsroman* which at its opening uses Christian imagery for secularising purposes. The cigar acts, as has been seen, to subvert the trope of the Edenic apple, where the fall is the defining disaster of the human condition. When Harvey falls from the liner's deck, he is described as going quietly to sleep and is then, in a dreamlike state, conscious of being "Harvey Cheyne, drowned and dead in mid-ocean" before coming to and seeing a blue fisherman's jersey on the dory which has rescued him. In his befuddled state he believes himself dead again and the fisherman a

“thing” in charge of his transportation (6). Beneath the naturalistic surface, which Kipling, with his command of descriptive writing, keeps to the fore, there is clear allegorical use of the Christian figures of death-in-baptism, regeneration, but also judgement, after which the righteous awake to a new created order. But the cigar also comes to represent the secularised recreation of maleness: the fully realised masculinity of the adult who has been able to master for himself the constitutional shocks afforded by tar, salt and tobacco.

Disko Troop is the master of this new realm in which the boy providentially find himself. The captain of the *We're Here* very quickly asserts his authority over Harvey, by physical aggression, a direct confrontation very different from the wily offer of an overpowering cigar. Accusing Troop of theft, Cheyne demands that the vessel sails to New York where his father will reward the crew. The fisherman calmly ignores the young man's tantrum, and when the boy threatens him, repeating the accusation, lays him out with a punch to the nose. The blow, which symbolically acts as a bleeding, perhaps even an initiation into masculine instrumentality, takes all of the bitterness out of Harvey and readies him for a different, humbler but worthier life of work on the ocean. Kipling implies that Harvey trusts that Troop is working out of a superior repertoire of masculine responses, and acting in *loco parentis* for a negligent father, who has failed to discipline him.

The speedy reconciliation of Troop and Cheyne has been seen as an aberration, turning *Captains Courageous* according to Carrington into “an enlarged short story” (1970, 285). An absence of continuing conflict removes the potential for narrative tension. The majority of the tale is taken up with the minutiae of schooner fishing (a practice even then fading into history). Kipling presents life under sail with no diversions of shipwreck or island life, concentrating upon detailed representations of an all-male crew and their daily interactions. The lack of narrative complexity is perhaps reflected in uncertainty over target readership. Leonee Ormond observes that “the mixture of adventure

and allegory makes it hard to be sure exactly what the audience for *Captains Courageous* was meant to be”, before arguing that the book has an evident accessibility for an adolescent reader (1995, xxx). Its relative obscurity may point to a general feeling that the novel is overburdened with content similar to the “practical and constructional” or “how-to-make-it” (Cox, 50) aspect of the boy’s own ethos. Yet two recent commentators have sought to restore the book’s critical reputation.

Viewing it as “a superb maritime novel” and a “Bildungsroman more complex than is supposed” (2010, 34), Joseph Kestner argues that its debt to ancient Greek ephebic ideas have been overlooked. Picking up on the fact that a crew member refers to the captain as “Discobolus”, an allusion to the famous sculpture commemorating the age of Greek athleticism and that the surname, Troop, signifies the all-male band of the Greek warrior formation, the phalanx, Kestner proposes that the “education” set out in the novel is that of ephebe into hoplite-warrior in the Greek state. Dillingham, who agrees that the novel has been substantially undervalued (2005, 189), proposes that Kipling intends to portray Harvey as a young man of unusual potential. The novel is therefore charting his passage to heroic status as a future captain of industry but in a more enlightened form than his father, because of the moulding of character that has been achieved on the fishing schooner.

The process of maturation that Harvey passes through registers acutely in an episode aboard the ship where the boy is observed by crew members imitating them all by turns, combining Disko’s stoop at the wheel, another man’s handling of the fishing lines, another’s rowing of the dory, and yet another’s stride along the deck (70). By a process of study even more exacting than school exercises, Cheyne prepares himself for manhood by incorporating or instantiating the mannerisms of other men. By taking on their habits, he slowly acquires his own individuality. One veteran sea-man, observing Harvey, waxes philosophical: “the boys they make believe all the time till they’ve cheated ‘emselves into bein’

men, an' so till they die – pretendin' and pretendin'". Another crewman then comments approvingly upon Harvey's ability to "yarn good" (70). In a very Kiplingesque trope, manliness and literariness are fused. Growing into a man is seen as an experimental process of converting make-believe into reality. In the many hours on watch aboard the *We're Here*, Cheyne has time and space to experiment with alternative versions of the self "read" from fellow crewmen. This integration of boyishness and manliness takes place on deck in the empire of his imagination.

More than the South Seas, which in reality was a backwater of the imperial project or the sketchy environs of Skeleton Island, the American setting of *Captains Courageous* makes it the only novel of the three genuinely, geopolitically concerned with empire, in its anatomization of a rival superpower to Great Britain. Daniel Karlin has described the novel as an allegory of the American future (1989, 11-12). Elaborating upon Karlin's assertion, Leonee Ormond sees Harvey Cheyne senior and Disko Troop as contrasted figures of the West and East coasts (xvii). As Louis Cornell notes too, Kipling was, above all other writers of his generation, steeped in American literature; an American resident forced by circumstances beyond his control to leave; a social observer enthralled by the dislocation he witnessed between geographical areas during westward expansion, the attractive yet destructive energy of robber baron capitalists, and the obsolescence brought upon disciplined, settled communities by industrialization (1972, 71-80). *Captains Courageous* is a hopeful parable about the reintegration of the buccaneering spirit of capitalism with an older, more respectful American tradition by a writer, as Cornell notes, "sharing a deeply ambiguous relation to authority" (79).

The cigar recurs a second and final time as a totem of this supposed integration. It is found on the lips of Harvey Cheyne senior, a captain of industry with a piratical beard, when sharing his paternal experience with his son for the first time: "the story of forty years that was at the same time the story of the

New West whose story is yet to be written" (142). Under the disciplined tutelage of Disko Troop, Harvey has been prepared for a reconciliation with his father. Yet in presenting the gospel of physical work and the putting on of a masculine *persona* re-imagined from the performativity of fellow seamen, Kipling does not set up a false opposition with classroom-based education. Cheyne senior counsels, "[Y]ou'll have to stow away the plain, common, sit-down-with-your-chin-on-your elbows book-learning. Nothing pays like that Harve'" (144). The ex-schooner cabin-boy must now discipline himself to bookishness. Harvey goes to university, which is presented as a necessary finishing school. As Kestner recognizes, "sea-based discipline must be reinforced by land-based education and progress" (36). In so doing, Harvey Cheyne is restored to himself in a process akin to sanctification; duteousness is now combined with technocratic knowledge in the rising secular power, America. But perhaps the book education would not have taken effect, if occurring before "the education that had not begun" at the start of the novel – the baptism into masculine ways.

### **The sea yarn as metamorphic code**

I have applied the crib of tobacco as an interpretative tool to decipher manliness in the sea adventure as the prelude to what will be in this section a more intensive investigation of the yarn as metamorphic code. Exploring how tobacco was situated in three texts found it linked in *The Coral Island* to an outright rejection of piratical trading, but in *Captains Courageous* used as an integrating symbol of buccaneering West Coast capitalism tamed by disciplined Cape Cod seamanship, as the economic future of the United States moves on to dry land. In *Treasure Island* the smell of tobacco wafts seductively up from the dead man's chest. The exposure of Billy Bones's secrets leads Jim Hawkins to his fortune without reconciling him fully to the devilish combination of nicotine, salt and tar. These readings are a pointer to the figural and formulaic patterning of the yarn and its way with signifier and symbol. Yet in picking just one article from

the inventory (so to speak) of the sea adventure, tobacco, it has still been possible to develop fairly sophisticated comparative readings of the primary texts. The question arises conversely whether those comparative readings might be packaged simply enough to be deciphered by a child reader.

In describing the process by which a child learns to read, Spufford references Shannon's *Mathematical Theory of Communication*, which as he notes has been fruitful for cryptography. He observes that "Shannon was interested in measuring how much a message could be disrupted by the noise that's inevitable on any channel of communication" (72). This is the hurdle that must be overcome in the process of learning to read; the jumping from the known to the unknown that Bratton outlines in her growing childish delight in the Coral Island as island. Approaching the noise on the communication channel from the cryptographer's vantage point, Kahn again cites Shannon in support of what is known as the concept of redundancy: "it is only the existence of redundancy in the original messages that makes a solution possible". Kahn himself confirms that this is "the very basis of codebreaking" (745). Redundant elements in English are the high-frequency letters, the preference for the alveolar consonants *n, t, r, s, d*, which, for example, enabled Richard Hannay to break Scudder's cipher in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. It is such high-recurring symbols within the alphabet, once they are mastered, that enable the less frequent letters to be guessed then assimilated. By analogy, it is the interrelationship between commonly recurring elements in the sea yarn and local variations that enable the spectrum of meanings or interpretations of each text to be unscrambled.

One potential problem with applying this technique to the sea adventure is deciding what those commonly recurring elements are. Looking again at the originator of the Robinsonade within the print culture from which it emerged offers useful guidance. Jonathan Rose - noting that *Robinson Crusoe* was often considerably abridged to eight-page chapbooks for a poor audience - cites the work of Pat Rogers who has undertaken a detailed comparative analysis of



different print versions to sift out the peripheral elements from the common denominators in all published versions (Rose, 2001, 107-8). The central components are Crusoe, the shipwreck, the early sojourn on the island; in effect, the key ingredients of romance, adventure or yarn in telling the story of a masculine quest for mastery of a hostile environment. Friday and the cannibals are peripheral. In looking for the workings of a metamorphic code, I shall keep to those obvious commonalities of the sea adventure that are in keeping with my definition of the yarn: the circumstances of the quest, the flight from domesticity and social isolation of the protagonist, the treatment of education and issues of textual authority. I believe that when these elements are combined, they throw light on how the central issue of boy-conduct is charted, the clear starting point of the narrative in *Captains Courageous*. At sea one might term this issue of conduct "helmsmanship", the stars by which one's life course is steered.

When examining the school story, I described the rupture of any domestic, organic relationships as a hermeneutic orphaning, the necessary break with the past that starts the hero on his lonely quest to self-knowledge in male society. Of the three protagonists considered in this chapter, Jim is the only literal paternal orphan, his father's death being hastened by the menacing Billy Bones's non-payment of board. The bond between father and son does not appear strong in *Treasure Island*, and certainly less strong than the psychological affinity that the pirate masquerading as a retired captain forges with the boy at *The Admiral Benbow*. As to his mother, Jim's impatience with her petty-bourgeois propriety is palpable when she only wants her dues from the dead Bones's chest. In flat contradiction, Hawkins reaches below for the treasure chest, symbolically an overreaching of his social status. The aroma of tobacco is a portent that Jim, like, Harvey is tempted by worldly wealth as well as the world beyond the hearth. Although voyaging is also the passion of Ralph, his adventurousness is, by contrast, in accord with the values of his father, a retired sea-captain. *The Coral*

*Island* is marked out as the only novel where roving is not in conflict with paternal or maternal values, and not connected with commercial gain.

Jack's assumption of moral authority after the shipwreck, as the oldest of the boys, is conflated with wearing the boots of the missing captain of *The Arrow*. Jacqueline Rose sees in this passing of authority, the fastening by the adult writer of a pedagogic intention upon the child: "something [...] like a command, which passes from one to the other" (141). In a sense, there is no rupture between the Christian values of Ralph's home once on the island until he is abducted by a pirate masquerading as the captain of a trading vessel. Only then, does Ralph come into conflict with a rogue captain who undermines the values of the missionaries. By contrast, in the Godless realm of *Treasure Island*, Jim resents the law-giving side of Captain Smollett, the only morally consistent adult in the novel, rather as a son might resent a disciplinarian father. In the integration of energy and discipline of *Captains Courageous*, Disko Troop is also - no less than the Head of the "Coll" - an admirable figure, who can be trusted to administer to Cheyne the physical shocks that will turn him into a courageous captain of industry. Through conflict with ship captains, Jim and Harvey develop their sense of individuality. In comparison, despite witnessing greater horrors, Ralph remains unchanged from the boyhood beliefs he shares with his captain-father. There is limited growth in the psychological complexity of Rover's make-up, and the novel therefore appears the least socially realistic and most marked by the escapist strain in boy's own adventure.

Compared to *The Coral Island*, Stevenson's work appears a religious mutiny in its advocacy of freedom of thought. In *Treasure Island*, the right to become master of one's fate and captain of one's soul (to quote the poem by W. E. Henley, on whom Long John Silver was modelled) is strongly asserted. The mantle of captaincy passes unchallenged to Jack in Ballantyne's universe but in *Treasure Island* the term "Captain" is first usurped by Billy Bones at the *Admiral Benbow* and then by Silver who is appointed "Cap'n" by the pirates on Skeleton

Island after what he tauntingly refers to as Captain Smollett's desertion. Class hierarchy on the high sea has been subverted by ordinary seamen. Reading the "gentleman of fortune" created in Stevenson's paradigm provides new interpretative challenges to boy protagonist and implied reader. Silver is the product of this duality: respected by the other mutineers because he has had a good schooling and can "speak like a book" when necessary. His transgressive potency derives from the ease with which he switches from the respectful "Captain" to the mutinous "Cap'n". Education is not used to reinforce an obedience to the divine order but to subvert it. In his back-handed compliment to Ballantyne, Stevenson acknowledges the pioneer of the older first-person narrator, but then in Silver creates a pirate of great psychological complexity, whose depths Hawkins never successfully interprets. Kipling too, in mapping the education aboard the *We're Here* that Harvey sorely lacked when aboard the cruise ship with his mother, breaks with the comfortable world-view of the Christian maritime novel.

The worlds represented to the child in *Captains Courageous* and *Treasure Island* have therefore shed the certainties presented by Ballantyne the Brave. The transition is reflected, I would argue, in a greater technical command of allegory or symbolic enactment in the texture of the fictions. There is a certain clumsiness in the epithet Bloody Bill as there was in Farrar's Softy Bob, and a certain preachiness (absorbed into a first person narrative) when Ralph leads Bill to repentance whilst trying to navigate the pirate-ship single-handed. By contrast, in elegantly smuggling his subversion of Christian redemption into the early pages of *Captains Courageous*, Kipling may have learnt from reading Stevenson. The symbolism of piracy is economically enacted at the opening of *Treasure Island*, the "Bones" of the false captain's surname pointing to mutiny and the corpses on Skeleton Island. Like a gentleman of fortune, Jim desires to rebel against his socially-determined status through treasure-seeking. His double-edged reward is to be aligned to silver through Silver, symbolically enacted too by Hawkins

"moving down" in Billy Bones's chest to grasp the chart, showing that he unconsciously sympathizes with piratical rebellion.

As Gillian Beer suggests in *Darwin's Plots*, when allied to the formulations of Freud, the loss of simple co-ordinates both to a divine order and to the sense that "the ego was master in its own house" led to "a growing fascination with the reaches of experience beyond the domain of reason, a fascination which expressed itself in the oceanic richness in the use of symbol typical of Victorian prose" (1983, 10). Stevenson, beneath the exact descriptive prose of Jim's narrative, evokes mythic and unconscious layers of meaning in his yarn. In *Treasure Island*, despite its realism, Hawkins never quite throws off the mantle of the fairy tale hero, leading Captain Smollett to insist that he will not go to sea with Jim again because he is "too much of the born favourite" (185). Whereas Rover can awake, after shipwreck, to a sunlit world where language correlates the Edenic world to its *Logos*, the creative Word, Hawkins wakes to a nightmare-inflected daytime consciousness with the surf around Skeleton Island's coasts still booming in his ears. The last paragraph of the novel therefore mirrors the first which states that the treasure on the island (symbolically the weight of Silver's presence) is not all lifted. Figuratively, Hawkins is still wedded to Silver, bearing out Beer's supposition that with the acceptance of the Darwinian narrative in Victorian thought, the Bible is replaced by other sources of authority in its fictional plots, in this instance the influence of the unconscious.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has developed the hypothesis that the yarn is primarily a form of adventure preoccupied by conduct anxiety in which competitive discourses about masculinity are advanced. The maritime novel has been shown to continue the preoccupation with honourable behaviour found in the school story as the yarn moves into a more complex symbolic theatre, the sea. The hermeneutic orphaning of the boy protagonist once again initiates a growth to

self-knowledge in which different value systems - Christian, commercial and imperial - play off against each other. In the course of this exploration, I have also illustrated how the yarn functions as a metamorphic code, taking care to limit the interplay to some basic building blocks of the sea story - questing, the flight from domestic experience, homosocial isolation and the achievement of masculine mastery - that are common to the yarn, romance or adventure tale. The application of the common symbol of tobacco has been shown to work as a crib elucidating increasingly complex, comparative readings within texts. The growing narrative intricacy is commensurate with the secularisation of the adventure story. Gillian Beer's reminder of oceanic richness is particularly important for my next chapter about the colonial encounter, a symbolic theatre where the yarn continues to yield up multiple interpretations.

### Chapter 3: Yonder is the Sahib – The Colonial Encounter

SAHIB, s. The title by which, all over India, European gentlemen, and it may be said Europeans generally, are addressed, and spoken of, when no disrespect is intended, by natives. It is also the general title (at least where Hindustani or Persian is used) which is affixed to the name of office of a European, corresponding thus rather to Monsieur than to Mr. For Colonel Sahib, Collector Sahib, Lord Sahib, and even Sergeant Sahib are thus used as well as the general vocative Sahib! 'Sir'! [...] The word is Arabic, and originally means 'a companion'; (sometimes a companion of Mahommed). *Hobson-Jobson, The Definitive Glossary of British India.*

#### Introduction

As my thesis moves on to consider the colonial encounter, another critical insight by Gillian Beer, this time from her earlier book, *The Romance*, provides a useful connection between the sea and the empire. While examining romance in its chivalric, medieval form, Beer notes that in later stories adventure sometimes takes over from love as "the great theme and machinery of the work". "The search for treasure, whether it be grail or gold, or dragon's horde (sic), is engrossing enough in itself, and the object of the quest serves as the love-object. *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Treasure Island* and *The Hobbit* are three-romance mutants of this sort" (1970, 3). The empire can be seen, of course, as the most extreme treasure hunt; when describing the cannon upon which the orphan Kimball O'Hara sits at the opening of *Kim* as "the first of the conqueror's loot" (1999, 1), Kipling is well aware of the term's Hindustani derivation, stealing; this is a point I shall return to. Joseph Bristow, too, notes that "the critical debate about realism and romance, conducted in many periodicals during the 1880s, took place when Britain's own imperial treasures loomed more largely than ever before in the nation's mind" (1991, 95-6).

Yet, as *Treasure Island* demonstrates, the search for unearned riches leads to an increase in ethical uncertainty within boy's own adventure; as Lisa Sainsbury recognises, Stevenson's novel "renders morality uncertain in the voice

of its impressionable narrator" (2013, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition). This inner questioning of the honourable and gentlemanly path for a boy only increases in the imperial setting, which might be considered the yarn's most extreme mutation away from the comfortably domestic and its most extroverted fastening upon the love-object, treasure. The extension of ethical self-consciousness, even turmoil, first compellingly encountered in boys' books in Jim Hawkins during his quest for treasure reaches its full crisis, I would argue, in the nervous breakdown of an Anglo-Indian boy and his despairing question, "Who is Kim?" But perhaps a little surprisingly, *pace* Gillian Beer, I want to suggest, too, that what lies hidden behind this outburst and its half-despairing wish for a solid identity is the quest for human love.

In justifying this assertion that something else beyond imperial treasure-hunting is predominant in the three texts, *She* (1887), *Kim* (1901) and *Lord Jim* (1900), under examination in this chapter, I am assisted by the fact that they are all ostensibly failed quests. The basic building blocks of the yarn – questing, the flight from domestic experience, homosocial isolation and the struggle to achieve masculine mastery – are certainly in place in the stories. But the full elevation to a higher, heroic status upon the successful completion of a physical, moral and intellectual examination is deliberately unfulfilled, indeed problematized. Not only is this so, but the main figure in each tale who contests the automatic arrogation of superior status as a Sahib, an English gentleman in the Empire, is also an adoptive rather than a natural father; and if the British stiff upper lip may inhibit (although not eliminate) references to love, the filial bond formed between boy and man points to that conclusion. In these colonial texts, the quasi-paternal intervention of a lama or an academic or a merchant seaman simultaneously counters the perceptual limitations and complicates the social identity of the son-hero. Surrogate fathers mediate to dissuade their younger charges of the need to conform to patriarchal patterns of behaviour in conversations across the hills and plains of India or the exotic landscapes of the African interior, or the verandahs

and swamps of the Far East. One might argue that this retreat into orality in the yarn attempts to rescue young protagonists from the written inscription of destiny in the form of potsherd, pictogram or holiday sea-yarn. Or at the very least, that the conflict between orality and writing seems to continue the discussion about cultural transmission evident in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, when Squire Brown stays silent about his ambivalence about another written inscription, the Greek digamma and the genuineness of its importance to his son's future.

In taking this approach, I am endorsing the yarn's capacity for philosophical reflection that was demonstrated in the *B.O.P.* optical illusion of six or seven cubes reproduced in Figure 4; and from now on, to avoid confusion, I shall refer to this visual motif as the "illusion" to distinguish it from the *B.O.P.* badge on the frontispiece to my thesis, which will be referred to as the "insignia". Those cubes were, in a sense, the building blocks of a worldview presented by the adult contributors of the *B.O.P.* to its implied boy readers. That way of seeing pointedly suggests to its younger audience that a strong commitment to one interpretation can render a reader unsighted from a competing perspective. Avoiding the presumption that one viewpoint was better than another, the illusion strains a boy's eyes until they recognise that two legitimate but discrepant representations can co-exist, and that it takes an almost preternatural vigilance towards symbolic interpretation to move between the two. As the focus moves now on to the colonial encounter, I want to use the illusion once again as a reminder of the possibility for multiple interpretations because of one very powerful way of seeing (and therefore experiencing) primary texts set in imperial locales. This approach, post-colonial theory, has come to dominate the critical imagination. For as its guiding light, Edward Said, rightly noted decades ago in the first edition of *Orientalism* (1978), when the symbolic theatre of the yarn shifts to empire, the Rugby-inspired disciplines of classical Arnoldian scholarship are not simply abandoned. When West attempts to engage with East (despite Kipling's poetic pessimism about whether the twain can ever meet), the cultural



practices of reading and decipherment developed at the British public school elide naturally from scrutinising Greek and Latin texts to interpreting Sanskrit and Arabic sources. As a consequence, for Said and a whole body of subsequent criticism, the resultant reading process is redolent of the desire to control non-Western societies or at least place them within a hierarchy of power which validates Occidental perceptions. The charge against the colonial novel is that it reinforces, to apply Mercea Eliade's pithy critique, "an exemplary History of man – a History conceived, of course, only as Western man" (1967, 8-9). And that charge has been advanced so persuasively and repeatedly that is sometimes difficult to envisage reading adventure fiction set in the empire in any other way.

As will be evident from later citations in this chapter, post-colonial theory has developed since Said's seminal critique. In the complexity of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak's work, it nuances more fully the binaries and dualities inherent in, for example, Kipling's representation of India. And in the work of Haggard and Conrad too, the controlling presence of the British in their empire has been acknowledged to be riddled by contradictions: by imperial dissent as well as fervour, by irony as well as dogmatism, by anxiety as well as hubris. Undeniably, in all three primary texts, the status of the white man as superior and controlling is questioned. Yet, as my Introduction suggested, a critical lens can still sometimes be found in operation, for example in the work of Cole and Green, that regards Conrad's narrative techniques and tone of sardonic detachment as inherently superior to - because oppositional to - Kipling and Haggard's more sympathetic depiction of imperialism. This is despite the fact that Conrad was proud to publish in *Blackwood's* magazine, the same clubman's milieu for which Kipling wrote. Thus, for example, Lee Horsley argues that "the most difficult trials the Conrad hero faces are, of course, moral and psychological rather than physical: he is a carrier of strongly positive values, but, instead of facing the straightforward choices confronting a Haggard adventurer, he must cope with unsettling self-doubt, anxiety and uncertainty" (1995, 26). And Kestner endorses

the taxonomy of Owen Knowles and Gene Moore (2000), which divides colonial adventure fiction into either the "naïve" or "skeptical" camp, by himself placing Haggard in the former and Conrad in the latter grouping (2010, 8), although he also acknowledges Kipling's complexity by including him with Conrad.

Even in discussion of Kipling's work, there is a residual tendency – captured in Said's very conceptualization of the White Man, which borrows directly from the title of a Kipling poem – to believe that, so to speak, it evangelizes for imperialism at the expense of anything else. The American poet-critic, Randall Jarrell brilliantly captures an attitude to Kipling's work that still has some currency, by quoting one of Rudyard's own literary heroes, Mark Twain, to the effect that "it isn't what they don't know that hurts people, it's what they know that isn't so". Jarrell appears to be suggesting that coming to a primary text with a distorted prior assumption may deprive the reader of insight. He goes on pointedly to suggest "most people already do know about Kipling – not very much, but too much: they know what isn't so, or what might just as well not be so, it matters so little. They know that [...] Kipling was for imperialism; he talked about the White Man's burden; he was a crude popular – immensely popular – writer" (1962, 220). To let the personal and subjective intrude for a moment, that was true of me, since Kipling did not feature in my undergraduate English degree course, and I also only stopped knowing too much when I stumbled across the short stories, "They", "Regulus" and "Mary Postgate", over twenty years later and read them attentively, even vigilantly. And it was only at this point that, to cite a modern visual motif (Figure 5), I stopped seeing the hag-ridden face of Kipling's imperialism. Instead I started to see the (to me) fresh and tender things in his work, particularly when he writes about children: about the predicament of being a child, especially a child who is in some way obliged to make a premature and impossible choice; about the child's right to experience the world differently from the adult; about the importance of that luminous, childlike way of experiencing as a bulwark against a profoundly dark and pessimistic adult worldview. And these

qualities are as much at work in *Kim*, notwithstanding its imperial setting, as they have been in *Stalky* and *Captains Courageous*, and will be in *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*.



Figure 5      Optical Illusion. Old Hag and Young Beauty

This chapter will seek to demonstrate that Haggard, Kipling and Conrad all grapple with the psychological difficulty faced by their young male protagonists in self-fashioning as a "Sahib"; and that the natural difficulties in establishing an adult identity anywhere are only complicated by the foreign setting. The struggle to define himself successfully as a white man in a foreign land is no easier for a Leo Vincey or Kimball O'Hara than for a Lord Jim. The chapter will also explore a development in the hermeneutic orphaning that occurs when boys are separated from their fathers' direct influence. In the school story, it is by and large accepted that the schoolmaster will act *in loco parentis*. In these three texts, however, something subversive changes the intergenerational masculine bond, as

a younger male breaks into the settled existence of an older man. Surprised by the disruption and, it would seem, by their own willingness to act as mentors, a Buddhist (Lama), a lonely Cambridge don (Holly) and a sceptical master-mariner (Marlow) physically accompany the youths on their identity quest, verbally warring against the written destinies that the young men's fathers have prescribed. In each novel, reticently but insistently, an alternative matrix of belief emerges, amounting to a substitute paternal *credo*.

I shall also demonstrate how, within the print culture of its time, the adventure romance trespasses across the boundaries of high-, middle- and low-brow taste in the search for more best-sellers to rival *Treasure Island*. How literary awareness of the workings of the unconscious mind, particularly in Haggard's work, starts to offer an alternative organising principle for the yarn to Christian scripture. And how the issues of social class and of gentlemanliness continue to dominate the yarn's discourse - that defining issue for any adventure hero of being "one of us", as Conrad's Marlow puts it. Indeed, the chapter heading from the *Hobson-Jobson* demonstrates the problematic status of the British gentleman among his own kind. An immutable class distinction clearly exists between a Colonel Sahib and a Sergeant Sahib even before racial divisions come into play. By adopting this approach, I hope to disrupt the naïve/sceptical binary for colonial adventure fiction through other methods of critical perception. I shall open my exploration with an extract from *Kim*, which is arguably as much about what an upper-class colonel in the intelligence service is allowed to do to an army orphan as about what British imperialists do to Indian subjects.

### **A boy, a cultural exchange and an act of adoption**

"Following his instinct" a boy who is white-skinned but burned black as a native, presses his ear to a gap in the heat-cracked door of an Indian museum curator's office to eavesdrop. The curator is in serious conversation with a Tibetan Lama who seeks assistance in his quest to find the River of the Arrow, a sacred

and secret place in Buddhist teaching which, if found, permits the washing away of all taint of sin. The boy, Kimball O'Hara, the orphaned son of an Irish colour-sergeant, is a Lahore street urchin. He survives by carrying messages pertaining to illicit affairs and secret intelligence between adults across the racial boundaries of the city. His liminal assuredness - since that is why he is employed - trespassing across what is to others forbidden space, has been shown to be paralleled linguistically. It is the boy who has shepherded the unworldly Buddhist monastic leader (the equivalent of an abbot in Western parlance) into the presence of the curator with the spoken direction, in half-Hindustani, "Yonder is the Sahib". The reader watches the meeting between the two old men unfold. The boy can only listen initially, and whether Kim can watch later from a different vantage point is left unclear. Kim is out of the reader's purview, an eavesdropping presence, even if his existence as another watcher is powerfully felt.

Not all that the men say is within the comprehension of the boy. The curator shares his knowledge of Buddhism and explains the items on museum display, as far as this is necessary since to the lama they are part of a living creed rather than the reassembled artefacts - however lovingly curated - of cultural appropriation. The lama is shocked and awed, in the sense of delighted wonder, to be shown photographs of his monastery by the curator, a development that adds another layer of surveillance to the scene. Yet observing, monitoring and spying is not the same as understanding. The scene might be construed as another Kipling paradox like the opening of *Captains Courageous*. Here, instead of an adolescent who plays at smoking being given a cheroot that is constitutionally beyond him, a young street urchin plays at spying without being fully aware of the necessity of taking sides in the adult version of espionage. How unusual it is for a white official and a black holy man not to take sides, for the techniques of surveillance to be employed as acts of veneration rather than as the instrumentality of power will also be well beyond the boy's comprehension.

Additionally, he may be only half aware how much his own act of surveillance is in some mysterious way a quest for mutual love.

The consultation draws to a close. At this point, Kipling creates what Alan Sandison terms a parable-picture, a Victorian form "favoured by so many painters of the time, including Kipling's two uncles-by-marriage Sir Edward Burne-Jones and Sir Edward Poynter" (*Kim*, 1987, xxvii). The detailed tableau portrays a curator passing his crystal spectacles for a lama to use; an exchange of gifts between them, some pencils and sheaves of paper for an ancient, iron pen-case; and a street urchin looking on. Grace is the operative word in this narrative-portrayal, for the parallels between Buddhism and Christianity are clearly drawn out. Two religions are shown to share a gracious Lord, echoing a verse prefacing the first chapter which warns the Christian reader to be gentle with the heathen who pray at Kamakura, a Japanese shrine.

In the symbolism of this crowded "canvas", a curator gives up the technological superiority of his glasses as if asserting that he and the lama are equally seers. The writing utensils of scholarship are shared and the lines between spirituality and scholarship blurred. And the eavesdropping boy, following his instinct for spying, draws the reader's attention to the similarity between fiction-reading and surveillance. The picture-parable sets up (and indeed implicates the implied reader) in the novel's central debate about intense scrutiny, imperial, aesthetic and religious, being either an act of control or an act of love. In essence, this boils down to whether Kim will become an imperial soldier or a Buddhist priest. For now it becomes clear that, at some point during the two men's consultation, the boy has adopted the lama by serving as his *cheyla*. Kipling, an admirer of the *Hobson-Jobson* glossary of British India, would have been aware that O'Hara's dilemma as to his long-term destiny - the answer to the question "Who is Kim?" - is bound up with its glossing of *cheyla*. The *Hobson-Jobson* lists "soldier", "disciple" (my italics), "household slave" or "adopted member of a great family", amongst ten meanings (2013, 141).

## **Surveillance, cultural appropriation and language in the colonial encounter**

When Kimball O'Hara is first seen spying, the boy is still in a state of some innocence as to the dependence of cultural appropriation upon military occupation, the link between the loving curating of artefacts and the cataloguing of loot. Nor has the game of spying yet become the Great Game; as Green notes, Kipling can introduce the pun because Kim is still a child (1980, 267). Similarly, the scuffle to ascend the cannon, Zam-Zammah, between three boys, an Irish Catholic, a Hindu and a Muslim, has acted out *in play* the battle for ascendancy between imperialist armies. Like the *B.O.P.* insignia, at this stage Kim is both implicated within an imperial paradigm and as a child, innocent of its personal implications - so distanced from Western ways that he has learned to evade the conduct anxiety of "missionaries and white men of serious aspect" who wish to interrogate him about "who he was and what he did" (2). Yet in describing "the great green-bronze piece [that] is always first of the conqueror's loot" (1) Kipling, an admirer of the *Hobson-Jobson* dictionary, would have known its definition of loot: "Plunder; Hind. Lut, and that from Skt. Lotra, for loptra, root, lup, 'rob, plunder'" (2013, 318). In a street orphan playing upon a conquered cannon, who is as yet uncertain of his own racial origins, Kipling plays off the predicament of a fatherless child against the imperial thieving of his father's race.

This linguistic sophistication is a hallmark of *Kim*. One would have to be phased by word-blindness (and Kimball O'Hara himself is hardly ever so lulled) not to experience a sense of wonder or intoxication at the blending, merging and synthesizing of cultures in the very texture of the narrative language in the opening pages, which themselves represent a written representation of a childish orality. Words from different languages jostle each other as do terms from different registers within the same language. So the place of reciprocity between the curator and lama is described in three ways, as the Ajaib-Gher (Urdu), the Wonder House (a colloquial English reworking of the Urdu) and the Lahore Museum (formal, received English). The names of foreigners featuring in dialogue

are textually shadowed by English equivalents in brackets, which do not form part of the speech: Khitai (a Chinaman), Pahari (a Hillman) and Bhotiya (a Tibetan). The slang of Kim ("Thy father was a pastry-cook, Thy mother stole the *ghi*"), as energized as the demotic speech-acts of Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk, is rendered in the archaic familiar second person as a distancing device to confirm that another language is being used. The verbal equivalent of a *trompe-d'oeil*, an artistic illusion that vividly places an object in a physical space that cannot sustain it, is being performed. One can sense the joy, joie-de-vivre and *jouissance* in the boy's vulgarity at the same time as being distanced from it, a trick of perception that Kipling is particularly adept at, drawing in and excluding the reader at the same time. Any vertigo induced in the reader has, perhaps, the thematic intention of reinforcing the boyish spontaneity of multicultural play, its place in an idyll of racial innocence which, for Kim, later interpellation within an imperial order will end. But what is the source of the boy's taunt about illegitimacy? A child's nursery rhyme, even though the orphan has moved prematurely beyond maternal care? An obscure adult obscenity, perhaps bowdlerised? Is dirty Hindustani slang, perhaps based on a phrase the Indian Kipling knew and savoured, being smuggled past British censorship? Is this nursery or gutter language? It is not clear, but judgement might tilt towards the latter. The boy is litmus paper for all sorts of slang picked up from the men who visit the Indian woman who is the nearest thing he possesses to a mother, although the trade that she plies is euphemised. And the taunt about illegitimacy itself implies the very anxiety about paternity and destiny that O'Hara embodies.

Irrespective of its Indian setting, *Kim* carries many of the preoccupations and tropes of the yarn. As the episode in the Lahore museum illustrates, Kipling is profoundly interested in the perceptual gap between child and man, where the profound cultural rapprochement between adults, made possible only because of hours of study, is only half-understood by an ignorant child who has evaded schooling. As he has not been educated, Kim has yet to come to terms with the



Anglo and Indian strains (in both senses) within his own upbringing. The cultural hybridity of the boy is symbolised by the birth and masonic certificates sewn up in a leather amulet-case, the artefacts of universal and Eastern religion; yet the facts of his racial origin obscured by his darkened skin, will later be easily deciphered when the cloth pouch is broken into. Written language inscribes Kim's identity and it is written-down language that the boy must encounter and master as he moves from childish orality to adult literateness. During that process, O'Hara will accumulate a transcultural homosocial network of mentors fretting over both his schooling and education-in-life: the Lama, Mahbub Ali, Father Victor, Colonel Creighton, Lurgan Sahib and Babu Hurree. Yet he differs from Tom Brown, that original boy-scholar, in not wanting to go to St Xavier's. Brown is, in a sense, reconciled to Greek particles and the digamma, becoming in the process the brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman and Christian that his father feared he might not become. Kim's fulfilment of his late father's prophecy, the resumption of his place in the imperialist order is much more problematic, unless the reader is proleptically to make assumptions about O'Hara's future after the point at which the novel actually concludes. Surveillance as control and spying as child's play; reading, deciphering and interpreting as practices which develop a boy into a man yet dislodge him from his preferred state of pre-pubescent innocence; verbal adventure within and across language to reveal the ironical truth that for an imperial power cultural appropriation is sometimes nothing more than looting; the dislocation from and then unwilling, stuttering movement back towards patriarchal order: these are the issues *Kim* explores with masterly subtlety without coming to any definitive conclusion. And given the metamorphic nature of the romance, its likeness to an evolving code, a master-yarn does not often come out of nowhere: *Treasure Island* had precedents. *Kim's* clustered motifs of orphaning, intersecting classical and oriental languages, comparative religion, and paternal prophecy leading to a quest for personal origins can all be located in *She*, by Henry Rider Haggard, Kipling's only literary friend. Haggard's

own quest as an emerging professional writer had been for the “coiniest” possible literary blockbuster.

### ***She* and the cultural exploration of the White Man**

In his introduction to the novel, Daniel Karlin reminds the reader of the moment when Haggard delivered the manuscript of *She* to the office of his literary agent, declaring that it was what he would be remembered for (1991, xxvi). Haggard’s confident prediction attests to the striking impression left (then and even now) by *She*, the care with which its author has repositioned the building blocks of the yarn to create something monumentally new. Whatever the stylistic unevenness noted by critics on first publication, W.E. Henley’s observation, recorded by Kestner, that “[t]he invention is [...] admirable” (2010, 144) accurately records Haggard’s powers of reconstruction. In *Codebreakers*, Peter Twinn describes as a “crab” the German practice of complicating the breaking of a cipher by moving position-chains of letters sideways on cipher machines (1993, 128). *She* does something similar with the structure of the yarn; it alters the relationships of constituent parts. Instead of being travelled to as a place of testing, an all-male college, Cambridge University, is left behind when Leo Vincey journeys to a mysterious African kingdom with his guardian Ludwig Holly, a mathematics Fellow. An ancestral command, inscribed on a potsherd and parchments, to avenge a pre-Christian ancestor, Kallikrates is accepted by a pedagogue and his ward at a place of learning, which is then permanently abandoned. Known as Beauty and the Beast in their college, Vincey and Holly’s quest takes them from woman-free domestic contentment into sexual enthrallment within an empire ruled by a *femme fatale*, Ayesha. Under mental, physical and moral trial, Leo demonstrates that he is no idealised White Man, but in Daniel Karlin’s apt phrase a “dumb blond” (1991, xxiii); the narrative that would normally record Leo’s heroism instead celebrates the physical hardiness and moral grace of the grotesque Holly, who, despite his learning, resembles a

figure like Spring-Heeled Jack from the penny dreadful. Haggard mixes up high-, middle- and low-brow elements, adds something of the picaresque novel or travelogue, increases the importance of the protagonist's older companion and halts the quest's progress towards valorising a younger hero. He even complicates the colonial yarn's relationship to its Christian antecedents; the last recorded destination of Holly and Vincey, after they have recorded their account, as Thibet – "where, if anywhere upon this earth, wisdom is to be found" (13). By turning the yarn on its axis and creating a claustrophobic, supernatural tale where contemporary interest in psychoanalysis and Darwinism could be explored, Haggard created a best-seller. If, in view of the critical question mark over quality that his work sometimes attracts, Haggard's skill as an innovative craftsman has been largely forgotten, *She* still rewards attention as a harbinger of change in the material culture of Victorian Britain, where advertising boosted the sale of popular novels (1991, x), and of a later transformation in the twentieth century critical reception of the yarn.

For Haggard seems to have slipped from the annals of "serious" literature to become a case history in the early literary response to psychoanalysis or perhaps an object lesson in the perils of imperialism. Martin Green, influenced perhaps by Leavisite distinctions between the critical canon and other lesser works, devotes little space in *Dreams of Adventure: Deeds of Empire* to Haggard, associating him with "the manliness propaganda" of the public schools (1980, 222). Joseph Kestner devotes several pages to the novel, noting its eroticism, seeing it as a fable of male desire (2010, 149) but also as a tale of revenge against a woman (144). Nicholas Daly places Haggard suggestively on the cusp of literary modernism: "The dark continent of the unconscious mind, the earthy working-class culture evoked by Lawrence, or the more exotic primitivism of Gauguin's Polynesia, do these not occupy an analogous position in the cultural imaginary to the unexplored territories of Haggard's *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*? With some important changes of shading, the map of the world unfolded in

late Victorian romance and modernism is remarkably similar" (2000, 24). Daly comes closest to positioning Haggard securely in his literary milieu. Haggard moved in the same all-male, clubbable world as his mentor and novelistic collaborator, Andrew Lang, who acted as a populariser in his romances of emerging anthropological, Darwinian and psychoanalytical thought. A member of the Savile Club once dominated by Robert Louis Stevenson, Haggard was unafraid to acknowledge the Scot as his exemplar. Indeed, the writer of *She* was eager to build the author of *Treasure Island* into the story of his professional life.

In his memoir *The Days of My Life* (1926), Haggard presents the writing of *King Solomon's Mines* as a nonchalant response to his brother-in-law's wager that he could not write a novel that approached *Treasure Island* in quality. Placing himself as heir-apparent to Stevenson in the production of a stellar book for boys is characteristic of an improbable form of story-telling that reaches beyond Haggard's fictions to include his own life-history. At times, this entails the spinning of yarns out of unnaturally-stretched material. The production of *King Solomon's Mines* was more systematically planned than Haggard acknowledges, benefiting from a carefully choreographed marketing campaign across the advertising sites of London, which promoted it as the most amazing book ever written. If Haggard is (with his tongue perhaps slightly in his cheek) noticeably braiding his yarn by interweaving "memoir" with the themes of comparative religion, evolutionary theory and the unconscious mind found within his romances, the autobiographical elaborations, whether strictly believable or not, serve to reinforce the themes of *She* which are, as in *Kim*, central to the yarn. Within these themes - the privileging of the Classics, the flight from the domestic, alienation and rapprochement with a father or father-figure, the intertwining of literariness and manliness - Haggard's playing up of the examination and the hierarchical taxonomy of study at the public school are particularly prominent.

When dealing with his childhood in the memoir, Haggard paints a sad picture of a boy who was regarded by his parents as stupid. His father had

depreciated Rider's intellectual capability, claiming he was fit only to be a greengrocer. Whilst five brothers were thought suitable for a public-school education, he was instead sent to a grammar school in Ipswich, since not thought worth the financial expense. Deemed unsuitable for the University, he failed the Army examination through poor mathematics and, in danger of failing the Foreign Office examination, was packed off by his father to an unpaid post on the staff of Sir Henry Bulwer, Lieutenant-Governor of Natal. When Rider returned from Africa and instead of practising as a barrister became determined to achieve success as a writer, Squire Haggard predicted that his son was destined to become merely "a miserable penny-a-liner": a writer only managing to earn the hack-rate of a boys' story paper. When *She* opens with its narrator Holly, a mathematics don, preparing for a test in which his tutor expects him to distinguish himself, that is the very subject that its author miserably failed in. By yarning in his memoir about his failure as a linguist and a mathematician, Haggard encourages the belief that *She* was written as a Freudian game of revenge visited upon a father figure, as well as being intrinsically about a fantasy woman whose beauty enthrals men in the empire of their sexual imaginings. The readers of the memoir are left in a quandary: should they believe the autobiographical story-telling implicitly or enjoy their complicity with what may be merely an engaging shaggy-dog story appended to an already reality-straining yarn? For, as Daniel Karlin astutely notes, "there is something disturbing about the very facility with which *She* lends itself to being read as a cultural document or case-history of neurosis or perversion" (xix); Haggard seems to be parading his anxieties a little too obviously to convince.

The ink-intensive materiality of *She* in its early pages, as the command to avenge passes from Greek to Latin to Norman French to Gothic-type to modern English, is quite unparalleled in boy's own literature. It does seem to be (literally) a black joke at the expense of Squire Haggard, even if in putting together these seamless linguistic transitions, his son was forced to rely upon a father-substitute.

The pages of uncial and cursive Greek script owe their existence to the writer's former Ipswich headmaster. Dr Holden, a respected classicist, was dragooned into assisting Haggard construct his enacted avenging of his father's imputation of intellectual mediocrity. Reverse-engineering his former pupil's English prose into the immaculate simulacrum of Greek from the period of Herodotus took Dr Holden three months, half the time it took Haggard to complete his romance. With the help of a human crib, the "duffer" of the family turned the table on its patriarch.

Seen in the light of Haggard's relationship with his father, the characterisation of Holly and Vincey appears to deliberately invert the ideal of Varsity excellence, where physical and intellectual brilliance (preferably in the Classics), the Blue and the Double First, are normally nonchalantly combined. First, Haggard gives Leo the "tall, athletic form and clear-cut Grecian face" (78) of the Corinthian, Oxbridge all-rounder but turns him into a bathetic failure. Second, he makes Holly "as ugly as his companion was handsome" (11) and a bachelor recluse, into a spiritual follower of Dr Arnold, with the moral backbone of a Victorian headmaster. Even mathematics seems to be a signifier of Leo's respectable but marginalised status; it is while "grinding away at some mathematical work" in his room that Holly throws aside his book and catches sight of himself in the mirror, reflecting mournfully on his "physical deficiencies" (16). In "As It Seemed To Us", an essay about the cultural dispositions inherited from the Victorians, Auden quotes Evelyn Waugh, an Oxford alumnus, reminiscing about his own Varsity days: "Mathematicians were respected but were thought to be out of their proper milieu; they should have been at Cambridge" (1989, 497). In a twist then to the conventional, social pattern of heroism, the older man is made the psychological and moral centre of the yarn, and his ward, the son of Holly's only friend, becomes peripheral because of his shallow imperturbability. The early passages in which Holly and Vincey examine the potsherd and other ancient artefacts reveal Holly making the intellectual running. It is true, as Morton Cohen maintains, that Haggard does not produce in Holly a fully-rounded

intellectual (1965, 116): but were the narrative of *She* conducted through the internal consciousness of Leo the resulting tone would approach the jaunty inconsequentiality of Bertie Wooster.

When the two adventurers are made captive in Kôr, the *femme fatale* allure of Ayesha is mediated by Holly's gaze. The novel's erotic energy is generated by the dynamic of Holly's constant circling between attraction and repulsion. Granted, Leo, as a surrogate Kallikrates, is the object of her desire, but an obscure object, given the gap between her imperious nature and his phlegmatic innocuousness. Furthermore, in the empire of Kôr women initiate sexual relations and before meeting Ayesha, Vincey has already been seduced by the dark-skinned Ustane. She responds to his love with a passionate musical chant. He can only lament his sexual laxity in a tone of resignation: "What am I to do, old fellow?" By contrast, Holly swells up to an Arnoldian rhetoric at the dangers of sensual ensnarement that would have graced Rugby chapel:

For those who sell themselves into a like dominion, paying down the price of their own honour, and throwing their soul into the balance to sink the scale to the level of their lusts, can hope for no deliverance here or hereafter. As they have sown, so shall they reap and reap, even when the poppy flowers of passion have withered in their hands, and their harvest is but bitter tares, garnered in satiety. (205)

This purple prose exposes the psychological heart of the novel, which is the plight of Holly. Having thought himself too ugly for marriage, he endures and resists sensual rapture to the point where language breaks down. When She forces Holly to his knees on account of her beauty, he tells her of his worship "in a sad mixture of languages – for such moments confuse the thoughts" (172). Ayesha is kept on her pedestal by the high style of her speech. When not dumbstruck by her attractiveness, Holly matches it. If it were not for his unattractive appearance, Ludwig rather than Leo would be Ayesha's natural partner; he can match her passion and rise to Wagnerian heights of ecstasy.

Conversely, Vincey although entranced by Ayesha, can only express his feelings in clubman drawl, a patois derived from public school slang.

Joseph Kestner has pointed out that Holly finds many situations impossible to put into words, because "language is inadequate to narrate the unconscious" (2010, 148). Bruce Mazlish maintains that Africa has sometimes in literature served as an archetype for "the Dark Continent of the mind, the underground of the kingdom of the unconscious" (1993, 742). Daniel Karlin too notes how in *She* "the landscapes and episodes have an intensity and precision which mark the difference between daydream and nightmare" (1991, xi). Against a growing interest in the unconscious, Haggard cannily plays up this aspect of the writing of *She*. *King Solomon's Mines* was apparently nonchalantly thrown off. The later novel is the work of a man possessed by automatic writing, composing in a white heat of passion - like Holly wrestling with dark forces beyond his control. If the author's yarnning is to be believed, Haggard is suddenly a man inspired.

Automatic writing and white heat are motifs that suggest the unconscious or subconscious mind and the battle between the expression and repression of libidinal desires. At the time that Haggard was writing *She*, Freud had already established his Viennese consulting room. Even though the impact of Freud's ground-breaking work had still to filter through to England, the historian G.R. Searle notes that by the mid-1880s C.S. Myers was writing about the "subliminal self" and how "hidden in the depths of our being is a rubbish-heap as well as a treasure-house" (2004, 582). Searle also notes that the theme of the divided self is dealt with in *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Bram Stoker's Gothic fantasy *Dracula* (1897). Vincey/Kallikrates is another variant upon the divided self; the educated embodiment of the White Man proves physically identical to but morally inferior to his earlier incarnation, and in this fable there may lurk subconscious anxiety about the condition of the British Empire.

As noted earlier in *Orientalism*, Said used a Kipling poem to create the concept of "the White Man" as "an idea, a persona, a style of being" (1995, 224,



226-7). It sanctioned a "rigid binomial opposition of 'ours' and 'theirs'" reinforced by anthropology, linguistics, history, the theory of natural selection and the rhetoric of Arnoldian high cultural humanism, that led to cultural hegemony "even to the point of making 'theirs' exclusively a function of 'ours'" (227). Although Haggard's attempts to render a donnish intellectual are a little clumsy, the techniques of Western scholarship are applied to the persona of Holly in his descriptions of sculptures in the caves of Kôr: "I thought how envious some antiquarian friends of my own at Cambridge would be if ever I got an opportunity of describing these wonderful remains to them" (*She*, 127). His intellectual interest is characteristic of the late nineteenth century when scholastic enquiry was no longer being hamstrung by the obligation to defend the religious and cultural superiority of Christianity. Yet in *She*, that interest is arguably more playful than imperially condescending (and to suggest this is far from mounting an intellectual defence of imperialism), since Haggard is specifically playful in his allusions to empire. He gives the concept a sexual potency which is both disordered and repressed, as witnessed by the much-quoted scene where an entranced Holly's gaze moves up Ayesha's body: "my eyes travelled up her form now only robed in a garb of clinging white that did but serve to show its perfect and *imperial* shape" (143, my italics). Before her unexpected demise, Ayesha has planned to come to England, taking power from Queen Victoria, leaving Holly to surmise that although "she would speedily make ours the most glorious and prosperous empire that the world has ever seen, it would be at the cost of a terrible sacrifice to life" (226). The mind-boggling consequences of what Holly is suggesting are left unexplored in a statement of a very British and strangulated understatement.

Haggard's propensity for presenting his imperatrix as a sexual dominatrix is considerably complicated by the family story in Haggard's memoir that a hideous rag-doll used by the family nurse to frighten his brothers and sisters was named *She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed* (1926, i, 248). Is Haggard - with a tongue

once again in his cheek and an eye to further royalties - perhaps overzealous in bringing into the light of his reader's consciousness a childhood experience that may "subconsciously" explain the frightfulness of Ayesha? Daniel Karlin has suggested that something may be overlooked in turning "popular romance into exemplary text" (1991, xx); and I would suggest that authorial knowingness rather than naivety might be that missing factor in *She*. That "something" surely includes Haggard's sense of humour and transgressive fun with the registers of fiction from penny-a-liner Gothic romance through middlebrow tale of adventure to scholarly novel. The cultural imaginary created in *She* is an exotic gumbo thrown together by a writer more interested in the pungent flavour of individual ingredients than their combined effect, or in reinforcing a respectable stereotype of the White Man. Sexual prurience is the base into which anthropology, Darwinian thought, mythology, comparative religion and Arnoldian scholarship are stirred with a measure of public school morality by a writer self-confident enough to experiment with the yarn's form.

### ***Kim* and the cultural exploration of the White Man**

Leo Vincey turns out to so lack the intellect and moral backbone of a British colonial adventurer that on the advice of Andrew Lang, Haggard felt obliged to add a rider to his Introduction explaining why Ayesha might be attracted to him, liberally adding a pinch of salt to his yarn (1991, xxiii, 15): "Can it be that extremes meet, and that the very excess and splendour of her mind led her by means of some strange physical reaction to worship at the shrine of matter?" As *Kim* follows the template of *She*, what might be said of O'Hara's incipient White Man status? For all its exoticism, *She* describes transcultural love, and in *Kim* too the strongest relationship (between a Tibetan lama and a poor, white orphan) radically crosses ethnic divides. How does O'Hara fit into multicultural India?

The racial positioning of Kimball O'Hara, aligned to Said's concept of the White Man, has continued to fascinate literary scholarship. Sue Walsh notes how, in answering this question, critics have often turned to the parallel between *Kim* and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, "not only because of its picaresque structure or the pairing of a young boy with an older figure who acts as a catalyst for the former's growth and development but particularly because of its use of 'dialect'" (2010, 13). Thus, Martin Green is cognizant, like Louis Cornell, of Kipling's immersion in American literature. Green sees O'Hara's Irish nationality as a homage to Twain, also observing that the relationship between Kim and the Lama is strikingly like that between Huck and Jim with the Road approximating for the River (1980, 265-6). Bristow, however, somewhat like Bratton in her analysis of *The Coral Island*, sees the racial hierarchies of Victorian ethnography shadowed in *Kim*. O'Hara "is unable to rise out of his Indian habits because of his Irishness" (1991, 206). For Bristow, O'Hara's depiction as a loafer, a drinker and an unfit father follows on from a considerable body of anti-Irish writing that abounded in the nineteenth century (207). Coming to very different conclusions, two critics, Green and Bristow, present O'Hara as an outsider being tenderly nurtured during a picaresque quest and as white trash. The critical positioning of Kim's ethnicity and class continues to fluctuate.

A nuancing of *Orientalism's* analysis of ideological support for imperialism within *Kim* is evident in *Kipling and Beyond* (2010). Its introductory chapter by Caroline Rooney and Kaori Nagai summarizes developments in theory since Said. They cite Homi Bhabha's essays in *The Location of Culture* (1994) that posit colonial ambivalence, moving Kipling's work away from "an embodiment of racial binaries" towards "syncretic possibilities". They quote Gayatri Spivak's characterisation (2002) of Kimball O'Hara as "a resident alien" and a metaphor for post-colonial migration. For a closer reading of the child-centred aspect of Kipling's fiction, rather than his position as an icon of post-colonial theory, they point to Don Randall's *Kipling's Imperial Boy* (2000), which explores his boy

heroes as "able cultural brokers, due to their hybridity and proximity to the native subject" (2).

Whilst acknowledging Kipling's fondness for contemporary American writers, placing *Kim* within the British tradition of the yarn, and specifically acknowledging its debt to *She* may help elucidate O'Hara's cultural positioning. The novel records how, having left their record of the African adventure with Haggard's fictionalised self, Vincey and Holly, reunited in bachelor contentment after the death of Ayesha, have left lodgings in Cambridge "for Thibet" (14). *She's* geographical stepping off point, then, is *Kim's* place of departure; paternal love and filial love conquer all in Haggard's novel which ends with the suggestion of a Buddhist renunciation of the world. What will O'Hara's status be at the end of his quest? More sophisticated in its analysis than the African romance, Kipling's Indian novel pitches the surveillance of control (imperialism) against the surveillance of love (cultural studies); the two "tableaux" at the start of *Kim*, presenting him astride a cannon and watching an act of transcultural scholarship, almost pictorially present the boy's predicament. Thus, if anything, might not Kipling be seeking to blur the identity of O'Hara, turning his skin tone into an optical illusion (like the later *B.O.P.* motif) to deliberately encourage mutually contradictory Occidental and Oriental readings?

Nonetheless, Said's critique of Anglo-Indian scholarship as enforcing an imperialising agenda in *Kim* is trenchant, since it is clearly visible in Colonel Creighton, the master of colonial surveillance, who has for years bombarded the Royal Geographical Society "with monographs on strange Asiatic cults and unknown customs" (1987, 174). Said's point about Arnoldian scholarship being used to posit a negative, essentialist construction of non-Occidental cultures is evidenced by *Hobson-Jobson*. Kate Teltscher notes how Burnell dismisses Indian modes of thought when in a draft introduction to the glossary, he wrote, "it is noteworthy that the additions which have thus accrued to the English language are from the intellectual standpoint, of no intrinsic value [...] they do not

represent new ideas (Teltscher, 2013, xx). It would be wrong however to suggest that the study of orientalism invariably aligned scholars with imperialistic prejudices. The late Christopher Hitchens, a friend and early collaborator with Said, points out that "those whose passion was for the Orient were very often numbered among the *anti-imperialists*" (2011, 500). The exchange of gifts between the Lama and Curator in the Lahore Museum gestures towards transcultural equality: "We be craftsmen together, thou and I!". At this point, Kipling seems acutely aware of the syncretic possibilities of scholarship, possibilities which are being observed secretly by an orphan whose own syncretic potentiality, symbolised by his sunburnt skin, is his defining feature.

As well as thinking that Kipling borrowed the nature of O'Hara's Irishness from Huckleberry Finn, Green proposes that Twain should be credited with the idea of substituting a boy for a man as hero (1980, 265), the precedent which *Kim* adopts. Green's is an important insight and a reminder that the incipient and problematic status of O'Hara as an imperial boy in post-colonial theory may occlude an earlier trope of Kipling criticism evident in J.M.S. Tompkin's *The Art of Rudyard Kipling* (1959) and Bonamy Dobrée's *Kipling Realist and Fabulist* (1967). They pick up, and find to be of considerable influence upon his work, a phrase that was coined by Henry Rider Haggard: "every man, like every rope, hath his breaking strain" (Dobrée, 31). Perhaps in O'Hara in whom Occidental and Oriental strains jostle and play linguistically, one might witness a boy subjected to a breaking strain, symbolically enacted when the amulet around his neck is broken to reveal his status as a white boy. The severing of that string brings to an end his essential boyishness, his freedom to do "nothing with an immense success" (2).

*Kim*, by turning Kimball O'Hara into a changeling, complicates the boy's own paradigm but also makes it quintessentially "boy's own" through that mutation, for the orphan is initially a free agent, before becoming a secret agent. O'Hara's plight is not picturesque, however it might appeal to a boy reader

inconvenienced by schoolmasters or mothers and their demands, yet it is picaresque before he meets the lama and departs along the Great Western Road. He goes where he pleases in a walled city before he explores the sub-continental interior. His defining function is urban trafficking, which requires him to be constantly on the move. Only intermittently traceable, he runs silently between a matrix of adults who provide sustenance but no solid, emotional centre. It is only after the string securing the amulet is subject to breaking strain by the wrenching hand of an army chaplain that Kim's identity is revealed and his compulsory translation into a white community begins.

As well as being a Great Game, enmeshment within spying for Kim also represents the tragic curtailment of the freedom and innocence of childhood. The freighting of the child with imperial responsibilities, his "breaking in" as if merely an animal (a prize colt being the analogy that recurs in *Kim*) is alluring but unsettling; the game becomes as much a "Pandora's box" as Hawkins' opening of a pirate's chest. When the Lahore orphan inverts father-son relations by adopting the lama and following him on the Road, like Huckleberry Finn, his decision is fundamentally a vote for the liberating perspective of the child and a rejection of the curbing conformity of adult society. This entails O'Hara leaving his mother-substitute, fulfilling Paul Zweig's formulation that "the adventurer forms a masculine friendship so intimate, so passionate, that it reasserts, in male terms, the emotional bond which formerly anchored him within the world of the city" (75).

*Kim* therefore conflates its boy-hero's battle against the white men of serious aspect who would enculturate him with Western values with the only serious quest in the novel: the lama's search to be freed from the Wheel of Life. As Humphrey Carpenter observes, Kipling's "brilliant study of a white child adrift in the Indian underworld [...] has something of the Arcadian yearnings of the great introspective children's authors, with its account of the old lama's search for a sacred River, an Enchanted Place where he can find peace" (1985, 15). At no

point is the lama's journey itself infantilised. The quest has a moral intensity that sets it in opposition to the Great Game of intelligence; a complex, syncretic dialogue takes place in the novel between the values of espionage and spiritual renunciation. The verse which acts as a heading to the opening chapter warns the Christian reader to be gentle with the prayerful Buddhist heathen. The novel ends with the lama at last verbally expressing his love for the "Son of my soul", fulfilling the mutuality of love that has been O'Hara's quest since the scene in the Lahore Museum, and appealing to Kim to cross the Threshold of Freedom with him. Still an adolescent, O'Hara's ontological status as a White Man remains unresolved. As the narrative of *Kim* breaks down in a holy man's epiphany, Kipling leaves O'Hara as the perfect "colt" (113) of Anglo-Indian espionage strained to breaking point by a debt of love, his allegiance to his substitute father.

### ***Lord Jim* and the cultural exploration of the White Man**

He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders [...] He was spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat, and in the various Eastern ports where he got his living as ship-chandler's water-clerk he was very popular (*Lord Jim*, 2002, 3).

With ironic precision, Conrad locates the not-quite-heroic status of his protagonist at the opening of his novel about a dishonoured First Mate with a dark secret beneath his chivalric attire – a figure who "to the white men in the waterside business and to the captains of ships [...] was just Jim – nothing more" (4). Like the first description of Kim atop of Zam-Zammah, Conrad immediately hints at the predicament of his hero. Jim is metaphorically weighed down by the burden of his failure to live up to an ideal of chivalric manliness - white manliness - derived from a course of light holiday literature (by which Conrad means the romantic sea tales of Christian writers such as Marryat, Kingston and Ballantyne). He has been revealed under cross-examination in court to be a coward and as soon as his surname is known in the waterside business he feels obliged to move

on to another port to recover his anonymity. Yet the young man's pugnacity, captured in his straight advance, reveals a refusal to give up on an impossible ideal of conduct without a fight.

The ironical contesting of racial supremacy in both *Kim* and *Lord Jim* might be taken to demonstrate a comparable narrative dexterity. Yet in a critical tradition dating back to T.S. Eliot and literary modernism, as Martin Green notes, Conrad, in opposition to Kipling, has been considered "the model of everything [...] to be admired and preferred" (1980, 280). By contrast, having begged the question whether Conrad can be assumed to have a less imperialist posture than Kipling, Sarah Cole shrewdly argues for the symbiotic relationship of Conrad to the dream of empire. She asserts that "Conrad's creation of a twentieth-century alienated subject – perhaps the quintessential icon in modernism's landscape – derives from his simultaneous rejection of and dependence upon traditions of imperial narration" (1998, 252). Cole is surely right to reject a binary construction of Conrad the ironical opponent of empire and Kipling its doctrinaire supporter, but even she may be underplaying *Lord Jim's* attachment to an ideal of Western masculine conduct in a character whose obituarising by Marlow describes him as "excessively romantic" (303).

*Lord Jim* no less than *Kim* concerns itself essentially with a dilemma over conduct. The secret that Jim attempts to hide by concealing his surname is that he has abandoned a ship of Meccan pilgrims, the *Patna*, when falsely believing it no longer seaworthy leaving its Muslim passengers to their fate. The full details of the *Patna* desertion come out at a maritime Court of Inquiry early in the novel and the subsequent episodes deal with the problem of how Jim can regain his self-respect. At the Inquiry he must acknowledge orally under cross-examination his professional and moral failure. Since the novel concerns itself with the construct of the chivalric English gentleman, the breaking of this code of honour at sea – by not going down with the ship – turns *Lord Jim* into the classic text in failed-conduct literature (even though *Heart of Darkness*, using a classic, quest



progression exposes Kurtz's moral fragility even more graphically, he is not British). Jim must indict himself unflinchingly, struggling for self-control as his dignity is stripped away by the presiding magistrate, followed by his maritime officer's certificate.

Like *Kim* then, *Lord Jim* also pivots on a certificate (but its withdrawal rather than its interpretation). Jim's failure, established so early on, to live up to his own false expectations is an education in self-knowledge that the failed merchant seaman would rather repress; the novel's burden thenceforth is to follow where his romantic insistence on not abandoning the quest for personal honour will take him. Jim's connection to text, the light holiday literature, has proved unstable, yet he clings to the immaculacy of the White Knight construct, dressing immaculately in white even though its hollowness is exposed by the fact that his Christian name has been reduced to an 'incognito', an incomplete packet of secret information. Conversely, the decrypting of O'Hara's identity, to establish his social position, is still awaited. Jim has lost a surname; Kim has still to find one. Jim has undertaken two years' training in seamanship and trigonometry, the necessary skill for carrying passengers safely to port, and failed in his vocation. Kim has yet to be forced into training for the white man's profession perfectly suited to his instinct, as a spy. Jim has had his symbolic whiteness besmirched. Kim, because mangled prophecy and certificate are still "sewn-up", has yet to have his destiny interpreted. All that can be said is that a Colonel riding on a great horse accompanied by nine-hundred, regimental devils (not all devils being dark-skinned), with their God, a Red Bull on a green field, will come to look after him. Kim's future life in the imperial intelligence network might be construed as an awfully big adventure, only a tremendous game; whereas Jim's ultimately failed attempt to recover personal honour, driven by an innately immature form of literature (romantically divorced from the complexities of life) might seem to sound the death knell for the boy's own romance.

But is the positioning of Kimball O'Hara and Lord Jim fully antithetical? Is Kipling's imperial boy simply destined for service in a value system that Conrad has deconstructed as a rickety, unseaworthy vessel? Does Conrad's technique of liberal (and liberally-applied) irony, verbally undercutting any enthusiasm for the Great Game of British imperialism, separate him so neatly from the preoccupations found in Kipling's supposedly blatant support? Just as *Kim* has a counterpoint to espionage in its protagonist's childish yearning for the freedom of the Road, so *Lord Jim* has a residual respect for the idealism of its hero, expressed in the very Victorian motif of competitive examination. A submerged hierarchy of moral conduct lies under the watery surface around the *Patna*; by not going down with the ship Jim has failed a test of manliness. Foreshadowing the revelation of Jim's hidden fall from grace, when introducing his tarnished hero, Conrad marks him out as a failure by observing that "[a] water clerk need not pass an examination in anything under the sun" (3).

It may appear in the opening sections of *Lord Jim* then, that its hero has been hopelessly naïve in imagining himself equal to the fictional escapades of a Jack Martin or Ralph Rover, "always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book" (5). Clearly not only has Jim failed to comprehend the fantasy contained in the improving literature represented by Ballantyne and others (because he is an inadequate reader); he has also failed in his *viva* defence in court of those values (because he is an inadequate advocate). The rickety reality of Empire-building, clothed in the fine words of white idealism (Kurtz again comes to mind), is exposed in *Lord Jim* in the terms of a humiliating, failed examination, a term employed when Marlow first sets sight on Jim as the young man comes ashore with the other renegade officers. A gharry draws up but its driver cannot bring himself to look at the shamed officers and instead gives himself up "to the critical examination of his toes" (30).

Yet the acknowledgement that there is an examination to be passed or failed suggests that *Lord Jim* too is in thrall to the honour code of the English

gentleman. The point at which Marlow spies Jim is significant because at the commencement of this chapter, the novel has switched from a third-person to a first-person narrator and the character of Jim is refracted through the personality of Marlow. And the older man's view of the disgraced marine officer is conflicted from the start: "He had no business to look so sound. I thought to myself – well, if this sort can go wrong like that ..." (30). The idea of continuing kinship is reinforced when he compares Jim favourably with the shifty, lower-class engineers who have also betrayed the human cargo of the *Patna*; after the young man's futilely heroic death in Malaya, Marlow pronounces he was "one of us" (303). That sense of gentlemanly affinity leads Marlow to intervene on the young man's behalf with his business acquaintance Stein and have Jim appointed as his business representative in the archipelago of Patusan. The typographical play on Patna/Patusan reinforces the sense of the official post as a resit in the moral examination of the White Man, reinforced by making Jim's temporary recovery of self-respect dependent on a model of colonial governorship. The *Tuan's* role is admittedly akin to the benevolent paternalism of a James Brookes in Sarawak rather than rapacious imperialism. But upon it there still falls the shadow of the white man's burden, even if that of a middle-ranking administrator with a shortened Christian name, whose elevation to the status of *Tuan* - the Malay variant of Sahib - masks the disgrace of a lost surname.

The lordliness of Jim in Patusan grows as he gains the trust of the indigenous peoples, becoming in Jacques Berthoud's words "the incorruptible guarantor of peace and prosperity" (*Lord Jim*, 2002, xxvii) and friend of Dain Waris, son of the Bugis chief, Doramin. The position of custodianship that he achieves mirrors that of First Mate on the *Patna*, but has a reciprocity because Jim is dependent upon the Patusan population for the recovery of his sense of self-respect. But there is nevertheless a distance from the ruled, and a semi-blindness in Lord Jim's conception of himself. This lack of vision is open to fatal exploitation by the less high-minded. Indeed, Berthoud discerns in Conrad's distance as a

Polish émigré from the British gentlemanly class an objectivity that “made it possible to perceive the cultural idealism of a class whose chivalric illusions were to founder in the trenches of the First World War” (xxxix).

Conrad’s depiction of Jim’s tragic second fall from grace is nevertheless influenced by his own status as a displaced member of the Polish gentry or *szlachta* turned master mariner. The honour code - self-denying, industrious and impartial - is not traduced in the encounter that leads to Jim’s chosen self-destruction at the hands of Doramin. His downfall comes in the form of a white man, his nemesis being a grotesquely-drawn pirate, rumoured to be the son of a baronet gone to the bad, called Gentleman Brown. When Brown’s murderous crew lay siege to Patusan, Jim falsely believes that public-school rules of honour apply amongst all Englishmen. Offering his adversary a clear road or else a clear fight on the basis that Brown’s word can be trusted leads to disaster as the pirate doubles back and massacres Dain and his men, after which Jim in atonement gives himself up for ritual execution by Doramin. The episode tragically repeats his romanticised commitment to an honour code ignoring practical realities and confirming the assertion of Cornelius, Brown’s accomplice that Jim is in some ways little more than a child. It is as if the cabin boy with the fine sensibility who has haunted juvenile literature (holiday literature in Conrad’s dismissive term) for most of the nineteenth century is at last bested by the unregenerate pirate.

### **Patriotism and paternity in the colonial encounter**

Conrad’s infatuation with the English, gentlemanly honour code that was culturally transmitted to public schoolboys has been ingeniously explained as a Freudian slip of the pen by Gustav Morf. It is known that the author was much distressed during the writing of *Lord Jim* with the article of April 1899 by Eliza Orzeszkowa suggesting that as an aristocratic émigré from Poland, Conrad had betrayed Poland. Noting the typographical similarity of *Patna* to *Patria*, Morf suggests that Conrad wrote a confessional novel expiating gentlemanly guilt at his

personal desertion of nation. To play typographically with this insight further it might be suggested that the y(e)arning of Marlow is an elegy for his surrogate son, Jim, who is forced into elective suicide by the pressure of the Patna/Patria equation, the demand that he conform to an impossible ideal of gentlemanly behaviour. Since Haggard also uses the Latin tag, *Amor Vincit Omnia*, love conquers all, to soften the other derivation of Vincey, meaning vengeance, the employment of language games or para-praxes appears integral to these colonial encounters, particularly as Kimball O'Hara's moniker, "little friend of all the world" is an application of Sahib in its sense of companion. In *Hobson-Jobson*, the hierarchical taxonomy of the Sahib in India is indelibly inscribed in a written "judgement" that permanently places the Colonel, Collector, Lord and even Sergeant in class relation to each other. It is a clarion call to patriotic duty; and against its patriarchal demands, the "vocative" orality of Sahib as spoken by indigenous peoples - transgressive in its idealised promise of male friendship across class and racial boundaries - offers a welcome blurring of divides, symbolised by the confused racial identity and paternity of O'Hara's skin.

In *Boys Will Be Boys*, E.S. Turner maintains that the one basic plot running through the Gothic thrillers "was that of the young and rightful heir deprived of his birthright by evil-scheming relatives or guardians" (1976, 19). Turning this plot on its head, the colonial encounter dislocates its actual or metaphorical orphan-heroes from their patrimonial line. Surrogate fathers step in to offer their charges a relief from the breaking strain of racial identity and destiny. Jim cannot return to his father, a rural dean, because of his betrayal of chivalric Christianity upon the *Patna*; the complex, worldly Marlow, recognising an affinity, steps in with a series of appointments that his putative son breaks or ruins because of the psychic wound of his unremitting idealism. The lama offers a spiritual alternative to the Colonel coming for Kim on his white charger; the great fire-breathing dragon that the boy straddles somewhat unconvincingly in an imperial masquerade *could* be quenched by the peace-loving waters of the River of Life.

Holly, initially against the quest to Africa and going out of quasi-paternal affection, saves the day with his intractable tree-like strength when the British lion of imperialism, Leo, fails to roar.

The dissolution of the natural father-son connection leads to a surrogate paternal bond that is even stronger. Filial love conquering all other forms, Leo and Ludwig find solace together in Thibet, where the only earthly wisdom can be found - one example of uncondescending Occidental respect for Oriental wisdom. Marlow yarns to his anonymous circle of white men, defending the disgraced officer's continued kinship with them by virtue of race, class and sensibility. The lama appeals for Kim to join him where the wheel of empire has no dominion. More than in the school story or the maritime adventure, the colonial adult mentor identifies himself closely with the child or young man in his care.

## **Conclusion**

I have concluded my exploration of the colonial encounter by foregrounding the interest that an older man takes in the psychological development of a younger male to whom he becomes, formally or informally, a moral guardian. Although imperial yarns in their setting, *Kim*, *She* and *Lord Jim*, like the *Boy's Own Paper*, also address the extent to which a ward's imagination should be quarantined from paternal injunctions, such as spying for the empire, avenging a patricidal murder or acting out a Christian ideal of chivalry. I would argue that the form of surveillance undertaken by the lama, Holly and Marlow reflects love more than imperial necessity; or that at the very least the colonial yarn is genuinely dialectical in balancing the personal against the geo-political. Furthermore, these three romances evidence another development as the perspective of the older man in the yarn challenges that of the younger in importance for the first time. Although the exotic locations of the stories mean that they are full of colour and incident, there is also a sense, noted by Paul Zweig, of a change at the end of the nineteenth century when the "substance of

adventure has been displaced inward" (227), reflected by a greater narrative reliance on psychological factors, whether conscious or unconscious. That inwardness only intensifies, as will be seen, when an imperial veteran returns home, a subject explored in my next chapter about the domestic landscape fantasy.

## Chapter 4: The Way through the Woods - The Domestic Landscape Fantasy

"Now are you two lawfully seized and possessed of all Old England," began Puck, in a sing-song voice. "By Right of Oak, Ash, and Thorn are you free to come and go and look and know where I shall show you or best you please. You shall see What you shall see and you shall hear What you shall hear, though It shall have happened three thousand year; and you shall know neither Doubt nor Fear."

Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill*

### Introduction

When setting out the yarn's defining characteristics in the thesis Introduction, I proposed that one way of reading the form is as a means of playing with the perceptual gap between adult and child. I noted that the yarn came into its own in nineteenth-century Britain at a time when an oral culture was being overtaken by a written culture, owing to social pressure for universal education; and that, as a consequence, while the masculine adventure story might appear principally to bridge the gap between childish orality and adult literacy in an upwards (that is, growing-up) direction, it simultaneously opened a channel for the expression of childlike feeling in men. When writing of the colonial encounter, I provided evidence in three novels of speech and conversation being used to disrupt the imposition upon a young hero of a written *diktat*, the command to live out an impossible ideal or oppressive future. At the point when the constellating of British and Roman imperial values – implacably resolute, patriotic and self-sacrificing – might appear at a zenith, the gravitational pull of childlike freedom as a release from the oppressive demands of being grown-up, particularly in Kipling's *Kim*, was still forcefully exerting its influence.

Following Zweig, I also emphasized the movement toward inwardness in adventure at the turn of the twentieth century, separately noting that in the colonial novels under discussion, the viewpoint of the older man rather than the



younger man or child was pre-eminent. In this chapter, I shall examine what happens to the yarn on the home front as it becomes detached from adult theatres of interest, still sometimes imperial, and is reworked within the Edwardian literary marketplace to include a younger constituency of children (although curiously this does not necessarily result in books written solely or even primarily for children). Without such an examination, an overview of the yarn would be incomplete, for in the texts I explore, the construction of young children as essentially different from adults in their language, imagination and activity in the real world is particularly marked; and yet there is also a strong tension between the yarn's cultural imperative of ensuring boys become men, and its opposite: the adult desire to re-appropriate the child-state even under the guise of coaxing children towards maturity. The cultural dualities and oscillations at the centre of my construction of the masculine adventure tale are therefore particularly evident in the synthesis of adult and child perspectives within the three chosen works, *Barrie's Little White Bird* (1902), *Baden-Powell's Scouting for Boys* (1908) and *Kipling's Puck* tales (1906, 1910) – texts that I have grouped under the collective rubric of domestic landscape fantasy.

This discussion involves a modification in approach from chapters which deal with a recognised sub-genre. By their physical or symbolic theatres of interest, school, maritime and colonial romances offer straightforward points of comparison, and invasion scare stories treat the same underlying anxiety. In the term, domestic landscape fantasy (and "domestic" refers to a metropolitan park, suburban street or rural site within the British Isles) I am exploring a perceived unity in preoccupation within otherwise disparate texts from the same decade: their manner of fixating upon the figure of a child in a landscape, and exploring with great intensity its imaginative engagement with the material environment. Since the child in these texts is not, by reason of age or social class, always conversant with sophisticated Latin, the landscape becomes a proxy for the interpretative struggle with a classical language: the model boy (and in Kipling's

case, girl too) is marked out by their acuity in reading their landscape, of seizing and possessing its meaning. But in the process of the child becoming educated about the landscape, the “devices of the adventure story” - as Martin Green notes of J.M. Barrie and *Peter Pan* - become “conscious fantasy” (229), and as a result the relationship of the adult to the child is problematized.

In writing of the colonial encounter, I made use of the *B.O.P.* optical illusion shown in Figure 4 to conceptualise mutually contradictory readings of surveillance as motivated by imperial control or love. I want, in writing of the domestic landscape fantasy, to employ the *B.O.P.* insignia on the front cover of the thesis to raise a similar dichotomy. Supposing the latitudinal and longitudinal co-ordinates of this *B.O.P.* badge were prison bars - the imprisoning perceptual state of conventional adulthood - which a grown-up could part to enter a boy or girl’s sphere of experience, and the land entered was devoid of an imperialising agenda? What sensibility would emerge if that grown-up could abandon, at least partly, man- for man-boy status? What if residual imperialistic tendencies in the adult act chiefly as a pretext for positioning himself with the child in the landscape, permitting uncomfortably subversive collusions? Suppose the delicate questions of how far adult experience should be present to the child or how far child innocence should be disturbed by adult knowledge are the serious themes at play in Kensington Gardens, the scout camp or on the Sussex Weald. To advance the discussion, I have chosen as a passage for preliminary close reading, the opening of Kipling’s “A Centurion of the Thirtieth”, one of the Roman tales in *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906). More intricately than any other writer, Kipling manages to collapse the imperial into a child’s world of make-believe - the two paradigms that converge in the *B.O.P.* badge.

### **The quest for the child in the domestic landscape**

As in *Kim*, the opening passages of “A Centurion of the Thirtieth” present a young child observing the world from a confined space in a manner that

emphasizes their role of interloper or eavesdropper. In the Roman tale, placed fifth in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), and the first of three dealing with the occupation of Britain, that child is a girl, Una. She is alone on a wooded escarpment in the Sussex downs, her slightly older brother, Dan, also home-schooled, having been kept in for failures in Latin, a nursery equivalent to the predicament that was observed befalling Alick Careless in *B.O.P.'s "Alick in Blunderland"* (1917). Alick is locked into a world of Carrollian fantasy until he can correct a blunder as an atonement for his linguistic incompetence, but there is no sense that Una is being rewarded as a more competent student than Dan or either privileged or condescended to as a girl in the fantasy-experience she initiates from the wooded "watch-tower" that her brother and she have dubbed Volaterrae "out of the verse in *Lays of Ancient Rome*" (1993, 84).

Slipping through a secret gap in the fence into their private hideout, Una assumes a vantage point that Angus Wilson notes as a cause of the "elusive magic" in Kipling's work. In Wilson's opinion, it arises from "the incorporation into adult stories and parables [of the] transformation of a small space into a whole world which comes from the intense absorption of a child" (1977, 1). For Una that magic is both literal and literary as she incants snatches, against the blustering wind, from Macaulay's lays, whose imperial and patriotic virtues had made them popular recitation pieces in the public schools. At the same time, picking up her brother's catapult from its secret place she fires "into the face of the lull" (1993, 85), imagining herself in battle against Rome. Yet as the recitation (and the volley) evokes the presence of a dead Roman centurion, Parnesius, it might be suspected (to this reader at least, if not necessarily to all) that a more contemporary shadow text lurks behind Una's recitation of Macaulay – Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). In "On Wenlock Edge", the old wind in the old anger, troubling the wooded Wrekin, puts the poet in mind of a Roman in historic Uricon, sharing the same blood and troubled thoughts as a modern English yeoman. And "Into My Heart An Air That Kills", from the same collection, uses the Shropshire

landscape (a cultural imaginary, a Neverland that Housman had not visited) to evoke a land of lost content not traversable again – which, amongst other interpretations, may signal the enchanted places of childhood. That yearning for a vanished state of bewitchment is caught in a brief concession to the language of a very young girl within the narrative, evoking what it is like to experience a gusty day: “Now wind prowling through the woods sounds like exciting things going to happen, and that is why on blowy days you stand up in Volaterrae and shout bits of the *Lays* to suit its noises” (83).

The exciting intrusion of Parnesius into the modern world of Dan and Una – for although the children imaginatively evoke historical figures from the land, they are reciprocally watched and intruded upon by the ghosts of Sussex past – is made possible by Puck. A creation owing as much to the Psammead of Nesbit’s tales for children as Robin Goodfellow – so in a sense a rebranded version of Shakespeare’s sprite – Puck has also been evoked earlier through the same literary magic; Dan and Una have repeated a scene from an abridged *Midsummer Night’s Dream* three times over on Midsummer Eve under one of the oldest hills in Old England, Pook’s Hill. The purpose of his visitation is to enable the children to take seizin, a symbolically-enacted seizing and possessing of a clod of Sussex land as an act of imaginative recovery. The *Puck* stories are therefore history lessons delivered orally through the yarns of long-dead inhabitants, made possible by the fact that the children have, in raising Puck, “broken the Hills” (9). This implied code-breaking is double-edged. For although it seems that the children’s carefree literary incantations have acted as a cipher to open up chapters in an adult history book, it is equally true that the adult history in the tales is profoundly modified by the representation of children as capable of imaginative absorption and make-believe.

For example, when Parnesius first appears to Una, she marvels at the red horse-tail on his helmet that flicks and rasps in the wind (Figure 6). Such details act to reassure any child reader of the physicality of the historical visitants, who,

as Gillian Avery notes, seem like dressed-up figures from a pageant (1972, 114). But they also capture a child's ability to fix on an extraneous feature; a quality that Dixon Scott, writing in 1912, thought characteristic of its author, describing him as "far more than [J.M.] Barrie himself, one of those who never grow up, who are never quite at home in the world, but who wander through it [...] a little alien and wistful, a little elf-like" (1971, 309). However, in "A Centurion" the child-consciousness presented is on a collision course with an older person's more careworn worldview represented by Parnesius who marches out of Roman Sussex towards Una in Edwardian Sussex. As Avery observes, there is no magicking into the past of Dan and Una, for "Kipling brings his historical characters forward" (114). To elaborate upon John Buchan's characterisation of the romance as a form in which events march just within the borders of the possible, the centurion marches across time. By so doing, he extends the adventure story's propensity for escapism by violating the laws of physics until it becomes fantasy.



Figure 6 Una and Parnesius. Original illustration from *Puck of Pook's Hill*, 1906

Scott, an extremely vigilant reader of the Puck tales, suggests that there is a composite tissue of four levels in them, made up of the child layer ("Dan and Una's plane"), a layer of "moonlit magic (plane of Puck)" on a layer of "history-stuff" placed on a "last foundation" of allegory (316). The layers are linked by "a kind of practical punning, so that the self-same object plays a different part in every plane" (316). H.R. Millar's drawing for the first edition of *Puck of Pook's Hill* demonstrates this juxtaposition of adult and child viewpoints upon the meaning of a catapult. The illustration nicely captures that to a girl innocent of warfare it is a toy made of "laccy", whereas a centurion acknowledges himself "'better with the bigger machine, little maiden'" (85). Perhaps there is just a hint in this statement, and in the very solidity of the centurion's representation, of menace; of a man's world not so accommodating to little maidens who fire catapults at soldiers of the occupation. The eyes fixed upon the bullet see different things, having recourse to different levels of experience drawn from different worlds, or the same world encountered at different points in history.

In "The Centurion", then, the full meaning (that is, what Roman catapults do) behind the historical account transmitted by Parnesius is not totally available to Una. Yet just because Kipling is using the perceptual gap between an adult and a child here to shield information from the implied child reader, this does not necessarily mean that he always adopts a construction of childhood as carefree. When I return to the sequel series of tales, *Rewards and Fairies*, in a later section, it is to examine a tale in which I argue that, in order to trouble the boundaries between the child-like and the grown-up, Kipling can also gesture towards children's ability to conceal their awareness of so-called adult truth. Yet, generally speaking, the yarning of Parnesius is typical of all the historical figures in *Puck of Pook's Hill* in that although Kipling is respectfully alive to the subtlety and fragility of two children's responses to the world, the Roman tales are freighted with meaning that is clearly too heavy for some young heads and shoulders. After introductory pleasantries between Una and Parnesius have compared the

experience of growing up in turn-of-the-century Sussex and the Roman settlement of Vectis (the modern Isle of Wight), the narrative turns to address complex truths of geo-politics, in particular what it feels like to be at the margins of imperial power. Britain is presented as a distant outpost that risks being an early casualty of retrenchment. Presciently, ten years before the First World War, the British legion's young "subalterns" are faced with the predicament of becoming collateral damage in the power-play of distant generals vying for the position of Emperor. The allegorising is so marked that Kipling's official biographer, Charles Carrington, a young officer himself in the Great War, recalls that the centurion tales "strengthened the nerve of many a young soldier in the dark days of 1915" (1970, 446-7). Parnesius is characterized as insufficiently biddable for serious promotion. In the further tales he is shown struggling desperately at Hadrian's Wall to subdue the Picts, deprived of necessary reinforcements by internecine warfare nearer Rome; Parnesius learns from an enemy informant "what troops Maximus was taking out of Britain every month to help him conquer Gaul" (104).

The imperial grandeur, then, that Kipling presents is that of a declining power, engaged in a dignified recession from its zenith. Nirad Chaudhuri contends that "his politics were the characteristic politics of the epigone, when the epic age of British world politics was already past" (1972, 28); and that recession extends to a sense of decline and entropy in the faery world inhabited by Puck, who is the last of the People of the Hills. The sense of depletion is inscribed into the landscape: very quickly Puck provides an etymology of Willingford as Weland's ford, linking a local bridge to Scandinavian, German and Anglo-Saxon legend. The Sussex landscape has suffered its own Twilight of the Gods, a shift from mythology to modernity that Kipling illustrates later in "Dymchurch Flit", describing how the People of the Hills migrate across the Channel. That sense of loss is mirrored within the centurion's story. Parnesius is observed moving from a youthful enthusiasm for soldiering to an exhausted

tenacity in which duty alone keeps him at his post despite almost insuperable odds. And as a short story collection, *Puck of Pook's Hill* itself anticipates shifting levels of experience in its audience. The centurion tales are constructed to allow sophisticated readers like Carrington, who may have encountered them first as children, to understand their growing burden of meaning. For example, a returning reader may re-encounter Kipling's employment of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* enriched with the knowledge that the poems were written by Macaulay when an imperial servant in India; Carrington takes the view that "Rudyard's Roman soldiers of the fourth century too much resembled subalterns of the Indian army" (447). Yet loss of innocence, as the text reveals more to the maturing re-reader, is counterbalanced by the child, as a static island, at the heart of the storytelling; in "The Centurion" the figure of Una framed against the landscape and preternaturally responsive to the gusts of wind that blow towards Pook's Hill, summoning imperial ghosts but also perhaps symbolising the vanity of all grown-up pretension. Moreover, the essential vanity of all human experience is embedded in the dreamlike ending of the tales where Puck's invocation to Oak and Ash and Thorn wipes any memory of the yarn from the children's consciousness.

### **Children's literature and a changing Edwardian sensibility**

Dan has cheeked his home-tutor, Miss Blake, claiming that the plural of "dominus" is "dominoes". So already he shares the attitude of Stalky towards formal Latin teaching, in which interest in the beauties of the native tongue of Parnesius, as Puck quips, will be a means to an end, should Dan need to pass army entrance examinations. The nursery cheek and the shift to the feminine point of view suggest a development in Kipling's work, a change that may have been influenced by reading to his children. In March 1903, Kipling wrote to Edith Nesbit from the Woolsack, the South African cottage that Cecil Rhodes made available to Rudyard and his family, expressing Elsie and John's delight in *Five*



*Children and It* which was being serialized in the *Strand* magazine. He admits to having seen her work "settle and clarify and grow tender" (*The Letters of Rudyard Kipling, III*, 129) and is careful to tell Nesbit that his children have a sand-pit too. It seems that Kipling had taken the hint of how make-believe could transform the atmosphere of children's stories. Yet, in contrast to Nesbit's work, the exact audience of the *Puck* tales remains ambiguous. In "As Natural as Oak Growing" (2014), Johanna Brinkley Tomlinson confirms that when *Puck of Pook's Hill* was being serialised in the *Strand* magazine, it ran concurrently with *The Amulet, A Story for Children*, pointing out that whilst Nesbit's tale was advertised as a children's story, Kipling's tale was not explicitly labelled children's literature in the January 1906 issue. Nevertheless, when the first four stories of *Puck of Pook's Hill* were being published, Kipling wrote to Edward Bok, the magazine editor, explaining that they were "[p]art of a scheme of mine for trying to give children not a notion of history but a notion of the time sense which is at the bottom of all knowledge of history" (*The Letters of Rudyard Kipling III*, 189). The emphasis on trying may indicate that Kipling suspected the notion of a time sense to be a very complex one for children to understand. In his posthumously-published memoir, *Something of Myself* (1937), Kipling appears to have changed his opinion by stating that "the tales had to be read by children, before people realised they were meant for grown-ups" (1990, 111). It is clear that Kipling has derived inspiration from the female author enjoyed by his children and that a new sensibility is at work in children's literature at the turn of the century, but the exact relationship between Kipling and Nesbit is as difficult to discern as the bias towards a child or adult reader in the *Puck* stories.

Acknowledging that "introducing historical incidents into modern life as if in another dimension" (443) was a borrowing from Edith Nesbit, Carrington argues that "the Land and the People, persisting through Time" provides the theme of *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*. In *The Nesbit Tradition*, Marcus Crouch argues that she enabled children's literature to explore new worlds of

ideas, preventing it from returning to the stuffily enclosed nurseries of the nineteenth century (1972, 16). There is nothing stuffily enclosed about *Volaterrae*, but Kipling's adaptation of Nesbit's work is generally more in her method of combining fantasy and history than in her manner of presenting adults from a children's point of view. Dan and Una are indeed presented as real, naughty and inquisitive children, but their relationship to the landscape owes more to the Richard Jefferies of *Bevis* (1882), of which Peter Hunt has observed that "[n]ever before had fictional children been afforded such freedom within a realistic setting" (1989, xiii). Una's connection to Sussex woodland is as intense as *Bevis*'s; the realisation of Sussex, although owing a great deal to the presence of Hobden the Hedger (who symbolises the enduring relationship of man to nature), would not have the same sensibility were it not fused with one child's way of experiencing the landscape. Una, through her chanting in the "important watch-tower that juts out of the Far Wood just as Far Wood juts out of the hillside" (83) breaks the realistic adult coding of the hills, so to say, to find enchanted meanings secreted there.

There is, however, another secret layer of meaning obscured by Una's presence in the Sussex woodland that Kipling keeps hidden from his readers, a practice of concealment which exemplifies the contradictoriness that John Gross describes as "the paradox of his being at once the most public and most intimate of writers" (1972, xi). The experience of the two children at play in Sussex carries a private reference to the more adventurous play possible in South Africa. At the Woolsack, Kipling's surviving children John and Elsie had been given a lion cub by Cecil Rhodes, and Rudyard had nicknamed the children Dan, from the faithful Israelite Daniel tested in the Babylonian lion's den, and Una, from the virgin protected by a tame lion in Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (Lycett, 1999, 379). Kipling allows redundant levels of familial meaning to be left in published works, which retain what might be termed the spectral aura of a father talking to his child, an atmosphere perhaps most clearly felt in the *Just So* tales of 1902 which preceded

the *Puck* stories. In providing a South African overlay to the English landscape, Kipling may also be tacitly admitting to feelings of alienation and wistfulness in Britain, a place, as Dixon Scott noted, he could never be quite at home in; and indeed, a place that he referred to as "the most marvellous of all foreign lands I have ever been to" (Nicolson, 1996, 34). The cultural history which Kipling was keen to transmit to children had not been imbibed in his own youth but was instead the result of painstaking research over several years in his library at Bateman's in Sussex and at the public library in Cape Town during the Kipling annual double-summers that ran from 1900 to 1908. In as much as the Parnesius stories may be regarded as evidence of what Marcus Crouch terms Kipling's "complex, highly individual and often contradictory imperialism" (1962, 21), they conflate imperial and homeland landscapes, and they fuse adult and child levels of experience, but they do so reticently, despite Kipling's reputation for propagandising on behalf of the Empire. By comparison, the fellow ardent imperialist, Robert Baden-Powell, is much more explicit in endorsing the healthy example of overseas living, the rough-and-tumble of army scouting, to the British public. But as will be shown, the appearance of extroversion in scouting does not preclude a yearning after the enchanted places of childhood.

### **Baden-Powell and the Scout in the Landscape**

The heroics of Parnesius repeat on historic home soil the stoicism of a contemporary imperial soldier, Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell, in defending from the Boers an African township, Mafeking. The desperate under-resourcing of adult troops obliged Baden-Powell to use ordinary boys in scouting forays at Mafeking; their courage put into the shade the elitist fictional doings of Henty heroes in *With Buller in Natal* (1901) and *With Roberts in Pretoria* (1902). Almost inadvertently a national hero, Baden-Powell appears by serendipity to have broken the code of how ordinary British city-boys wanted to re-enchant their rather drab, unadventurous surroundings. Almost single-handedly he was able to

recast the mission of *B.O.P.* to provide a template for good conduct for boys that cut across class divides. The alchemy of re-enchantment took place when it became apparent that his army manual, *Aids to Scouting* (1899), which aimed to shake-up and modernise army tactics of surveillance and manoeuvring, was being read enthusiastically on the home-front by boys and youth leaders. Baden-Powell refashioned its techniques a decade later in a handbook written exclusively for the young, *Scouting for Boys* (1908). As its editor Elleke Boehmer notes, this led to the development of “the most extensive of any worldwide movement” (2004, xi). Auden’s poetic response to the attractiveness of Edward Lear’s world-view for children (with its suggestion of a writer being colonized by children) might with some justification be applied to Baden-Powell. “Children swarmed to him like settlers. He became a land” (1977, 239).

Although the proofs for *Aids to Scouting* (1899) departed on one of the last trains to get out of Mafeking (*Scouting for Boys*, xvii), almost a decade elapsed between the establishment of Baden-Powell’s heroic status and the publication of *Scouting for Boys*, his handbook for instruction in good citizenship. Some of the text’s signature themes had been prefigured in his army career. Given responsibility for establishing a Rhodesian police force by General Roberts as the War concluded, Baden-Powell designed a uniform with special insignia and matching American Stetson hat. He developed an interest in techniques of reconnaissance gained during stints in Kandahar, Afghanistan and the Matapos, Southern Rhodesia. Yet his very notoriety as a national hero, as Brogan observes in *Mowgli’s Sons*, “did nothing to endear him to orthodox military circles where he was regarded as a dangerous eccentric who had never been to Staff College” (1987, 20). This led to a sideways appointment as Inspector-General of Cavalry in Britain. Opportunities to develop his ideas for scout-craft, sometimes borrowed from other youth leaders and imaginative works of popular fiction, proved more attractive than military administration.

As Boehmer insists, “the Scouting handbook as it first appeared *is* in every part a fragmentary, porous, non-cohesive mishmash of other texts [...] a multi-voiced mix of different prominent Edwardian discourses” (xiii, Boehmer’s italics). In conception, the handbook is extra-literary, moving its readers out from the circumscribed world of the printed page into the open air. Kimball O’Hara is presented to scouts as a paragon of virtue because of his intense vigilance rather than his scholastic abilities. The memory test involving a tray of objects that Lurgan Sahib gives O’Hara is recommended to scouts as Kim’s game (97). In writing, Baden-Powell gives off the atmosphere of a man of action too extrovert to want to polish and refine his thoughts into literature, who nevertheless transfers the intense absorption of the classical scholar to reading the environment. (Parenthetically, too, it should be noted that the scorn at the duffer in the school story becomes directed at the loafer in Scouting, the shame at not connecting vitally to text now being shifted to the landscape).

Like the Siege of Mafeking itself, the citizenship guide is a series of hurried counter-measures, a hotch-potch combining imperial reminiscence, literary borrowings, tables of useful facts and anecdotes illustrating the core concepts of “Woodcraft. Observation without being noticed. Deduction. Chivalry. Sense of duty. Endurance. Kind-heartedness” (31). Baden-Powell was caught out by, and obliged to play catch-up with, the overnight success of the early *4d* parts of *Scouting for Boys*, published from January 1908, before the publication of the full handbook in May at 2/- in cloth covers and 1/- in paper (Jeal, 396). Thousands of boys had formed themselves into patrols, before going looking for a sympathetic Scoutmaster. Baden-Powell admitted in 1910 that popular demand had meant that the first two years were utterly chaotic (Jeal, 397).

Fortuitously, Baden-Powell had undertaken preparatory scouting exercises in an experiment which brought Boys Brigade and public school boys together at a camp on Brownsea Island, Dorset in July 1907. The landscape to which this detachment of boys was brought - the open-air laboratory in which Baden-

Powell's experiment in citizenship could be tested - was, as Jeal observes, "an inspired one since islands had played an important part in adventure stories from *Robinson Crusoe* to *Treasure Island*" (384). The deliberate mixing of classes and the control of activities so none lasted longer than the attention span of the boys indicates a format which redevelops the socially reforming principles of *B.O.P.* without its overt Christianity. The expansionary impulse of *B.O.P.* to include lower-class boys within the public school ethos is retained; the verbosity and abstruseness to which Victorian discourse was prone is jettisoned. Furthermore, when Baden-Powell put the principles of his movement on paper, he took advantage of the revolution in popular publishing and the establishment of a mass readership to his own advantage. The publication success of *Scouting for Boys* was largely attributable to the direct endorsement given by the millionaire press magnate C. Arthur Pearson, who owned the *Daily Express* and made available his printer, Horace Cox, for the production of it in fortnightly parts.

The care with which the Edwardian team behind the realisation of those fortnightly parts has carefully thought through their visual impact is no less painstaking than the Religious Tract Society's engagement with the forms that the boy's story paper had taken in the 1870s. And typographically, the 4d part resembles a downmarket *B.O.P.*, similar to the popular miscellany *Tit Bits* which Pearson had taken over from the Victorian publisher George Newnes, who had provided the *Daily Mail's* owner, Alfred Harmsworth, with his apprenticeship in journalism. In a similar populist vein as the *Daily Mail*, *Tit Bits* had combined inspirational stories with interesting facts and amusing anecdotes. Pearson sent his senior editor Percy Everett to assist Baden-Powell, suggesting that "*Pearson's Weekly* pot-pourri approach would also be ideal for a youthful readership" (Jeal, 390). Featuring a cover sketch of a scout by either Baden-Powell himself, or John Hassall, the part of *Scouting for Boys* contained written sections broken up so as not to deter young readers with short attention spans. The content resembles the non-fiction side of *B.O.P.*; its guides to hobbies, games and exhortations from

former adventurers turned either volunteer or professional writers. Baden-Powell had been a contributor himself as a young army officer, seeking to supplement his pay with contributions to periodicals, also including the *Daily Sketch*.

As there is an undeniable temptation within the jumble of Edwardian discourses to think that "sense of duty" trumps the other more exciting entries as a means of keeping young working-class readers in their place, it is worth noting the innovative, even iconoclastic side of Baden-Powell's thinking. Jeal remarks that it is "difficult today to appreciate that an organization now considered rather staid and conservative was seen quite differently in 1908" (396). Jeal notes how one common uniform for scouting was revolutionary at a time when "gentlemen" (amateurs) and "players" (paid professionals) left the cricket field through different gates (396). The dress of the scout points towards informal, open-air colonial behaviour in a manner far less secretive than Kipling's smuggling of his South African experience into the Puck tales, through the incognitos of "Dan" and "Una". Some of Baden-Powell's boy-readers noted that the manual has a radical edge. Leslie Paul, the founder of the *Woodcraft Folk*, discerned the inadvertently revolutionary aspects of Scouting: "British youth by the thousands were electrified [...] divining that this was a movement which took the side of the natural, inquisitive adventuring boy against the repressive schoolmaster, the moralizing parson and the coddling parent" (Jonathan Rose, 454). Baden-Powell's outlawing of snobbery and his adoption of a common uniform are blows not only against socially divisive dress-codes, but also perhaps the restrictive, half-articulated parental codes which limit a boy's friendship associations. In camouflaging the effects of social class, Scouting dissolved some of the oppressive realities of real life and created an enchanted space, open to the egoism of a child. As Bruno Bettelheim notes in *The Uses of Enchantment*, "no child can help wishing for a kingdom of his or her own. Realistic statements about what the child may achieve as he grows cannot satisfy or even compare with such extravagant desires" (1978, 127). So although *Scouting for Boys* can be read - indeed has been read

by Michael Rosenthal in *The Character Factory* (1986) - as a predominantly militaristic text reinforcing loyalty to nation amongst the lower classes, *how* the child reimagines and plays imaginatively with such injunctions as "a scout is pure in thought, word and deed" may actually be more permissive and creative (and probably less predictably conformist) than Rosenthal allows. Indeed, as Lisa Sainsbury has recently observed, the didactic impulse in moralizing can be as liberating as enslaving since it "can also contribute to a process whereby children are shown *how* to think" (2013, Introduction, Kindle Edition, Sainsbury's italics).

When Una is described reciting *The Lays of Ancient Rome* (poems that an adult reader might see as primarily designed to restate historic imperial virtues within an Anglo-Indian context), Kipling evokes the lordliness of her play-acting in a kingdom of her own devising. When Baden-Powell (in his imperial trappings, so to speak) walks towards the scout, their relationship is, at the same time, similar to and different from that of Una and Parnesius described by Kipling. It is still contingent on the child's ability to suspend the rules of physics in relation to the landscape or cityscape. For scout-craft to work, the boy must see himself at the centre of a moral universe in an evolving narrative co-created with Baden-Powell, whose yarning grants to any episode an intoxicating sense of improvisation, of adventure. In "Campfire Yarn No.1", Baden-Powell draws on his Mafeking experience to place the boy reader in the position of one of his real-life scouts: "If an enemy were firing down this street, and I were to tell one of you to take a message across to a house on the other side, would you do it?" (12) The challenge enchants suburbia with the spell of the Empire. But the advantage of this form of enchantment is that the Chief Scout does not recede into the past like the centurion, but stays implicated in the fantasy as an almost equal player, since he must abandon certain trappings of adult power if he is to play the game of being child-like too. The landscape of Scouting dissolves the temporal boundaries of class and rank in a Neverland of make-believe.



Of all the illustrations in *Scouting for Boys*, the individual scout is, literally and metaphorically, the most lovingly sketched in (Figure 7).

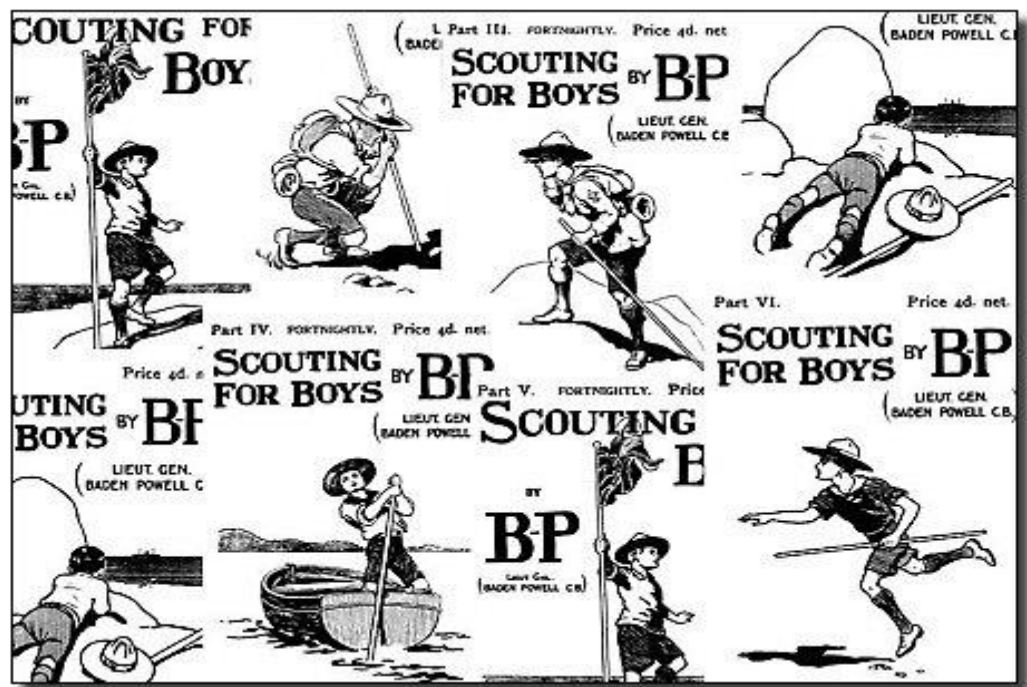


Figure 7 Front Covers of the Individual Issues of *Scouting for Boys*, 1908

In "The Adventures of My Life", Baden-Powell later advanced the intriguing claim that he had led a "double life" (2007, 15), firstly as a soldier and secondly as a married man with children of his own and a vast family of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The faux-innocence of this allusion to a divided self suggests a knowingness about the psychological constant joining both parts of his life; the preference, despite his marriage, for segregated male social space in which masculine relationships held centre stage, the most prominent being his army friendship with Kenneth "the Boy" McLaren (Jeal, 74-79). When Boehmer posits a buried discourse of homophilic love in *Scouting for Boys* - being very careful to discount any suggestion of paedophilia "for which there appears no evidence in Baden-Powell's make-up" (xxxii) - she raises the paradox of "boys playing at men, of men playing at being boys" (xxxii). In the Handbook, this preferred, uninterrupted state of pre-pubescent bliss is supported by an apparatus more

dependent, I would argue, upon play-acting, the rigmarole of dressing-up and theatrical effects, than on imperial discourse.

When shorn of imperial or militaristic connotations, the Notes to Instructors with which Baden-Powell peppers *Scouting for Boys* strongly resemble stage directions: one is put in mind of his contemporary George Bernard Shaw's often highly-detailed outlines of how an act should be stage-managed, *Arms and the Man* (1894) being a particularly clear example of meticulous scene-setting down to establishing which on-stage doors should be open and closed. For example, Baden-Powell's Notes in Chapter 1 read like a playwright's full synopsis of a play. They set out what is to happen during each Scouting session. For the last evening Baden-Powell suggests "rehearsals carried out of a display such as 'Pocohontas'" (10), ending meta-textually with a play within the play of Scouting. The tradition of theatrical performances in all-male barracks was well-established in the British army; the acting out of a pantomime with cross-dressing in the *Stalky* story "Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)" imports into school life the tension-relieving high jinks of adult soldiers. The Chief Scout was unembarrassed by acknowledging that J.M. Barrie was his favourite playwright. Indeed the attraction of not growing up was confirmed on the first of many visits to see *Peter Pan* on 10 February 1905. It made such a deep impression that he returned the following day, urging his mother to go too without delay (Jeal, 2001, 87). The inclusion of "Pocohontas" in *Scouting for Boys* is perhaps an act of homage to Barrie's play, the band of Red Indians being made up of scouts, not lost boys. Jeal explains this fascination with play-acting as the shadow-side of Imperial Britons' fixation upon "character" and aggressively disciplined training at the Public School. "The child they had striven so hard to cast out, when bent on making men of themselves, was still lurking in the wings" (571). The domestic landscape exploited by Baden-Powell, whilst overshadowed by imperial vistas, is also variegated by emerging layers of half-acknowledged boyish feeling, an issue I shall return to in the chapter's conclusion.

### **Barrie's *The Little White Bird* and the child in the landscape**

At about the time that the unmarried hero of *Mafeking* returned to the homeland, Barrie was writing about another army bachelor, Captain W-, whose emotional state has parallels with Baden-Powell's experience. Uninterested in Britain's struggle to subdue foreign adversaries, Barrie had headed south in 1885 to prosecute a solely domestic campaign, the conquering of literary London. In 1902 he published *The Little White Bird*, a novel for adults and proto-text for the Peter Pan fable, predating the perennially popular play by two years. The novel's subject is a campaign for the affections of a young boy, David, conducted with military precision against his governess mother Mary A-. The boy has been encountered in Kensington Gardens, where the military bachelor walks his St Bernard dog, Porthos. "Conceived in a flash and ever after relentlessly pursued", the Captain's purpose is "to burrow under [her] influence with the boy, expose her to him in all her vagaries, take him utterly from her and make him mine" (81). If the bald statement makes the Captain's desires seem sinister, it is worth bearing in mind that his strategy repeats in a domestic setting the paternal surrogacy observed in *Kim*, *She* and *Lord Jim*, adding an animosity to interfering maternal petticoats which has been observed to be a recurring trope within the yarn.

When *The Little White Bird* was published in book form after appearing in four monthly instalments in *Scribner's* magazine between August and November 1902, a child's map of Kensington Gardens was included as a frontispiece. In real life the park was where Barrie inveigled himself into the affections of the Llewelyn Davies's and their five sons in 1897 and it is the place where Captain W- and David A- collaborate in story-telling, the method by which the army bachelor entices the boy. As *The Little White Bird* plays with, distorts and embellishes factual information (a lifetime practice for Barrie who recycled entries from his diary into fiction) the novel raises unavoidable questions about Barrie's private life. His involvement with the Llewelyn Davies family and later guardianship of the

five orphaned sons has become prominent through Andrew Birkin's book, *The Lost Boys* (1979). There is biographical confirmation from an interview between Birkin and one of the Llewelyn Davies boys which exonerates Barrie from any improper actions. Kevin Telfer suggests in *Peter Pan's First XI* that *The Little White Bird* allowed the author to explore anxieties arising from his failed and childless marriage and his desire to be a father that was poignantly caught in his phrase "all perambulators lead to Kensington Gardens" (2010, 164-5). That reassurance is helpful in breaking the unfortunate circuit set up by the author - already a celebrity by 1902 - where the novel is mined for biographical insight, because of the similarities between Barrie's known habits (such as promenading in Kensington Gardens) and the subject matter of *The Little White Bird*. For, alternatively, it can be read as a topographical fantasy chronicling the changes wrought on the face of London by the imaginative collusion of an old man and a boy.

Kensington Gardens reifies the subversive play Barrie is making with the boundaries between adult and child knowledge. The map of the park included with the published text subverts an essentially adult conception of cartography as the record of land proprietorship. The railings which mark off the park are shown in a horizontal line at its top left. Directly above this line, well-dressed mothers and uniformed nannies with perambulators and children are depicted promenading outside the perimeter, as if the weary truths of Edwardian class-consciousness and the messy facts of procreation can be consigned to Neverland. The Gardens themselves become an enchanted space for male play, the only perambulator within its environs being pushed nonchalantly by a pipe-smoking man. With the presence of women and the associated complications they bring to human relationships prohibited by a civic by-law of Barrie's, as it were, Kensington becomes bucolic and Arcadian, a *Boy's Own* paradise (Figure 8).



Figure 8 The map of Kensington Gardens. *The Little White Bird*, 1902

Indeed, the map's somewhat elite activities, the dog-walking of an expensive St Bernard, sailing on the Round Pond, yachting on the Serpentine and the playing of cricket on many pitches are infantilised versions of activities found on the frontispiece of the *Boy's Own Paper*. At the bottom of the map, situated directly above the rubric "The Child's Map of Kensington Gardens", a row of fairies follows the figure of a pipe-playing Pan. The realistic has been transmuted by fantasy into combining the visible and unseen in a manner that embodies J. Hillis Miller's paradox about land-surveying: that sooner or later "the effort of mapping is interrupted by an encounter with the unmappable. The topography and toponymy hide an unplaceable place" (*Topographies*, 1995, 6-7). In *The Little White Bird*, the fantasy element of fairy tale or mythology has been combined with grown-up map-making to produce a hybrid, if diminished, form of adventure. The surveying which tragically symbolizes the wrenching of a boy from the great game of doing nothing at all in *Kim* is used here, through the magic of story-telling, to create a world of perennial play.

Because of the novel's uncomfortable use of stalking - in which military surveillance is turned literally towards scouting for a boy - *The Little White Bird's* obsession with yarning can come to seem a ruse or pretext, rather than its principal preoccupation. By the start of the novel, story-telling has already enabled Captain W- to seize and possess David emotionally, since in the first sentence he is introduced as "the little boy who calls me father" (7). The first chapter sees them setting forth upon a journey - a typical note of whimsy that applies the mock-seriousness, adopted later by A.A. Milne, to a childhood event, since the trip is only to the captain's club. Yet interpretatively, the journey *is* a quest for the origins of their relationship, since Captain W- intends to tell David "how it began" (12); and this corresponds with Robert Fraser's definition of quest romance as "a search for the truth [...] the question of authentic sources" (1998, 77). The explanation, however, turns out to be a masquerade in which Captain W- shows David the vantage point from which he watched the courtship of the boy's mother and father, before implying that he is responsible for David's birth. Exploiting the boy's ignorance of procreation - since David is landlocked in a state of innocence - Captain W- describes how his club window voyeurism has healed a rift between Mary and her future husband. The soldier's motivation is not necessarily prurient, but perhaps strangely wistful, even envious of conjugal bliss; Barrie's whimsy is sometimes difficult to interpret. When an unexplained row threatens the lovers' progress to marriage and leaves both parties lingering regretfully near a post office, the Captain effects a reconciliation by dropping a letter. This the dejected young man then feels obliged to post, bringing him back within the purview of his equally inconsolable fiancée. Captain W- has spun a yarn in which he is the *deus ex machina* behind the procreation of David.

Story-telling then, in both senses, is used to isolate David from his mother. One might also argue that the intense absorption of the child Una is distorted in Barrie's tale into the voyeuristic absorption of the Captain in an adult (and therefore implicitly sexual) courtship between David's parents; and that this

soldier's movement towards a child is dominated by the desire to separate childhood from its conjugal origins. The Peter Pan fable, which is employed by the captain in *The Little White Bird* to make a further rupture in the relationship between David and his mother, differs markedly from the later theatrical version. In this original version, Peter lives secretly in the Gardens after lock-up time in a fairy kingdom, having literally flown away from domesticity and his mother's bedroom at seven days old, after magically regaining consciousness of his pre-birth status as the little white bird of the title. The tale develops through the joint imaginative work of the Captain and David: "First I tell it to him, and then he tells it to me, the understanding being that it is quite a different story; and then I retell it with his additions, and so we go on until no one could say whether it is more his story or mine" (100). The whimsicality of the story, a code to which modern readers may have lost the key, cannot disguise a stasis in which Peter, even though he attempts to return to his mother to find the window of her bedroom obstructed by iron bars, is locked into Kensington Gardens and outside any human understanding of time. This tale-within-a-tale can only be an idyll, because of its suspension of temporal norms, because only in yarn or tall-tale can the progression towards adulthood be outlawed.

Because of its leaning towards the childlike, *The Little White Bird* never quite throws off a sense of undermining the purpose of the adventure story, which valorises manly courage. Why engage dialogically with a boy to construct a shared representation of reality if the purpose is to tie him to a childlike state from which he will want to mature? What emotional block causes such a narrator to fixate on the experience of boyhood, to long so nostalgically for it, not as temporary relief from the mundane responsibilities of marriage, wage-earning and fatherhood but as the permanent state (as a land of lost content) it can never be? Initially, Barrie bypasses such questions by making his protagonist an ex-army bachelor, a familiar figure in fin de siècle publications, of whom Sherlock Holmes's friend Watson, a doctor invalidated out of the second Afghan war, is the most

prominent example. In her survey of bachelor literature, Nicola Humble lists almost a dozen titles from the catalogues of the British Library, including Barrie's own precocious autobiography, *When A Man's Single* (1888). Querying why bachelor fiction should be a popular sub-genre of middlebrow literature at a time when women outnumbered men by almost a million and when remaining a single man could be construed as selfish, Humble notes not only "the overpowering nostalgia for boyhood" (*The Masculine Middlebrow*, Chapter 6, Kindle Edition) that bachelor texts aroused for married men, but also the unique respectability surrounding the single, domiciled officer. She argues that "the intense bonding and camaraderie of the battle field may have served to make conventional married life less appealing". Yet *The Little White Bird* also explores the loneliness of this bachelor experience, for which surrogate fatherhood is a temporary cure, the only permanent one being a rapprochement with female company.

The ending of *The Little White Bird* at last confronts the Captain's isolation from women. That the isolation could only be temporary has been hinted at from the start in the suggestion that Mary A- has tolerated his interest in her son as a displaced form of flirtation. Now the mother of a daughter, Barbara, whose procreation cannot be claimed as his work, she at last meets the retired soldier. At this point it becomes clear that he has been constructing a novel out of his friendship with David. Her reading of it brings what has been an exclusively masculine text into the domain of the feminine, and her promise of tea-party invitations may yet make romantic relations with women possible. As Andrew Nash implies in his introduction to the novel, her intervention rescues the Captain from the "iron bars" that had prevented Peter Pan from penetrating beyond fantasy to reality (2000, xv). The "substance" of a conjugal relationship finally counterbalances the "shadow" of fantasy and literary story-telling. *The Little White Bird* ends with "the words of a soldier" promising to forswear bachelorhood if one of Mary's ladies can be got to care for him, signalling the clipped wings of a man no longer fleeing domesticity. If this denouement seems contrived, it should



be remembered that when Baden-Powell, an eligible bachelor in his fifties, was finally persuaded to marry, he wrote to his wife-to-be saying that he wanted to take her to see *Peter Pan*, and “they duly went, for the first of many visits, a few months after their wedding” (Jeal, 353). Hankering after an enchanted masculine state was compatible with Edwardian marriage; indeed *Peter Pan* seems almost the code-text employed by Baden-Powell to indicate to his fiancée his perennial commitment to the inner boy-man beneath his military exterior.

### **Kipling’s *Rewards and Fairies* and the child in the landscape**

*The Little White Bird* ends positively with the possibility of a reconciliation between homosocial space and marriage. Published two years after Kipling’s winter sojourns in South Africa came to an end, *Rewards and Fairies* (1910) returns to the Sussex landscape for further explorations in an enchanted space that exists beyond the boundaries of conventional family life with results that are often darker than Barrie’s optimistic resolution. As Donald Mackenzie notes, the sequel is systematically different from *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, ranging more widely in space and time and centring upon real historical figures (1993, xxviii). To the extent that *Rewards and Fairies* mirrors the growing understanding of John and Elsie in their fictional counterparts Dan and Una, the tales are able to explore a more complex dynamic between adult visitants and child. One story, “Marklake Witches”, features a female protagonist who demonstrates that it is not only boys who must face the predicament of the adolescent, forced before their time into facing the hard knocks of life with the stoicism of a young legionnaire. If the tale breaks one of the definitions I set for the yarn, a masculine narrative, it helpfully highlights a major literary influence upon Kipling ever since the day at his Devon boarding school that the young Rudyard fell under Robert Browning’s spell when his Classics and English master threw a copy of *Men and Women* at his head in a concussive literary initiation. “Marklake Witches” exemplifies the yarn’s development into a prose character-sketch in the style of a Browning dramatic

monologue of its plucky and doomed protagonist, Philadelphia Bucksteed. And in extending Kipling's range, it shows a sympathetic treatment of a female heroine, which foreshadows "Mary Postgate", examined in a later chapter. Additionally, as the central character has no military background, the tale provides an example of the domestic fantasy in a context where there is not even a residual interest in patriotism, duty and Empire, and where the time sense that Kipling emphasized is even more to the fore. "Marklake Witches" takes the interplay of landscape, fantasy and cultural memory to a more advanced level of intricacy and sophistication than "The Centurion".

As Una is now older, there is no childish invocation of the figure from the past; instead Philadelphia breaks in upon the girl in the landscape as she is voluntarily apprenticed to a farmer's wife learning the adult task of milking in a summer pasture. The comparing of childhood experiences between Una and Parnesius is replaced by a short exchange that Mackenzie marks out for praise as generating a frisson of sadness and indefinite suggestion (xxvi):

"We went a picnic to Marklake Green once," said Una. "It's awfully pretty. I like all those funny little roads that don't lead anywhere".

"They lead over our land," said Philadelphia stiffly, "and the coach road is only four miles away. One can go anywhere from the Green" (244).

Already, Philadelphia's hold on the present seems much less tenacious than that shown by Parnesius. Yet she is merely sixteen, vivacious, commanding and known as Phil, exhibiting a boyish pluck. This is demonstrated by the courage she has shown after being prematurely forced into adult responsibility as manager of her father's country house, after her mother has died. Her characterisation might appear as nothing more than a concession to the fashionable androgyny evidenced by Peter Pan being played in 1904 by a female actor, Nina Boucicault, were it not for her predicament. She is dying of consumption, a reality known to all the adults in her story and something she appears (or affects) not to know. It is intimated by her faithful nursemaid, Old Cissie, that this is the disease from which her mother died. So concerned is Cissie for Philadelphia's health that she

steals the family silver in a bid to bribe a local Witchmaster, Jerry Gamm, into curing her. As Lisa Lewis also observes, the theft by Cissie is a hanging offence (2007, 201). Philadelphia immediately covers it up, maternally comforting her overwrought nursemaid, in an ironic reversal of adult-child responsibilities, and becoming complicit in the desperate attempt to cure what she dismisses as "this stupid little cough" (1993, 247).

In view of Kipling's indebtedness to Edith Nesbit, it might be questioned whether Philadelphia is quite so in the dark about her condition. The sick girl's cough and stitch recur throughout the story as an ominous motif to the point where even a young reader unacquainted with the symptoms of the illness could not fail to notice how every character is seemingly focussed on her health and even the remotest possibility of improving it. Later, the tomboyish girl is depicted climbing a tree to eavesdrop upon Gamm and René Laënnec, the real-life French inventor of the stethoscope who is re-imagined as a British prisoner-of-war. He is in love with Philadelphia and knows that her case is hopeless. The two men discuss Philadelphia without naming her, and Gamm comforts the lovesick Laënnec, since neither folk-magic, nor contemporary science can save her. The first stirrings of romantic reciprocation for Laënnec have already been hinted at beneath Philadelphia's defensive carapace; another reason to suspect that all parties in the story, reinforced here by the evidence of her own eyes, are engaged in a serious masquerade, since they share motivations to protect each other from unpleasant truths. Having complicated his tale with hidden romantic tenderness, Kipling brings it to an emotional climax by employing a perceptual trick. Philadelphia's father entertains the Duke of Wellington at Marklake Hall and Philadelphia, dressed beyond her years as the Mistress of the house, sings to the company a sentimental song about a fading young beauty. Philadelphia looks out on a tearful audience profoundly affected by her performance, and they return her gaze, reading another meaning into her words.

At this critical moment, "Marklake Witches" is as strongly visual as the incursion of Parnesius into Una's secret world, which truly benefits from its illustration by Millar. Instead of a catapult, a song prompts different responses in adults and children. Girl-performer and audience appear at cross-purposes in a highly incongruous manner that would be considered ironic were it to be reflected upon in the text (as such episodes often are in Conrad, for example). Una asks, "'And did they like it?' 'Like it? They were overwhelmed'" (257). But is Philadelphia really so convinced that the tearful response she engenders results purely from her rendition? Might it be more likely that Kipling is presenting a new sensibility, evident also in *The Railway Children* (1906), expressing the unspoken pain that adults and children in loving families are obliged, through mutual respect, to withhold from each other? Writing persuasively of Nesbit's novel, Louise Joy notes that *The Railway Children* "makes clear not merely that everyone, the child quite as much as the adult, suffers, but also that no one party is ever really able to comfort the other - to allay their tears - because all are so busy struggling to conceal their own" (2012). Arguably, "Marklake Witches" is even more radical. The text is silent upon whether either Philadelphia or Una, only slightly younger, knows the truth. The performance of the song is perhaps being mirrored by another social performance by two adolescents tiptoeing around a taboo subject. "Marklake Witches" could alternatively be read as a simpler fable about the perceptual gap between adult and child when it comes to disease; but the tale gains considerably from the positing of a tantalising exploration of childhood not as an innocent space, but one where secrets are, psychologically, a survival strategy. And for child-readers not yet aware of Philadelphia's deadly illness, Kipling builds into "Marklake Witches" a ticking time-bomb, for at some point a re-reader of the tale will recognise the unnamed tuberculosis that haunts the narrative.

At the end of the tale, Philadelphia disappears as suddenly as she arrives, leaving only the sound of a horse being galloped through the woods, as if on one

of the roads that no longer exists. The ending has been prefigured in the preceding poem, one of Kipling's most famous, "The Way Through The Woods" with its reference to "the beat of a horse's feet / And the swish of a skirt in the dew" (241). The purpose of magicking Philadelphia into the present (instead of Una into the past) has become more explicitly the summoning of a ghost, a motif that Kipling has used twice before since the death of his older daughter Josephine of pneumonia in 1899. In "They" (1904), the spectral presence of a young girl, the narrator's dead daughter, is caught as if in a time-capsule within a Sussex manor house, clearly based on Bateman's, that he returns to three times by car, before forswearing contact with the dead. "Merrow Down", a poem from the *Just So Stories* places a father figure, Tegumai, in a prehistoric Surrey haunted by his unreachable daughter, Taffy. These earlier texts do not culminate in any conversation between father and daughter; their potency derives from the child as a perceived but unreachable presence in the environment. "Marklake Witches" markedly develops the use of the landscape as a means of exploring the subject of loss: the development of new tracks through the landscape and the disappearance of old ways become a metaphor for human transience and the impossibility of extended contact with the dead since "there is no way through the woods". Returning to Mackenzie's and Hillis Miller's allusions, it is the indefinability of something within the landscape that cannot be mapped which Kipling uses to open up and negotiate meanings with the implied reader. The apparently inconsequential discussion about Marklake between Una and Philadelphia becomes a parable about the intractability of human conversation and its obliqueness; or the unreliability of present memory re-encountering past event; or the complexity of mental recovery when the dead are restored, however, fleetingly, to the minds of the living. This layering of human experience by reference to reading the physical environment - handled by Kipling here particularly adroitly - is implicit in all three texts I have examined, so I shall

conclude the chapter by a recalibration of earlier observations so as to weigh the domestic landscape fantasy against other manifestations of the yarn.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter introduction used the *B.O.P.* insignia to conceptualise grown-ups attempting to part the iron bars of adult experience and re-enter child consciousness. Analysis of primary texts by Barrie, Baden-Powell and Kipling has demonstrated, despite a yearning for the “blue-remembered hills” of childhood, how fundamentally difficult it is to dissolve the adult viewpoint into the child’s. In both the *Puck* tales and *The Little White Bird* the illusion of an enchanted space is quite explicitly impossible to sustain. Indeed the movement towards domesticity of Captain W- is driven by the impossibility of maintaining a perennially childlike relationship with a boy since he will grow up; and conversely the ritualised disappearance of Parnesius and Philadelphia from the landscape severs any communication with modern children and consigns the dead irrevocably to the past. As a consequence, an oscillation between states of enchantment and disenchantment is set up within the tales. The imaginative collusion between adult and child which empowers their dialogue is fundamentally unsustainable but temporarily creates a forum where the perceptual insights of both can dissolve the realistic facade of the environment.

By this token, the domestic landscape fantasy fulfils the central criterion of the yarn in being a hermeneutic quest or interpretative journey. Yet the “breaking of the hills” it establishes is only a partially-achieved state, a spatiotemporal blip, rather than a transition to a new ontological status for the protagonist. Nevertheless the code-breaking which I am positing opens up a psychological landscape in which the child’s desire to talk up into an adult’s sensibility and the grown-up’s desire to talk back into a child’s consciousness create a fragile and complex domain, as briefly enchanted as the life of a mayfly. Barrie’s Captain W- describes this process of negotiated meaning as reaching an

unmappable place where story-telling can no longer be located as primarily adult- or child-directed. Ironically, the chapters in *The Little White Bird* centring upon Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens which most fully exhibit this synthesis are to modern tastes the most inaccessible since they are suffused as Angus Wilson contends with “that decadent feeling of self-indulgent empathy with children’s ways that so often nauseates” (5-6). Therefore, even though *The Little White Bird* specifically, and the Peter Pan myth generally, have become exemplary texts in children’s literature criticism from Rose (1984) to Rudd (2013), the specific dynamic that Barrie achieves is overlooked. Instead, particularly in Rose, child autonomy is seen as being overridden by adult didacticism, which is treated as a form of cultural imperialism. This approach is still endorsed over twenty years later by Nodelman, who sees “colonization” as an accurate metaphor for “the stories adults tell to children [that] shape their audiences in the repressive forms of the subjectivities within the social world they occupy” (2008, 171).

Arguing against this conceptualisation, I agree with David Rudd that the yarn is fundamentally dialogic, and that therefore “colonisation can never (ideologically speaking) be taken as read” (2013, 64). By examining the situations of three soldiers I have deliberately sought to problematize the relationship of imperialism to the child to capture the dualities evident in the relationship. For example, with characteristic linguistic precision (and exemplifying the oscillation between the native, domestic language and Latin described in my Introduction) Kipling describes Dan as caught between child’s play (“dominoes”) and imperial rule (“*dominus*”). Baden-Powell’s Scout is depicted as clinging to the Union Jack as an upholder of the British Empire but also as running freely with only his shadow attached, like Peter Pan. Captain W- yarns to David with the authority of a military clubman but the story-telling is woven around the enchanted space of Kensington Gardens, where growing up never happens.

As a consequence of this repeated movement between adult and child points of view, between the extroverted desire to rule the world and the

introverted need to retreat from the world's demands, the domestic landscape fantasy represents the yarn at its most delicate and contradictory. It breaks the hills to reveal that "as beyond the hillcrest of primitive legend, exists a world of encounters, a magic world we imagine but never reach" (Zweig, 224). That world is reimagined in "The Centurion" or *The Little White Bird* or *Scouting for Boys* as an idyll, or in "Marklake Witches" as a pastoral elegy. Indeed the spatial boundaries placed upon the Sussex Weald, Kensington Gardens or a re-enchanted Scouting suburbia reinforce the sense of a Neverland, yearned after but never attained. In *Alice to the Lighthouse*, Juliet Dusinberre contends that in the *Puck* tales "Kipling suggests a new formal possibility in the construction of narrative for children. [...] The children's adventures in travelling in time have no causal framework, no utopian direction" (1999, 172). The cultural imaginary of the domestic landscape fantasy briefly disrupts the momentum of other forms of the yarn, which, as in the invasion scare story explored in the next chapter, journey interpretatively towards a new rather than a suspended state.



## Chapter 5: Romance and the Nine Fifteen - The Invasion Scare Novel

"Romance!" the season-tickets mourn,  
"He never ran to catch his train,  
"But passed with coach and guard and horn—  
"And left the local—late again!"  
Confound Romance! . . . And all unseen  
Romance brought up the nine-fifteen.

"The King" or "Romance", Rudyard Kipling (1894)

### Introduction

In his treatise on man as the symbol-making animal, Kenneth Burke in *Language As Symbolic Action* observes that the negative is "a function peculiar to symbol-systems". He adds "the quickest way to demonstrate the sheer symbolicity of the negative is to look at any object, say, a table, and to remind yourself that, though it is exactly what it is, you could go on for the rest of your life saying all the things that it is not" (9). At the opening of *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow, looking out at the sea-reach beyond the Thames from which great British adventurers, Drake and Franklin, had sailed, is moved to think of the very opposite: the Roman invasion of Britain. He imagines the sandbanks, marshes, forests and savages of the interior that the Roman invaders encountered; with a compelling twist, Conrad's nightmarish tale of the Congo interior grows from this perspective of the heart of darkness that was Britain nineteen centuries before. Marlow's introductory speech reinforces Burke's point: voyaging out, exploring, conquering and mapping - in short, invading - in the very process of conceptualisation at once implies the opposite. To think of the British Empire is to think of the Roman *imperium*, and its decline and fall.

This chapter explores the invasion scare story: a ripping yarn in which the dream of adventure turns nightmarish in a quest to protect the homeland. Its protagonists still believe (like an imperial explorer or soldier would) that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country; they strengthen any flagging of resolve with the self-talk that insists upon playing up and playing the game - even though

the deadly game of battle or espionage is played out for control of the Mother country. So the invasion scare's heroes, such as Hannay or Carruthers, are no less likely to evince anxiety about their own conduct than Kimball O'Hara or Lord Jim.

But another darker, masculine anxiety is explored within this sub-genre of romance, only hinted at in other manifestations of the yarn: an abject emasculation commensurate with the inability to protect not only the Motherland but also its wives and children. Tremors about British masculinity can already be felt in the colonial encounter, of course: in *She* when Ludwig Holly debates with himself the appropriateness of an Englishman "kootooing" to an African queen (130) before finding himself driven to his knees by her imperious sexuality; or in *Lord Jim*, where its overly romantic hero - sneered at by his nemesis Cornelius for being both a great man and a child - lacks the adult guile to outmanoeuvre Gentleman Brown. For even at its most expansive, when exploring the dark interior of Africa or holding sway as a benevolent potentate in the Far East, the British masculine imagination can turn recessive, its dominion over palm and pine haunted by the folk memory of its own enslavement by the Roman race it seeks to emulate, its sense of innate superiority challenged by the more worldly manliness of other nationalities, such as the Boers<sup>9</sup>.

Because the yarn is a genre that uses symbolic theatres to examine fault-lines in masculine behaviour under strain, it has no difficulty in adapting to either an imperilled homeland or a domestic setting in the British Isles *per se*. Granted, as was shown in the previous chapter, the landscape fantasy puts a different complexion upon adventure by exploring aspects of the inner child within the imperial soldier on his return to the Mother Country. As a result, this shift in focus to the childlike is sometimes used to justify the argument that a retreat to the home setting is of itself a form of emasculation. For example, in conceptualising adventure as the energizing myth of imperialism, Martin Green suggests that as soon as fantasy enters the boy's own adventure in *Peter Pan*, a lifeline to the real

world is severed: "the end of Empire was at hand, as far as England was concerned, and that feeling is transmitted, all innocently, through Barrie's work" (229). Joseph Bristow too, through the title of his monograph *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, explicitly binds *real* manliness – for which a domestic boyhood is merely the preparation – to Empire. Yet this circular connection between manliness and the Empire is possibly more in the minds of the critics and their chosen critical lens than the primary texts.

The invasion scare stories that I examine, *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) and *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) focus exclusively on the behaviour of grown men in defence of the Mother country. A child, Arthur, is only introduced poignantly as a motif in one of them to dramatize the shame of men who fail as protectors (and, I contend, to revive a medieval trope of chivalry for the Victorian romance). The death of the boy crystallizes the failure in courtly masculinity of the tale's protagonist. Although colonial experience undoubtedly adds a lustre to masculine virility in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, the yarn does not need imperialism to function. What it *does* need is a theme that affords a competitive discourse about masculine conduct, and this the invasion scare story provides brilliantly because the price of masculine failure is so high.

Indeed I would go further and argue that the adventure romance, as Kipling implies in the poem heading this chapter, thrives on the 9.15 suburban train – although a little surprisingly, Kipling makes no significant contribution to invasion scare literature, the two works of his briefly examined being overly propagandist. Because of its moral mission to align vigilant reading with physical effectiveness in the world as a cultural bulwark against the duffer and the loafer, the yarn adapts to the new landscape of suburbia by bridling against it. Featureless metropolitan outskirts are taken to symbolise a moral inertia against which the hero in the invasion scare story rebels in the developing field of espionage. The protagonist becomes, as David Stafford observes, "the young man

of breeding who is [...] confident that his vocation as spy permits his status and reputation as an English gentleman to remain intact" (1981, 490). As a self-modifying code generating new permutations from earlier fictions, the yarn is well equipped to reconceptualise gentlemanliness; it is instructive how the three primary texts covering a period of over forty years rework *topoi* related to male agency in social space to redefine heroism. The evolution within this specific sub-genre represents growing sophistication rather than a literary decline. Indeed, the yarn is never more ebulliently at ease in the interplay of quest landscapes, of textures of manly and childlike experience, of realism and escapism, of action and intertextuality, of Classics and code-breaking than in the work of John Buchan and the narrative voice of his best-known protagonist, Richard Hannay, who is first encountered in Buchan's breakthrough shocker, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

### **The Romanticism of Adventure in the Domestic Romance**

On the run in the Scottish lowlands, having been framed for a London murder by a ruthless band of international conspirators, Richard Hannay scents an ally near a wayside inn. Hannay, a middle-aged, colonial outsider, is relieved to spot a figure leaning over a bridge's parapet, who may serve as a temporary decoy. A break in the deadly chase is urgently needed: Hannay is not only being stalked by the local constabulary but also by "espionage from the air" in the form of a sinister monoplane. The figure in the landscape that he spies turns out to be the young innkeeper himself, bespectacled, pipe-smoking, sunburnt - and bookish. So literary as to be reciting from a small volume of *Paradise Lost* in a snatched moment from his enforced occupation, for inn-keeping is not a vocation but an inherited family business. So boyishly literary, in fact, as to confess blushing to a stranger that his thwarted ambition is to write. Sensing an unworldly disposition, Hannay smoothly initiates a literary discussion, so as to convert an acquaintance into an accomplice:

"And what better chance could you ask?" I cried. "Man I've often thought that an innkeeper would make the best story-teller in the world."

"Not now," he said eagerly. "Maybe in the old days when you had pilgrims and ballad-makers and highwaymen and mail-coaches on the road. But not now. Nothing comes here but motor-cars full of fat women, who stop for lunch, and a fisherman or two in the spring and the shooting tenants in August. There is not much material to be got out of that. I want to see life, to travel the world, and write things like Kipling and Conrad. But the most I've done yet is to get some verses printed in *Chamber's Journal*."

I looked at the inn standing golden in the sunset against the brown hills.

"I've knocked a bit about the world, and I wouldn't despise such a hermitage. D'you think that adventure is found only in the tropics or among gentry in red shirts? Maybe you're rubbing shoulders with it at this moment."

"That's what Kipling says," he said, his eyes brightening, and he quoted some verse about "Romance bringing up the 9.15".

"Here's a true tale for you then," I cried, "and a month from now you can make a novel out of it" (1994, 34-35).

This encounter is only three short chapters into *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Buchan's first outing in Hannay mode, only one of many print incarnations for the protean Scottish publisher, essayist, historian, poet and thriller writer. Already the reader is witness to a characteristic synthesis of complex ideas and their compression beneath a breezy, naturalistic surface. Intimations that the Old Country has gone anaemic in its modernity and needs a life-saving infusion from the dominions, that masculine truths are best transmitted through tall tales, that the man of action and the closeted writer are inseparable blood brothers are neatly compacted; it is even suggested that by rubbing shoulders with a man, Hannay, who has "knocked about a bit" (like the heroes of Kipling's and Conrad's colonial tales), the innkeeper may be ready to graduate from writing poetry to masculine adventure stories. The fast pace, the relentless packing of incident into a novella, is an advance upon earlier yarns: Hannay brings romance to the innkeeper's threshold not on a suburban 9.15, as it were, but on a Caledonian

express. The technique – highly economical and apparently artless – of drawing the reader into parsing dialogue that sketches character and anticipates plot development is a Scottish innovation absorbed by Buchan from his acknowledged, but disavowed model, Stevenson<sup>10</sup> (*Memory Hold-the-Door*, 1940, 42-43). Where Buchan breaks new ground is in addressing modernity's technological, economic and political turmoil through a tone of self-confident, virile Victorianism. Contemporary alienation, dislocation and atomisation, the paranoia induced by German spies who are indistinguishable from loyal Britons, are confounded by the patriotic boy's own ethos.

Paradoxically, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*' publication was anachronistic, being a spy thriller produced during wartime, when the cataclysm that its espionage was designed to avert (invasion) had been mitigated to carnage on foreign soil. Published on the back of scare-mongering effusions by the populist thriller writers, Le Queux and Oppenheim, whom Buchan claimed, somewhat misleadingly (as a closet highbrow) to emulate, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* – which I shall return to later in the chapter – is probably best seen as the outer book-end of a genre, the war-to-come story. This sub-genre originated with an apocalyptic battle, deep in Surrey, resulting in a German invasion as imagined by an army staff officer.

In *The Battle of Dorking*, the original book-end of the genre, the storyline was the jam sweetening the bitter powder of a military treatise outlining the urgent need of reform in national defence. Applying his First-in-Greats mind to the task, Buchan was eager to raise the standard of the invasion story through a sophistication in plotting and an intellectual fertility that would justify the innkeeper's reference to Kipling. And Hannay's mastery of the contours of the Scottish landscape and the complexities of code which allow him to turn the tables on his German pursuers is a far cry from the chaotic events conjured by Chesney at Dorking where, in the 1870s, anxiety about invasion first took on a convincing literary form.

### ***The Battle of Dorking and the Historical Resources of Romance***

The authority upon invasion fiction, I.P. Clarke, notes that the Edinburgh presses of John Blackwood were kept busy between May and late August 1871 with “the best business they ever had” (1997, 33) in satisfying demand for Lieutenant-Colonel George Tomkyns Chesney’s *The Battle of Dorking: The Reminiscences of a Volunteer*, a vision of warfare utterly devoid of sang-froid. Insatiable demand quickly reached beyond the capacity of *Blackwood’s*. An extremely successful career soldier, Chesney had adopted fiction to advocate conscription as an immediate response to Prussia’s victory, made possible by reservists, over France in 1870 and to proselytise for greater military preparedness. Before *The Battle*, there had been intermittent outbursts of war fever, mainly in the pamphlet format, dating back to the Napoleonic threat. Chesney’s innovation was to couch his admonition in the form of a short story. Clarke records how on 8 February 1871 he wrote to John Blackwood to suggest that “a useful way of bringing home to the country the necessity for a thorough reorganisation might be a tale – after the manner of Erckmann-Chatrion – describing a successful invasion of England” (1997, 40).

Chesney, like Stevenson later with *Treasure Island*, has no qualms admitting intertextual debts. Certainly, as Clarke notes, *The Battle* borrows from *The Conscript* (1864) and *Waterloo* (1865), re-enactments of the glories and hazards of the Napoleonic Wars written from the viewpoint of an ordinary participant, and its author “learnt from the French originals how to distance the narrator from the events he relates by telling the story long after the German conquest” (1997, 41). Chesney, however, gives his material a very British colouring by exploiting the didactic impulse of the yarn: far from celebrating military glories, his narrator is a grandfather lamenting his role in the loss of superpower status to impoverished grandchildren on the point of emigrating to create a better life. The truth transmitted at the heart of Chesney’s dystopian

tale, couched in terms of a domestic landscape nightmare, is the cultural price paid for not being vigilant to foreign threats.

The plot of *The Battle* imparts a human interest to the wide-ranging geopolitical repercussions which ensue when the scattering of the British fleet on international assignments emboldens Germany to annexe Holland and Denmark and, upon Parliament's impulsive declaration of war in support of these countries, cross the Channel and invade. The plot is worth paraphrasing because Chesney establishes several tropes which Childers and Buchan both develop. A coming man in a Government office, like Carruthers in *The Riddle of the Sands*, the narrator's younger self commutes to the City in volunteer's uniform during the run-up to hostilities and ignores a recall to the department when a messenger arrives at his club (a place associated with heroism in Buchan's work) with the news that the Germans have landed at Harwich. Instead, he departs for his Surrey regiment.

A man in professional preparation for a senior role in national government is observed being reduced to a cog in a rusty and creaking executive wheel, barely turning in defence of an imperial capital. This diminished role is reflected in the narrative mode which eschews omniscience for the limitations and verisimilitude of reminiscence. With great intensity, the indignities of the volunteer are presented: counter-marched on ill-conceived sorties, squeezed into commandeered trains, starved of provisions, poorly equipped, subject to indescribable din, dirt and heat before being deposited, in no condition for fighting, with other gentleman privates at Dorking. Yet this is where the British establishment has concluded that its modern Hastings will take place, as rumours mount over the Germans' sinister and secretive progress up through the Sussex countryside. The confusion of a battle witness is brilliantly captured by a man who, in spite of his ardour, is fundamentally unsure of his role and has literally lost his bearings. The result is inevitable mayhem: suburban acquaintances downed by sudden artillery and infantry fire in unstructured skirmishes where the



manoeuvres of one's countrymen are as much a mystery as those of the unseen enemy. This, of course, is Chesney's cruel point, the sad futility of amateurish voluntarism leading to the capitulation of London and its Government, the dismantling of the Empire, and the long-term impoverishment of a vassal state.

*The Battle's* words of admonishment are designed to cut deep. Its moral struck a chord with the political and military elite who were its intended audience since the Prime Minister was obliged to criticise the "alarmism" it had caused. Quite why the tale should have aroused such interest is difficult to pinpoint. Clarke speculates that Chesney's success arose from "a literary treatment of war that encouraged Victorian readers to think of warfare as a normal condition of life" (1967, 3). This explanation is more convincing for later manifestations of the invasion romance. Le Queux's *The Great War in England in 1897*, published in 1894, is panoramic in its sweep and does exploit the thrill of naming inconsequential streets caught up in Armageddon such as "Coombe Lane close to Raynes Park Station" and "Beulah Hill opposite the Post Office at Upper Sydenham" (1976, 106). Chesney's morality tale is not so abstracted. The sting in its tail is the communication of national apostasy as an individualised failure in gentlemanly chivalry, when a modern knight is unable to fulfil the rationale ascribed to him by Ruskin, to die in battle.

Perhaps it is the *Battle's* similarity to a sermon from Rugby chapel pulpit which explains its disproportionate influence. The rhetorical breast-beating that Ludwig Holly uses to castigate sensuality and Farrar to dramatize Eric's moral decline resounds throughout *The Battle*, transferring masculine anxiety from the sexual to the political. The aged narrator awaits "the time which cannot be far off, when my old bones will be laid to rest in the soil I have loved so well, and whose happiness and honour I have so long survived" (1976, 71), the ignominy of the graves of Kibroth-Hattaavah, the awareness of individual and collective sinfulness as regards the nation, perhaps colouring the atmosphere of his *mea culpa*. Alternatively, one might claim the narrator's admission of patriotic failure as the

agonised self-talk of a shamed public-school Old Boy unable to live up to a medieval and courtly ideal; his old bones will clearly not be subject to an Arthurian resurrection in defence of Britain. The association between the public schools, battlefield courage and a medieval honour-code had, as Parker notes, become very strong by the time of the First World War; indeed, “[c]hivalric notions about the War were those which were most difficult to relinquish” (1987, 226). *The Battle* evidences that association beginning to develop, forty years earlier. For as Mark Girouard has pointed out, by the 1850s “[c]hivalry was working loose from the Middle Ages” and embedding itself “in the behaviour of upper-class lads at Britain’s elite boarding schools” (1981, 184). By its 1869 edition, *Tom Brown* had adopted an illustration that depicted Brown as a medieval knight returning to Rugby chapel to mourn Dr. Arnold (Figure 9). As Girouard notes, the rug over his shoulder suggests a military cloak: “He is a young knight in mufti, keeping vigil before entering the battles of life” (1981, 168). Indeed even at first publication, as Margaret Markwick wittily observes, Brown’s closest friend and spiritual mentor, George Arthur, “is doubly predestined by his name to hold the shield of knighthood” (2007, 42). Exploiting this association of gentlemanliness with chivalry, Chesney consciously buries an Arthurian reproach, through the figure of an innocent boy, within the suburban tragedy of his tract-novella pleading the case for national revival in the matter of Britain.



Figure 9 Tom Brown at the Tomb of Dr Arnold, 1869 Edition

The younger self of the narrator lives with his parents in an unnamed spot fairly close to Surbiton where his friend Travers resides with his pretty wife and young son. Unlike the spouses of other volunteers, she shows unusual resourcefulness, taking his brougham and tracking her husband down at one of the improvised London depots, ensuring that he is well provisioned with food and

garments (a task at which she is considerably more effective than the British army). Her son travels with her, and we first see "little Arthur" crying himself to sleep in his father's arms, "his golden hair and one little dimpled arm hanging over his shoulder" (1976, 35). The picture of innocence, utterly dependent upon his father's masculine agency, the boy is already being marked out forebodingly by Chesney as the target of manly failure.

The narrator next encounters Travers at Dorking, seriously wounded with a bullet through one lung and blood draining ominously from a shattered thigh. He helps his friend to safety from where the family servant transports him home. Forced to retreat many hours later and no longer able to fight for loss of blood, the narrator passes Travers' villa, and suddenly reminded of his friend's plight, steps into its hallway and again encounters little Arthur:

He had been dressed as neatly as ever that day, and as he stood there in his pretty blue frock and white trousers and socks showing his chubby little legs, with his golden locks, fair face, and large dark eyes, the picture of childish beauty, in the quiet hall, just as it used to look – the vases of flowers, the hat and coats hanging up, the familiar pictures on the walls – this vision of peace in the midst of war made me wonder for a moment, faint and giddy as I was, if the pandemonium outside had any real existence, and was not really a hideous dream (63).

Struggling upstairs to the master bedroom he finds Travers dying in his wife's arms, and on returning to the landing to take Arthur to safety discovers that a shell fragment has passed through the open door and taken off the back of the boy's head. Unable even to lift the young corpse he faints and on regaining consciousness finds the ground floor occupied by enemy soldiers. Mrs Travers is on the landing having laid her dead son next to her fallen husband and in an ironic reversal of gallantry she tends his friend's wounds, before he struggles home, too weak to intervene further or protect her from German troops.

It is worth pausing briefly to place Chesney's construction of childhood within its historical context. Although it is left unspoken, the order in the tableau

(the neatness, the prettiness, the beauty, the quietness and the “familiar” organisation) confirms the Victorian sense of gender propriety in which men and women operated in different spheres. Clothed in a frock, Arthur is located within a mother’s realm. The pandemonium outside results from a failure in the masculine realm, which looks out protectively to the wider world. What is happening outside is nightmarish because it is shameful. As Postman recognizes, literacy creates a society in which the sense of shame is operative, because it is possible to move dialogically between texts to consider in the abstract norms of behaviour. It is pure conjecture whether Chesney had read *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, although Hughes’s work was, as he acknowledged, widely read by men as well as boys; and fighting is the overarching metaphor in the earlier novel. Still, there is a fascinating similarity between the construction of Chesney’s Arthur, and the new boy, George Arthur, whom Tom is given charge of at Rugby as he emerges into school life from the care of his widowed mother: “[Tom] looked across the room, and in the far corner of the sofa was aware of a slight pale boy, with large blue eyes and light fair hair, who seemed to shrink through the floor” (217). Both boys demand a “manly” protectiveness. Brown succeeds in providing it. Chesney’s narrator fails.

Arthur is, I would argue, the keyword unlocking the paradigm of multiple failure of masculinity in *The Battle*. Stripping the trappings of medieval romance (and of literary romanticism) from the battlefield, Chesney presents a man unable to live up to those obsolescent courtly values, powerless in the destruction of national prestige, impotent to protect the honour of a more resilient woman and complicit in the death of a child (ironically named after Britain’s mythic rescuer). The Arthurian resonances of the tale function bathetically, fulfilling one of the functions of medieval romance by acting as “a kind of national memento mori, a reminder of the dangers of hubris and the frailties of greatness” (Hodgkins, 2002, 21). Deprived of personal agency in his sorry passage across the suburban landscapes of South London, Chesney’s narrator completes an anti-quest where

his shift in ontological status is to humiliating enthrallment: he is unable to secure the well-being even of a villa, itself a diminished suburban Camelot. In one sense, the novella could not end any other way, because Chesney's point is that national defence needed more than amateur voluntarism could provide, requiring state interventions extending beyond the scope of any individual. But as a model for the invasion scare story, *The Battle*, in its pessimism, fatally lacks the ingredient of heroic romance – of events marching just within the borders of the possible towards a happy resolution – which his successors, Childers and Buchan, were to add back in.

### ***The Riddle of the Sands* and Restoration of Heroism to Romance**

From a literary perspective *The Riddle of the Sands* is a paradox; a novel originally written for the same reason as *The Battle of Dorking*, which has come over time to represent the adventure romance at its highest reach of sophistication. *The Riddle* is a full-length novel, and although it does venture into a geo-political polemic in its short Epilogue, Childers does in literary terms so much more than would have been necessary to modernise *The Battle of Dorking* into an Edwardian tract-romance warning about German invasion. While only a first-time fiction writer, he nevertheless constructs a work of considerable complexity, part *bildungsroman*, part psychological thriller, presenting in his narrator, Carruthers, a young protagonist who is not only totally convincing as a man of his class and times but also as a participant-observer undergoing profound masculine development within a quest. The structure of the tale is strengthened by employing the editorialising formula used in Haggard's *She*, in which the yarn is presented as a true story that has been brought to publication by the intervention of the author. Beyond this borrowed convention, Childers avoids the sort of intertextual gesturing to the work of other romance writers that Buchan appears self-consciously to encourage; but this does not prevent *The Riddle* standing comparison with the Kipling of *Kim* in its fine-grained descriptive realism

or with the Conrad of *Heart of Darkness* in the complex loops of its narrative arc. The result is a work of literary integration, even though its tone harks back to the public school story in describing the adventure of two upper-class youths, who are quartered upon each other and forced to confront and settle their differences in pursuit of a noble cause.

*The Riddle* is the study of a growing friendship between two young Oxford acquaintances, Davies and Carruthers, squeezed together in close confinement on a former life-boat, the *Dulcibella*. The cramped and haphazard living quarters evoke a boyish idyll with the faint whiff of a divine Dr Arnold enforcing the sharing of homosocial space for the purpose of moral and intellectual integration. The novel is certainly a throwback to a mid-Victorian comfort with two males enjoying a developing intimacy. And like *Tom Brown*, its plot turns on a linguistic crux, in this case a shibboleth, the pronunciation of a phrase by a putative German that unmasks his British identity. For when a mysterious businessman, Dollmann - aboard a luxurious clipper, the *Medusa* with his daughter - pilots the young Arthur Davies towards a "short-cut" on the Frisian coast with almost fatal consequences, Davies comes to believe that English is Dollmann's native tongue and so suspects foul-play for reasons unknown. He cables Carruthers, now a junior Foreign Office clerk, to join him on board, without explaining his full motive, on the pretext of duck-shooting, but with the intention of somehow exposing the motives of this suspected spy.

Had Davies been the narrator, a simpler and shorter action thriller would have emerged, with the unliterary directness of speech of a Lord Jim perhaps, since Davies admits to being "a dull chap all round". Instead, Childers renders the story through the worldly eyes of Carruthers, an academically brilliant young man with a head for languages and the courteous steeliness of a diplomat-in-the-making. This narrative choice nuances the tale, since, as David Trotter indicates, both protagonists reflect something of Childers: a keen yachtsman when duties as a parliamentary clerk permitted and "a man whose experiences evoked and

surpassed the gung-ho conventions of the late-Victorian adventure-story" (*The Riddle of the Sands*, 1998, vii). Carruthers' maturing voice spins out the tale, which in plot is - like *The Battle of Dorking* - no more than a novella, describing the unmasking of a traitor in German disguise, who tries to prevent two intrepid Englishmen unearthing the secret German harbour hidden in the sands of the Frisian coast in readiness for an invasion by sea.

*The Riddle* works at the leisurely pace of a Marlow narrative towards this denouement. The suspense of espionage is elongated to produce an elaborate case of detective work in which Carruthers comes to know himself and Davies much better in the process of researching the coastal waters of the North Sea. Indeed, both central aspects of the yarn (the outward mastery of environment and the inward journey to self-revelation) are reciprocally balanced so that development in one side (better interpretation) leads to maturation in the other (better action), which for the effete Carruthers necessitates a crash-course in yachting. The "spy" under suspicion in the first half of the novel is really Davies himself. The intelligence gatherer, Carruthers, must "decipher" the hidden code - made necessary by a cultural taboo - within the letter he receives from Davies in London (yet another example of a plot-inciting piece of paper coming into the hands of a yarn's half-reluctant protagonist). The intrepid but diffident Davies finds it hard to acknowledge the spy-catching motive behind his invitation to yachting on the Baltic because he has fallen in love with Dollmann's daughter and is solicitous for her moral reputation which he believes untainted by treachery. The coded meaning of the letter is an outward manifestation of the behavioural code amongst men in the upper-class stratum of Edwardian society in which, as Carruthers acknowledges, "[t]wo men cannot discuss a woman without a deep foundation of intimacy" (72).

The psychological cat-and-mouse game played out between the two "archetypal clubland heroes" (Trotter, 1998, xi) enlivens the tale, since the Marlow-like Carruthers must penetrate the husk of reserve under which Davies



hides his secret before the two can collaborate on unmasking Dollmann. Although a riddle of the sands - a riddle solved by their successful navigation - the tale is as much about the complex eddies of the British class system. It shows how highly developed the cultural competence of Carruthers needs to be to break down the masculine reserve of Davies, pointing to the difficulty of establishing familiarity between men in Edwardian England. Acknowledging his difficulty in getting to the heart of the matter with Davies, Carruthers observes: "There was a cross-current in this strange affair, whose depth and strength I was beginning to gauge with increasing seriousness. I did not know my man yet and I did not know myself" (72). Gaining that elusive knowledge entails a re-acquaintance with mid-nineteenth-century Christian and chivalric masculinity. That conceptualization can be found in *Tom Brown*, whose protagonists are not afraid of using affectionate terms of endearment, Tommy and Geordie, in male conversation.

Almost immediately afterwards, Davies does, in Carruthers's telling metaphor, struggle out of his armour (72) and confide that Dollmann has had contact with German naval officers. The figure here of a medieval shining knight, balancing martial necessity with concern for a lady's honour, is a reminder of how far *The Riddle* goes in resuscitating the potency of the Arthurian myth as foundational to British masculinity. Carruthers may not have known his man when receiving Davies's letter, but there was a clue in his formal signature: Arthur Davies. The yachtsman has been growing in the civil servant's estimation as Carruthers, aboard the *Dulcibella*, has reread Davies's face: "[i]t had always rather irritated me by an excess of candour and boyishness. These qualities it had kept, but the scales were falling from my eyes, and I saw others. I saw strength to obstinacy, and courage to recklessness, in the firm lines of the chin; an older deeper look in the eyes" (31). Carruthers is obliged to acknowledge a masculine strength informing Davies's outward boyishness.

Yet Carruthers also admits to not knowing himself, and it is aboard a metaphorical life-boat that the effete government functionary, for whom yachting

means ostentatious display at Cowes amongst an exclusive social set, undergoes what Kestner refers to as a "remasculinisation" (2010, 49). The direct engagement with nature; the testing of masculinity in the mastery, as far as possible, of the elements and a romantic acceptance of their transcendent power; Spartan self-sufficiency, and the disciplined reading of coastline, wind and tide: these are the aspects of Davies's life that fascinate but also repel Carruthers, as a projection of his increasingly conscious feeling of comparative inadequacy. Redemption for Carruthers, amidst continuing episodes of the "old morbid mood with which I left London" (53) comes through vigilant observation of tidal currents, of his fellow yachtsman's face and of the activities of Dollmann and his German associates, in what Trotter terms a heightened attention which becomes a way of life (xii).

Still, it would be wrong to imply that Carruthers' Damascene conversion to a yachting equivalent of scouting for boys represents a renunciation of his mandarin sensibility. Davies has chosen the government clerk as a partner in adventure because of his penetrating intellect and contact in high places - in other words his sophisticated reading of the world. Carruthers has passed brilliantly all his entrance papers to the Foreign Office, whereas Davies has failed the examination for the "Indian Civil", the pinnacle of imperial ambition, and languishes in a solicitor's office, his thwarted plans for national service being sublimated in yachting and the perusal of books about naval strategy. And Carruthers never totally loses his mollified impatience with the limitations of Davies's boy's own worldview, which lacks the transcultural sophistication of the diplomat. Without the linguistic brilliance of this coming man in governmental administration (chiming with the status of Chesney's narrator), the riddle would have remained unsolved. It is Carruthers who facilitates conversations with the Conradian freemasonry of the sea, the maritime officers and seamen of different nationalities who provide clues for the Englishmen's detective work.

In hinging his plot upon a shibboleth, Childers exploits the linguistic turn represented by the yarn within the masculine adventure novel. In the characters of Davies and Carruthers and the fate of Dollmann, language acuity in the heroes and a lapse in the villain are used to chart in different ways the ontological development of three men. In an act of rare linguistic perceptiveness, Davies spots the fault in Dollmann's otherwise effective masquerade as a German (a complex slip in which the speaker fails to disguise his native tongue by poor pronunciation). Davies's linguistic deconstruction commences the expatriate's decline from gentleman to exposed traitor. Carruthers puts his language skills at the service of a practical patriotism, and in so doing, the potential for personal heroism in the government functionary, lost in *The Battle*, is restored. As a parliamentary clerk himself, Childers achieves a remarkable *volte-face* for an amateur in the professional world of men of letters by writing a tract that is so assured as literature that, unlike *The Battle*, it can be read today not as a period piece but as an enduring study of upper-class masculine sensibilities. The effect of this integration of adventure romance with the social realist novel is to free *The Riddle* from the propagandising straitjacket of the pamphlet.

### **Kipling and Invasion Anxiety**

Kipling's own contribution to the debate over national defence is less well-known than *Stalky & Co.*, *Kim* and the *Puck* tales, although characteristically it spans works for adults and children. In his authorised biography Charles Carrington avoids commenting upon the literary merit of *The Army of a Dream*, which was started on a voyage to South Africa at Christmas 1900 and completed three years later. Instead, he links the short story to Kipling's active support for the National Service League to which his associate "old Lord Roberts devoted his declining years" (1970, 484-5). The omission is polite. For few critics who have commented upon *The Army*, a short story for adults or *A School History of England* (1911), a classroom textbook, have been struck by their literary merit.

Even Kipling seems to subordinate literary concerns to political allegiances, anxiety over Britain's inadequate preparedness for war being sufficient in mitigation. The League existed to agitate for compulsory military training in a political climate in which no party could safely advocate conscription. *The Army* envisages such a compulsory system. Kipling was not the only literary figure to have concerns. Another writer (almost inevitably, one feels, an Arthur), Conan Doyle, was also alarmed enough about security to correspond with Childers about creating a citizen bicycle cavalry (Lycett, 2007, 355).

*The Army* follows a vision-in-a-dream formula where the narrator falls asleep at his club, involuntarily summoning the apparition of a long-forgotten Indian army crony, "Boy" Bayley, now a significant figure in the home-based Imperial Guard. The narrator is taken on a tour of a regime which sees the training of reservists deeply embedded in the cultural and economic life of England, and rooted in the private and Board schools. The new system is outlined in exhaustive detail - Lycett concedes it is "overlong" (359). Kipling proceeds on the basis that a preoccupation with national defence will alone sustain the narrative. However, the main character "Boy" Bayley - echoing the nickname of "Boy" McLaren, with whom Baden-Powell formed an intense bond when sharing a bungalow on active service in Muttra, India (Jeal, 66-70) - is not fully developed like Carruthers. Nor is there any progression to the tale, unlike Kipling's Indian stories about the army which also rely on male badinage, slang and the technical language of soldiering as a trade to give them colour. The private rooms for the guardsmen depicted in *The Army* are a hybrid of club-bedroom and school-study and similarly bland - for a contented state of eternal bachelordom seems to be the preferred condition in the story. Kipling attempts to inject pathos when the narrator awakes with consternation to remember that all the soldiers he has "met" including Bayley actually died in the Boer war - a result, it is implied, of poor army planning. In a motif recurring in Kipling's fiction, the attribution of boyishness is intended to elicit sympathy. But as the protagonists of the tale are,

so to speak, men preferring to be boys rather than, as in *Stalky*, boys preparing to be men, compassion for their predicament is harder to evoke. The tale seems driven by the approval of Kipling's military associates rather than literary necessity. In fact, it is no surprise that *The Army* was separately published in 1905 as a pamphlet.

A few years later, Kipling's political dissatisfaction with "the current atmosphere of corrupting Liberalism" (Gilmour, 2002, 176) led to partnership with C.R.L. Fletcher, Tory historian and fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, on *A School History of England*, a text that Gilmour summarizes as "lamentable: racist, bigoted, anti-Irish, anti-Catholic, anti-Parliament and proudly propagandist" (177). Andrew Lycett notes that Fletcher was one of the historians consulted over the *Puck* stories and that in May 1910 Fletcher suggested a collaboration in which his own text would be supplemented by some new poems by Kipling (1999, 405). That Kipling consented is evidence of the split between the sensitivity of which his fiction is capable when children are depicted and the blatancy of some public utterances. Extroverted political postures, even those shared with a collaborator, sometimes seem a compensatory reflex for having to follow the sedentary career of a writer. That Kipling had mixed feelings over the partnership is evidenced in *Stalky* by the profound resistance in "The Flag of their Country" to any talking down by adults to children. Lycett records that after publication, Kipling was embarrassed about Fletcher's tub-thumping (405).

Kipling's contribution to *A School History* is limited to verse, twenty-three poems in total. The poems are scattered amongst the narrative, introducing or concluding a chapter, or placed within the text to emphasize a point that Fletcher is making. Like Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, Kipling, in imaginatively considering Britain's history, cannot but deflate present imperial success with memories of invasion. The opening poem, "The River's Tale" traces the Thames back to the dawn of remembered time when ominously it was a tributary of the Rhine, and England joined to the Continent. The course of pre-history is traced colourfully up

until the point when "life was gay, and the world was new", but this idyll is destroyed when "the Roman came with heavy hand" (10). The moral that England is only as secure as the power of its navy is reinforced in "The Dutch in the Medway", which references the reign of Charles II, the last time that Britain's control of the sea was challenged. The monarch's historic reputation as a pleasure-seeker is pitted against the desperate need to fund the Navy. Blame for national dereliction, as in *The Battle* and *The Riddle of the Sands*, is once again directed towards government in Whitehall (168-9).

In view of Kipling's support for the National Service League, Fletcher's closing remarks may safely be thought to echo Rudyard's sentiments. Fletcher emphasizes that "the only safe thing for all of us who love our country is to learn soldiering at once, and to be prepared to fight at any moment" (Fletcher and Kipling, 245). The *History* adds pedagogic weight to a populist discourse that schoolchildren were already sated by. Noting the preponderance of invasion stories in boys' story papers, E.S. Turner quotes an American newspaper speculating in 1910 whether war would become "inevitable as a direct result of the war-scare inaugurated and carried on with the most reckless and maddening ingenuity by the Northcliffe syndicate of newspapers" (1976, 175). In transferring the weight of invasion anxiety from grown men to schoolboys, Fletcher echoes a preoccupation of Kipling's: the boy forced prematurely into the role of a man. Anxiety about dominance from Europe is reified in the maps at the front and the back of the textbook. Britain's imperial possessions are relegated to the end of the text; the frontispiece presents the geography of Europe, an inlaid chart showing the battles that were fought in Belgium including Waterloo, prophetically outlining French Flanders, where John Kipling was to disappear at the Battle of Loos, four years later. This weighing down of the text with the doom-laden makes Kipling's foray into invasion scare territory less satisfactory than the *Stalky* tales or *Kim*, where the child's rebelliousness counteracts the pressure of imperial responsibilities. But his intrusion into the classroom within a

history primer does confirm his understanding of how pedagogic examination and patriotic self-examination are interlinked.

### **John Buchan, Richard Hannay and the Historical Resources of Romance**

Answering the question whether Britain has any masculine drive left in the negative, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* makes its national saviour a colonial figure. Hannay comes out of Africa - indeed out of Rhodesia - for very specific reasons. Lindy Steibel has noted that "the romance with its grand dreams of wish fulfilment, its deeds of heroism and its binary opposite, the fear of failure, of dark menace from without, suited the late nineteenth-century mood very well" (2001, 37). Buchan, one of Milner's "kindergarten" of bright colonial administrators at the turn of the century, plays up that menace in the sinister Black Stone, a ring of German spies who infiltrate British society. His romance implies that only the virile self-confidence of a South African mining engineer turned amateur agent can solve the homeland's problems. As Stephen Donovan observes, Buchan specifically links Hannay to Rhodesia ten times in the narrative, making it "a defining character trait" (2013, 49) because "a proliferation of travelogues, military memoirs and popular ephemera [created] in the minds of British readers an enduring image of Rhodesia as the supreme test-ground of imperial masculinity and up-to-date commercial enterprise" (50).

Although in outlining incidents that defy the probabilities, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is self-consciously escapist, this does not mean that Buchan is casual in his construction of the tale, and casting his hero as a Rhodesian is only one of several innovations woven into the yarn by Buchan. Gillian Beer argues that the romance "often registers with extraordinary refinement the peculiar forms and vacillations of a period" (1970, 12), and as a classicist and Scot, an imperialist administrator and publisher, Buchan was extraordinarily well-placed to capture the public mood at the start of the war, as he makes a great game out of oscillating between

insider and outsider status in his relationship to the public school code and popular literature.

That canniness is clear in the novel's dedication to Buchan's friend and employer Thomas Arthur Nelson (Lothian and Border Horse), which acts like Stevenson's prefatory poem in *Treasure Island* to persuade the hesitating purchaser. In a few short asides, Buchan positions himself in relationship to a Scots officer on active service, explains sickness as his reason both for not enlisting and for having the time to write, passing the novel off as a *jeu d'esprit* concocted in the style of an American "dime novel". The dedication is faintly reminiscent of Stevenson's letter to Henley identifying *Treasure Island* as a crawler, an exploitable and populist literary form. Yet Buchan appears to play down personal interest in "coining it" (which *The Thirty-Nine Steps* quickly did). In his memoir, Buchan continues the pretence of having written the thriller for his own amusement: "while pinned to my bed during the first months of war and compelled to keep my mind off too tragic realities, I gave myself to stories of adventure" (1940, 195). Paul Gough presents a more prosaic and realistic picture of a man of affairs in wartime facing "a reverse in his family fortunes, which obliged him to return to novel-writing" (2010, 25). And in a detailed examination of Buchan's relationship to popular American literature (2013, 155-168), Patrick Scott Belk notes not only that as a literary advisor for Nelson & Sons, Buchan "had been reading copious amounts of periodical fiction" (156) but also subsequently as an author he personally arranged serialization of three Hannay novels through American publishers of pulp fiction (155).

In his memoir Buchan also notes that his breakthrough novel "appeared to amuse my friends in the trenches" (195) as if that was a surprising consequence rather than a deliberate ploy. *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is designed to be read in the trenches: it is a war-to-come story carefully aligned to the deadly-dull war of attrition in Flanders, which created an appetite for romantic escapism. Freed from the necessity of supplying a treatise about national defence, Buchan had licence



to reconstruct the invasion scare story, by effecting an elegant reversal. Its eager readership of entrenched troops on the Continent were treated to a homeland chase across Scotland. By effecting that reversal, Buchan clarifies that a tall tale set on home soil can be a yarn too, providing the key ingredients of social dislocation, a physical translation into homosocial space and a successfully completed quest which transform the identity of its protagonist, Hannay.

The inversion of the normal rules of the yarn is apparent in the episode already described when Hannay encounters the Galloway innkeeper. For once, the romance hero is an older man obliged to embroider what is already an improbable story in order to gain the support of someone boyishly hungering for adventure. The appeal for the innkeeper's support is made by imaginatively converting a landscape that has been rendered humdrum by the incursion of the motor car and middle-aged women into an outlandish terrain in which Hannay must apply the techniques of veld-craft learnt in South Africa to elude a German gang that has embedded itself in the Scottish lowlands. Since Hannay's father took him away from Scotland at the age of six, and he has not subsequently been "home", the topography across which the Rhodesian mining engineer is pursued by the British police and foreign spies has a curious duality as both an alien challenge and a mastered reality. The landscape is re-imagined in South African terms. When alighting at a lowland station Buchan is reminded of "one of those forgotten little stations of the Karroo" (40); daylight has the "fragrant sunniness of the South African veld" (41); life on the veld has given him the eyes of a kite (42); in escaping the Black Stone, he longs for "a good Afrikander pony" (43). References to an already-achieved, colonial masculinity give a tremendous buoyancy to the narrative tone and an assurance that Hannay will conquer whatever is placed in his way, even in a sinister environment which has dispensed with standard assumptions about the native control of territory.

If his protagonist gives a bravura display of amateur competence in espionage that puts the British establishment to shame (restoring the romantic

gloss to voluntarism tarnished by Chesney), Buchan also exhibits considerable literary self-confidence in placing his romance against the work of established adventure writers. In causing the bookish innkeeper to recall two living writers, Kipling and Conrad, Buchan artlessly invites comparison with them. Furthermore, the poem "Romance" quoted by the innkeeper, in which Kipling argues that the atmosphere of romance has always falsely been regarded as obsolescent, summarizes Buchan's approach to adventure, grounding his *modus operandi* with a literary allusion. The poem links romance to the invocation of the gods of hunt and dance. Beneath the sheen of modernity afforded by trains, planes and automobiles, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* evokes a primeval, traversable landscape in which savage and predatory instincts lurk. The German spy concealed in the Scottish habitat is first described in the novel as "an old man with a young voice who could hood his eyes like a hawk" (20). But Buchan does not limit himself to the populist verse allusions of Kipling. When the Galloway innkeeper is caught reciting Milton to himself, the passage in question describes a Gryphon pursuing the Arimaspians, which is a coded reference to Satan let loose upon the earth. It may be that Buchan is slyly implying that Hannay's pursuit, by what turns out to be a German-owned monoplane, is a form of infernal harrying – a morale-boosting suggestion to British troops that God is on their side. The reference is more clearly sign-posted than the Miltonic atmosphere that Jeffrey Richards noted in Farrar's *Eric*, and that Buchan should cite the most classically-learned of English poets places him in a pedagogic tradition which values intellectual display.

Indeed, Buchan's way with the thriller does call to mind the method of George Arthur in completing a Latin or Greek composition in *Tom Brown*. Elegance and aestheticism are brought to bear upon an existing artistic form, as if the creation of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is an intellectual game – and to this extent, the suggestion that the novel was created to amuse its author is justified. Buchan even seems to tease his audience with tacit references to *The Riddle of the Sands* in his romance's opening pages, as if an ideal reader should already have the

plots of other yarns circulating in his head. The topos of the disaffected gentleman cast adrift in an unsatisfying London is a blatant borrowing from Childers. Carruthers attempts to allay his world-weariness in a low music hall, as does Hannay. Both lament their boredom, are habitués of enervating clubs and are troubled by desultory servants in bachelor chambers. And both are rescued, as if providentially, by peripheral figures, Davies and Scudder, bearing wild tales of spying. Like Carruthers, Hannay is no fool and cosmopolitan, with some knowledge of German. Where the South African differs from the languid English civil servant is in his strong competitive streak and active desire for a challenge that will test all his powers.

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* might then itself be regarded as engaged in competitive discourse with *The Riddle of the Sands*, reflecting the differing social strata from which the two authors were drawn. Childers, educated at the bastion of British imperialism, Haileybury, produced a patrician tract which repeated Chesney's proposition of the impending peril of invasion. Carruthers takes for granted an innate superiority to his fellow man. His remasculinisation exposes that posture as an unmanly form of *ennui*, but his Arnoldian intellectual credentials as an expert linguist are not in doubt, and in themselves are never undermined during his yachting exploits. By contrast, John Buchan, the product of Hutcheson's Grammar, Glasgow, is marked out by Mark Girouard as one of the few men to achieve full gentlemanly status by an alternative route having not been at a public school: education at Oxford, friends acquired at university and future career (1981, 263). And Richard Hannay is driven as a colonial outsider to achieve social acceptance as a gentleman in England. Part of gentility's moral aura was, of course, never to be seen to be climbing socially. Yet quietly, Hannay does, as Girouard suggests many did, "pursue it with the ardour of those looking for the Holy Grail" (262). The veneer of amateurism in the Richard Hannay novels conceals a quiet ambition to step up the social ladder not found in Carruthers and *The Riddle of the Sands*, where patriotic duty is its own reward.

In *Clubland Heroes*, Richard Osborne anatomizes the Buchan success ethic, noting its fundamentally competitive nature. In his novels, it is not enough to have done a job well, one must do it better than anyone else (1974, 88-89). Osborne contends that Buchan bases this ethic on the academic competitiveness of the Cock House, the highest-performing house in the public school system: "a slight but persistent propaganda for the decencies as preached by the enthusiastic housemaster – for cold baths, for hard work, for healthy exhaustion on the playing-field, for shaking hands with the beaten opponent, for the attainment of Success in after-life" (81). Going further than Talbot Baines Reed and Charles Hamilton who write of – even celebrate – the public school without having been to one, Buchan competitively achieves more, internalising its ethos as if determined to crack its code in an act of supreme cultural competence. This literary competitiveness may help to explain the desire of Buchan to perfect a major innovation introduced by Childers: the foreign spy who is culturally indecipherable. Dollmann's Englishness is only established with great difficulty, but in the figure of the bald archaeologist, the German leader of the mysterious Black Stone, Buchan reverses the trope by embedding a spy-ring in the Scottish lowlands. His protagonist, a colonial amateur, proceeds to successfully uncover the foreigner, a task in which British professional intelligence has failed.

In the narrative voice of Richard Hannay, the yarn reaches its apogee, epitomizing the literary and linguistic properties of the public school-inflected adventure story. Pitted against a national enemy who, through a highbrow, Miltonic allusion, is characterised as evil, Hannay, in his self-talk, fuses boyish enthusiasm and manly resolution, the Galloway air reviving his colonial vigour and freeing him from the enervation of the *polis*, which he saves almost single-handedly. Even the public school motif of being chased as if in a hare-and-hounds game is rejuvenated, becoming a symbol of Hannay's personal agency, rather than a marker of inadequacy as in *The Battle*. Indeed, as Osborne points out, in Buchan's work "[i]f success is the strophe, the antistrophe is honourable

exhaustion" (91). It is through unstinting physical exertion that this rootless immigrant from Rhodesia exposes the German plans to steal details of the disposition of the British fleet, thereby gaining the gratitude of the British establishment and its spy-master, Sir Walter Bullivant. The reward for Hannay's fortitude in the testing landscape of Galloway is a country house in the verdant countryside of Oxfordshire and a knighthood. By a perceptual trick, reminiscent of an Escher drawing, when the German spies descend the thirty-nine steps to the sea at Broadstairs in an unsuccessful getaway, Hannay rises irresistibly into an honorific chivalric order within the gentlemanly English upper class.

The success of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* was instrumental in Buchan's engagement in intelligence work during the Great War, reflecting the historically iterative relationship between spying and literature. Praising *Kim* as "probably the finest of all spy novels", Christopher Andrew argues, in his authorised history of MI5, that its partly fictional portrayal of a far-flung intelligence network led European powers to over-estimate the sophistication of Britain's secret service in Europe (2009, 27). In *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Hannay "out-Kims" even that ultra-efficient recruit to espionage, passing most of the novella in a series of disguises that fool his German pursuers. It is only when he arrives at Sir Walter Bullivant's country residence to brief him that Hannay's mask momentarily drops to reveal the acquisitive side of his nature: "We went to his study for coffee, a jolly room full of books and trophies and untidiness and comfort. I made up my mind that if ever I got rid of this business and had a house of my own, I would create such a room" (78). The implied reader is left in no doubt even with the false modesty of "if ever" that Hannay will achieve his ambition, which will be the outsider's assumption of the mimicked trappings of elite Georgian masculine space, its literary comforts and reminders of past competitive glories, safe from the tidiness of petticoat domestic government.

Since *The Thirty-Nine Steps* was published in 1915 during a period of convalescence arising from a duodenal ulcer when Buchan was at a low ebb, its

production appears as a confident prediction that story-telling would be Buchan's route to a position of significance in the national effort. In the comfort of Sir Walter Bullivant's study Hannay elides yawning and spying: "when the coffee-cups were cleared away, and we had got our cigars alight my host swung his long legs over the side of his chair and bade me get started with my yarn" (78). Unlike Kipling, who believed that dropping the trappings of literature from *The Army* was the prerequisite to successful propaganda, Buchan attuned his story-telling to the national cause, providing a welcome diversion to men in the trenches by exploiting his naturally romantic disposition. In his invasion scare stories Kipling continues to exploit the borderline between dream and reality, between being a boy or a man, giving his work an idyllic or elegiac colouring but also an essentially static nature. Buchan wisely sees the importance of a successfully concluded quest to national morale. Even as Director of the wartime Department of Information, Buchan's achievement was principally aesthetic, a role in establishment of the official British war artists scheme, and more significantly in terms of masculine heroism in constructing the public face of Lawrence of Arabia, a flamboyant antithesis to the tragic yet mundane endeavours of trench warfare. Perhaps it was a lack of certainty that he was yet his own hero that attracted Buchan to Lawrence, an expert Oriental linguist and military adventurer whose commitment to personal exhaustion in unfettered treks across desert landscapes out-competed Hannay's. Lawrence's contribution to the yarn will be examined in the concluding chapter, but I will now turn to exploring wartime developments in Kipling's work as national and personal trauma force a reconsideration of boy's own heroism.

## Chapter 6: The public school code revisited - Wartime Kipling

Next, journey by journey, [...] she brought down in the towel-coloured clothes-basket, on the wheelbarrow, thumbed and used Hentys, Marryats, Levers, Stevensons, Baroness Orczys, Garvices, schoolbooks, and atlases; [...] the remnants of a fleet of sailing-ships from ninepenny cutters to three-guinea yacht; a prep-school dressing-gown; bats from three-and-sixpence to twenty-four shillings; cricket and tennis balls; disintegrated steam and clockwork locomotives with their twisted rails; a grey and red tin model of a submarine; a dumb gramophone and cracked records; [...] photographs of private and public school cricket and football elevens, and his O.T.C on the line of march.

**Rudyard Kipling, *Mary Postgate***

### Introduction

In his memoir, *Something of Myself*, Kipling describes the writing of *Rewards and Fairies*, admitting that he “even slipped in a cryptogram, whose key I regret I must have utterly forgotten” (1937, 111); its editor Thomas Pinney acknowledges that “what RK means has not yet been discovered” (258). Kipling’s comparison of the writer’s to the code-maker’s craft throws light on the construction of his middle- and late-period works. “In an auspicious hour, read your final draft and consider faithfully every paragraph, sentence and word, blacking out where requisite” (121), he counsels would-be writers in the final chapter, “Working-Tools”. Kingsley Amis suggests, in relation to this advice, that the “coyness of Kipling’s language [...] is a clue to how he regarded his craft”, objecting to Kipling’s “indifference to the fundamental right of the reader, to be acquainted with what can be taken as the full facts” (1975, 107). For Amis, working cryptograms into texts is a clue to an unfortunate tendency towards secrecy in Kipling’s practice of his craft.

As has been seen, Dixon Scott takes a more lenient approach to the interlayering of meaning found in the *Puck* tales; paring back can be a means of intensifying the relationship of different aspects of the text, bringing them into clearer definition. Dying on active service in the same year, 1915, as Rudyard’s son John, Scott did not have the opportunity to comment on the continued

development of Kipling's art in the two wartime stories examined in this chapter. It is a matter of conjecture what he would have made of them, although both "Regulus" and "Mary Postgate" contain the planes of adult experience and child experience, which he noted and praised; and in "Regulus", what Scott terms "history-stuff" is very much to the fore and also placed again on a "last foundation" of allegory (316). To these levels that Scott discerned at work in the *Rewards and Fairies*, I want to add another: familial meaning. The presences of John and Elsie haunt the Sussex countryside in the personas of Dan and Una. It is arguable, too, that Josephine Kipling haunts the representation of Philadelphia Bucksteed, both girls succumbing to afflictions of the lung. In "Regulus" and "Mary Postgate", Kipling addresses again the familiar theme of the adolescent placed under unbearable pressure. The fate of John Kipling (and the young men of his lost generation) haunts the texts, and enriches them, in a manner that challenges the belief that authorial secrecy contravenes an unwritten code of transparency between writer and implied reader. By demanding the readerly vigilance (code-breaking) lying at the centre of the boy's own paradigm of masculinity, Kipling both celebrates and acknowledges the tragic failings of this pedagogic system.

### **"Regulus" as a Latin primer**

For any writer of fiction, even one as long inured as Kipling, the unofficial laureate of Empire, to public denigration as well as praise, it is a risk (if not a calculated act of defiance to the critics) to portray oneself undergoing a test of literary competence. Yet this is the rite of passage to which Beetle, a younger Kipling<sup>11</sup> is subjected, in front of a demanding pedagogue, King, and smirking classmates at the opening of "Regulus", first published in *Nash's Magazine*, *Pall Mall* and *Metropolitan Magazine* in April 1917. Kipling once again returns to 'The Coll', his *alma mater*, whose fictionalised exploits were explored in the original *Stalky & Co.* and examined in my earlier chapter about the school story.



The opening scene is set upon a raw November morning which captures the unglamorous grind for master and pupil of classroom Latin. Beetle is obliged, before the Fifth Form, to provide a translation of the Fifth Ode of the Third Book of the school Horace and the first paragraph reveals the grounds for this public ordeal: "[T]hose were the years when Army examiners gave thousands of marks for Latin, and it was Mr. King's hated business to defeat them" (157) <sup>12</sup>. The examination will be *viva voce*, requiring from its candidates, as King explains, "somewhat freer and florid translations" which manifest a rapport with the sensibility of the text. Knowing that his poor eyesight debars Beetle from any military ambitions, King rather cruelly separates him linguistically from his peers by demanding an absolutely literal translation. Readers of the early *Stalky* will have understood that this humiliation represents King's revenge for the guerrilla campaign conducted against this hated master by Beetle in the form of accomplished poetic squibs, circulated anonymously across the college. Readers new to the series will not of course know this back-story so will have encountered something simpler. First, a rubric in English, prefacing the story, that briefly outlines the fate of the Roman General Regulus, captured by the Carthaginians in 255 B.C. and sent home as a hostage to plea-bargain before the Senate for an exchange of prisoners; a proposition that he resolutely argues against, thereby sealing his destiny (death by torture) and securing the admiration of British imperialists for his devotion to the State's interest. Second, the young Beetle engaged in a minor rebellion against Latin prep through a concealed dependence upon a construe from his friend M'Turk. Beetle is relying upon this crib to see him through the public ordeal, aided only by his own insouciant impersonation of a faltering scholar.

"Regulus" appeared in the wartime collection of short stories, *A Diversity of Creatures*. That Kipling should write again about a minor boarding school in the 1880s could hardly pass muster merely as an exercise in nostalgia in the decidedly chilly air of 1917. War had passed the point, in its introduction of

conscripted, of any romanticized Victorian notion of voluntary sacrifice. Furthermore, in employing the hackneyed scenario of the classroom construe, which had declined in snob value over sixty years from the fastidious Christianity of *Tom Brown's Rugby* to a formulaic deployment in mass-consumed periodicals like *The Gem* and *The Magnet*, Kipling deliberately provokes the charge of philistinism. An unpopular author by 1917, Kipling returns to a seam apparently mined to exhaustion in 1899, when the first *Stalky* collection was published.

Still, adding to an existing series of short stories does provide the ideal opportunity for the re-examination of a given topic. After "Regulus", three more appeared in periodicals, and a total of five were added to the 1899 version when the full complement of school stories was collected in 1929<sup>13</sup>. "Regulus" represents a development in complexity and outlook. It is clearly intended to be considerably more than the anecdote, extended prank or revenge-comedy that together constitute much of the original *Stalky* corpus. That Kipling has some important new statement to make in returning to a classic mode of Victorian education is perhaps intimated by the emblematic nature of Beetle's position, as a proxy for Kipling; standing figuratively before a teacher of Latin and English, half-attentive schoolboys and a group of academics, the boy-reader and man-writer both have to undertake a literary performance.

In "Regulus", the crib is still used as a device to differentiate Beetle and his friends from the morally muscular decency of Tom Brown. As I have already shown in the school story, the honourable determination to forswear the communal crib-book in favour of the lonely path of scholastic self-reliance is a moral crux of Thomas Hughes's genre-defining novel. In the 1899 edition of *Stalky*, Kipling is explicitly hostile to the feminizing influence of conscience-ridden religion and to the lowly schoolmasters who enforce the honour of the House, presenting in the headmaster, Bates (who unlike Rugby's Doctor Arnold is not in holy orders) a superior matrix of authority. In those earlier tales, the "Prooshian Bates", "a downy bird" (to borrow two preferred Number Five Study epithets that

capture his uncompromisingly steely intelligence), engages in the tacit undermining of his unworldly staff, administering condign punishment to Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle only for the sake of form. King, Prout, Hartopp and the other masters are depicted as imaginatively limited when regarding plagiarism as a serious matter, rather than as a wily preparation for the enterprise necessary if the future subaltern is to survive military operations on the Indian sub-continent.

By 1914, warfare had moved irrevocably forward, consigning battlefield autonomy to the rubble of history, and if "Regulus" were to appear as more than a reactionary spasm, some new life needed to be breathed into the familiar formula. The tone of defiance represented by Beetle's nonchalant "translating" gives hopeful signs of textual rejuvenation. And in "Regulus" there is certainly a rebalancing of the child-perspective (rebellious) and the adult world-view (authoritarian), which is particularly noticeable in the new respect accorded to King. Between writing "Slaves of the Lamp (Part I)", in which King is humiliated, and "Regulus", Kipling had participated in the production of a classroom text, *A School History*. In view of his doubts over the tub-thumping of Fletcher, this may have awakened a respect for those subtler skills of the schoolmaster which are not always evident to his pupils. Indeed, "Regulus" is a text which dramatizes the intellectual processes of the classroom. In a further twist for the school story, the invocation of Regulus has to be seen as contextualizing the plot, characterisations and ethos of the whole story rather than, as in *Tom Brown*, providing a single moral pointer for protagonist and implied reader. Not only this, but in observing a classroom translation, the reader is figuratively returned to the role of a student, a Latin scholar, faced with the interpretative detective work of deriving meanings embedded within the yarn.

To explain further, the central strand of "Regulus" is the character study of a pupil new to the series, Winton, who undergoes a physical trial that is perhaps the nearest that a Victorian public school could offer to the fate of the general. The link between Roman exemplar and student exegete is set up immediately

when responsibility for continuing the classroom translation passes from Beetle to the pupil who most meets King's pedagogic estimation of someone fit to impersonate the "provident-minded Regulus" (159) because of his reputation for taking Latin prep seriously. Ironically, Winton immediately stumbles in his construe, having made the mistake, in his otherwise thorough preparation, of relying rashly on Beetle for the correct translation of the one word whose meaning he has not looked up, *delubris*, which he renders to general derision as "deluges" rather than "flags". The workmanlike boy is publicly exposed in his one omission by the improvident boy who has almost sailed through his own construe owing to a resourceful subterfuge.

Thus far, Winton might fairly be regarded as the subject of a short parable by Kipling the Imperialist. The moral is that the costive virtues inculcated to mould the Christian gentleman (and Winton leans too much towards this type) will have little survival value in the mountain passes of Afghanistan. However, Winton's verbal stumble merely serves as the preamble to a significant fall from grace (in the eyes of conventional schoolmasters, at least) which the narrative not only implies may be the saving of him, but will also register a marked development, two decades on from the first tales of "The Coll.", in Kipling's use of narrative complexity. The Latin lesson continues its course, reaching its nadir in the grammatical incoherence of sub-prefect, Vernon, diverted only by the intrusion of chlorine gas from a neighbouring classroom of the school's new Modern Side, a private allusion by Kipling that I shall return to. The episode affords King the chance for "a few brisk remarks on Science" (165); for, as Auden notes in "The Greeks and Us", those masters who taught "Stinks" on the Modern Side in a public school were not regarded as gentlemen by the Classics Side (1989, 3). Then in an out-of-character prank put down to "the blind ferment of adolescence", Winton, knowing that the master is low in the school hierarchy and can only administer fifty lines, releases a live mouse in Mr Lidgett's technical

drawing class, bringing down on his head not so much the wrath as the calculated therapeutic intervention of Bates.

The astute Head makes use of a convention within the behavioural code of "The Coll." little practised in more conventional public schools<sup>14</sup> which in the form meted out to Winton, constitutes a humiliating barbarism. Any boy who fails to turn out for afternoon practice is liable to a beating by the Captain of Games. Bates gives Winton five hundred lines for his misdemeanour knowing that their completion on the afternoon of games will forestall sporting participation, setting up a ritual punishment by his study-mate, cousin and close friend, Mullins. Since the "provident-minded" Winton has chosen to make his act of defiance with a mouse in the class of a teacher with only limited powers of retaliation, Bates seeks to have "overcrowded him with new experiences", by making his punishment fit the crime; the beating of a boy by a boy who is his social equal. Winton has to learn that a true soldier, like Regulus, is obligated to serve all levels of society, even lowly masters. However, for Winton this social humiliation is so great that the story moves beyond being part of a game of cat-and-mouse between master and pupil into a serious study of a young man's suffering.

In "Regulus", Kipling promotes Winton into the company of those leading adults in his short stories, such as "Mrs Bathurst" or "The House Surgeon", who are subjected to what the critic Bonamy Dobrée was the first to identify as "breaking strain" (1967, 31). Dobrée suggests that Kipling may have observed the phrase in Rider Haggard's *She*: "every man, like every rope, hath its breaking strain" (1991, 182). Whatever its provenance, the result in late Kipling is a pronounced interest in describing the effect of stress on the individual. The movement forward in psychological realism can be shown through a contrast with one of the 1899 *Stalky* stories, "A Little Prep" whose somewhat contrived conclusion depicts the Head seeking to cane the whole school for riotously celebrating an act of secret heroism perpetrated by him on behalf of a sick pupil. Blows appear to have no immediate or lasting effect, as if high spirits or group

hysteria can ward off pain. In "Regulus" Kipling bypasses the caning of Winton but lingers instead on the period before the ritual humiliation, when he must face up to the agony of his impending beating. The tale evidences a psychological realism and compassion that critics of Kipling and the yarn, like Q.D. Leavis, have generally denied them.

Here, Kipling manages to imbue time with the elasticity that often arises during a psychological crisis. Winton's friends and mentor hover at hand to offer support. King, showing rare empathy, enters the form-room (apparently by accident) where Winton is waiting, and extemporizes Horace to speed his completion of five hundred lines. The process is described with a surprisingly technological image:

For the next forty minutes, with never a glance at the book, King paid out the glorious hexameters (and King could read Latin as though it were alive), Winton hauling them in and coiling them away behind him as trimmers in a telegraph-ship's hold coil away deep sea cable (169).

The figure leaves open whether Winton "receives" the Latin-encoded message transmitting the need for epic fortitude from the electronic circuitry of an enciphering Enigma machine, as it were. Will Winton comprehend at any level (if not linguistically) the need to endure his unjust punishment stoically, and face his ordeal with equanimity as a result? The explosive episode immediately following suggests not, when he lashes out in a frenzy at Vernon who he shows an emotional illiteracy as to Winton's fate echoing his earlier grammatical ineptitude. The intervention of four friends alone, bloodied for their pains, prevents Winton visiting upon Vernon the punishment he is about to endure.

The ostensible purpose of Winton's ordeal, which is described unsentimentally, would seem to be to loosen up a boy who is prematurely old (as befits the sobriquet "Pater") and according to Bates, a little stiff in his moral joints. Described as an elderly horse, Winton lacks the coltishness that *Kim* and *Stalky* present as the natural condition of youth, and rather than being broken in, he needs to be broken open and made aware that the occasional behavioural

lapse does not exclude him from the *esprit de corps* essential for the officer class. Yet at another level, his "berserker" episode hints at a darker reading of adolescent suffering, set against which the heroic stoicism of the general Regulus is the unattainable counsel of perfection. Although Winton *is* restored to his peer-group, to his First Fifteen cap, indeed to a sub-prefect's role (as "quasi-licitor" with the suggestion that the psychological purging of an unorthodox beating may have relaxed his overwrought conscience) "Regulus" does not end on an upbeat, much less a self-congratulatory, note. It is as if the rendering, in implacable and bald English, of the Roman's sacrifice as a chapter-heading obituary has given a sombre colouring to the whole text: its likeness to a funeral ode must have struck the contemporary, wartime audience with particular force. One could go further and propose that "Regulus" illustrates a pervasive anxiety about the masculine mode of public school education and its fixation upon Classics, an ambivalence always implicit in the literary warfare of English versus Latin between Beetle and King, but now finally articulated in the broken attempts at translation by the boys. This suspicion is reinforced by the educational debate that forms a subtext to the Winton plot: a fiercely-argued exchange between King, the classicist and Hartopp, the science master, at whose door the blame for the chlorine leak is laid.

The question behind Hartopp's and King's sniping, whether Classics at the elite public schools or Greats at Oxford merited academic pre-eminence, was being contested in the 1880s when the boys were being exposed to Army-exam Latin. The main lines of Hartopp's attack were familiar objections, some even appearing in Government reports on education: a profound imbalance in the curriculum that gave many more hours to Latin and Greek than any other subject; the variable quality of Classics teaching that exacerbated the imbalance; a mismatch to the social, educational and military needs of late-Victorian Britain; and lastly, as Hartopp confirms, the fact that after seven years' schooling only about twenty "totally unrelated Latin tags" lingered in the minds of the "victims" (173). King mounts only a routine defence, that Classics affords "[b]alance,

proportion, perspective – life” (173), perhaps all too aware of his own professional decline to teaching Latin at a joint-stock-company army school. Yet the story ends on a note of defiance when King, on hearing a few Latin tags from Horace being repeated outside the classroom by his recalcitrant pupils, underlines his satisfaction with an Arnoldian reference: “You see. It sticks. A little of it sticks among the barbarians” (179).

King’s dismissive and culturally potent term, barbarian, used of his army-destined pupils, is designed to set off reverberations within the text, causing a re-assessment of what has gone before. In the school-book Horace, the barbarians are understood to be the Carthaginians, with whom the Romans have to contend. In Matthew Arnold’s influential indictment of Victorian society, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), the barbarians are instead identified with the self-willed and extrovert aristocracy, so used to imposing their will, and yet as much in need as the Philistine middle-class and the brutalized Populace of the unifying and ameliorating influence of culture. The alumni of the ‘Coll’ will join the ranks of an imperial ruling class, the current global aristocracy, so King’s comment represents a criticism of their suitability as leaders. On one level, of course, the restoration of Winton to authority, a sporting elite, and the comradeship of his peers, suitably loosened in his moral joints, matches him to the Roman *exemplum* of his classroom construe. He has submitted to a humiliating beating, like Regulus, beyond the pale of the formal caning by a master, and faced it out, if imperfectly. He has been taught to respect a master with limited executive powers and to submit himself to this authority. Horace has stuck. On another level, however, Latin is being studied for purely utilitarian reasons and King’s pupils reveal no capacity to manage its syntax, let alone appreciate its subtleties: they remain passive recipients of King’s classroom performance. Most are clearly bored and welcome the diversion of a chlorine leak. Furthermore, Winton’s ordeal subjects him to considerable trauma and it is doubtful how far this will change his cautious and rule-bound nature. As the chaplain, Gillett, observes, “Pater’ll never be



anything more than a Colonel of Engineers" (178). By this analysis, Horace has failed, to which should be added the evidence of a further crux buried in the text.

"Regulus" has recently excited considerable academic interest as a representation of British elite education in the 1880s (Plotz, 1993; Montefiore, 2000; McDermott, 2008; Plotz, 2010). Where Plotz considers the tale to have "a certain exemplary value as a depiction of the uses of classical education in an imperial age" (153) and McDermott also sees no discrepant element creeping into Kipling's depiction of Latin study, Janet Montefiore has in contrast connected the classroom escape of gas with the historic introduction by the British army of chlorine, disastrously, at the Battle of Loos in 1915, where John Kipling was lost in action, only to be presumed dead. This fact makes sense of a curious joke made by Vernon, who observes a similarity between the coughing Form and some lines from the Tenth Ode (*Non hoc semper eris liminis aut aquae caelistis patiens latus* / this Side will not always be patient of rain and waiting on the threshold). This Latin phrase clearly fuses the Roman experience not with an Imperial context but with the European realities of being gassed and going over the top. By 1917, it was evident that the conservatism of the British army, including its privileging of irrelevances such as Latin over scientific training for its elite, had placed young soldiers at a great technological disadvantage to their German opponents. Perhaps then, Kipling means a silent (and coded) reproach to be heard in the exchange between King and Hartopp. When the former suggests that Latin offers "Balance, proportion, perspective – life", Hartopp retorts "Meantime you make them lose life for the sake of living, eh?" (173). Students in a safe Latin classroom can force windows open; subalterns on the Western Front subject to poisoning by their own side have no such recourse.

Lending pessimistic weight to the doubt that the Classics Side can successfully transmit values suitable for masculine formation is the curious meta-textual game, a hoax, which Kipling plays at the end of the short story, where he places an entirely fictitious free translation of a non-existent Fifth Book of Horace

Odes. This trick seems to be designed to illustrate that the close reading of Latin, the weighing up of semantic registers in a foreign tongue, the ability to distinguish the genuine article from the polished fake may be beyond the limited sophistication of the schoolboy. Early in the tale, Winton has naively asked King whether two words in the Horace text might amount to the same meaning, only to be admonished by King, "Nothing comes to 'about the same thing' with Horace, Winton. As I have said, Horace was not a journalist" (163). Seeing this truth is beyond the literary competence of the student, so the pedagogue has to tell, to pontificate, since he cannot show.

Kipling *was*, of course, a journalist and familiar with his former occupation being used as a barb by highbrow critics. The joke against himself has an ironic undercurrent: how many other journalists would be able to fashion a sophisticated tale around the teaching of Classics? It is a joke by a writer who does not want to be pigeon-holed; and it will be clear by now, in the references that I have made to its indeterminacy of meaning, to its concern with literary competence in the face of textual complexity, to the deftly communicated awareness of late-Victorian cultural debates, and lastly in my suggestion of Kipling's defiance, that I do not view "Regulus" as a continuation of an imperialist rhetoric but rather as constituting a rupture with it. Although it is still clearly a school story about the transmission of cultural values - and probably the most complex entry within the school story canon - it is also a searching meditation upon the triangular nature of cultural transmission between pedagogue, text and student by an author profoundly aware of how his developing technique was being and would continue to be read (and misread) as anti-modernist.

### **"Mary Postgate" and the ethics of the public school bomber**

Complex interlocking layers of meaning encompassing a coded critique of the British war effort may be found too in "Mary Postgate", also published in *A Diversity of Creatures*. The story is another inquiry into - and obituary for - the

ethos and cultural practices of the Victorian boarding school. Its second most important character is another product of the public school, Wynn Fowler, no more prepossessing than Winton, although by his sanguine temperament and unintellectual nature, Fowler bears a stronger resemblance to John Kipling. Unlike "Regulus", "Mary Postgate" has a definite chronology since Carrie's journal refers to her husband working on it in March 1915. As one biographer, Harry Ricketts, indicates, Kipling therefore wrote the story after John had notified his parents of an imminent posting to the Western Front in France and at the time of the first German aerial bombing of England. The poignant circumstance of its creation only adds to the recurring difficulty in separating Kipling the historical figure from the implied author within his fiction. Ricketts even goes as far as to suggest that Rudyard produced the tale as a *nazzer-wattu*, a superstitious ritual designed to ward off evil: "if he wrote a story in which he imagined his deepest fear, the gods might spare John" (1999, 318-9).

The psychological claustrophobia of the tale may have encouraged the approach taken by Ricketts, for "Mary Postgate" is, first and foremost, a study in repression and its consequences, when provoked by a series of calamities which push its eponymous heroine to breaking point. Its subject is a social type still existing in 1917: the woman of limited means who is forced into a pecuniary relationship (even if genteelly disguised) within polite society. The specific form of economic subservience endured by Mary Postgate - in contrast to the governess Jane Eyre, for example - is that of lady's companion to a well-off spinster, Miss Fowler, in an unnamed but representatively Home Counties village. The early paragraphs dwell on the details of Mary's employment, as she passes for unexplored reasons from a Lady McCausland, who in her note of recommendation writes (ironically given the story's ending) that she is "thoroughly conscientious, tidy, companionable and ladylike". They also outline the time-honoured obligations of the paid spinster-companion (domestic treasurer, public aunt,

place-filler at polite dinners, nominee on worthy committees) only conscionable through a heroic repression of personality.

Miss Fowler's poor health - perhaps allied to a temperament that uses it to evade active physical or emotional involvement - obliges Mary to take the active part in organising the life of an orphaned nephew, Wynn Fowler, who comes to live in their household. Fowler is presented as filling the home, when not away at public school, with a boisterous ordinariness and an unbridled affection for Mary, disguised by the pet-names "Gatepost", "Postey" and "Packthread" - terms that in boyish ignorance capture something of her insensible, errand-fixated and sexually colourless nature. In fact, his arrival is the first suggestion that her self-forgetfulness is simply a survival instinct, the amphibian camouflage of one who has been obliged to adapt mentally to a constrained social habitat. The other side of her character, a physical, playful and perhaps quasi-maternal self-forgetfulness, is glimpsed as the young boy chases her bleating round the garden "her large nose high in the air, at a stiff-necked shamle very like a camel's" (1994, 614). The image hints at an ungainly animalism, which Mary expends psychological energy in repressing, through the application of a "trained mind" - which is, in reality, the reflex of avoiding difficult thoughts or emotions.

The coming of war provides the circumstance which uncoils the springs of Mary's repressive nature. It "takes" Wynn, who volunteers for the Flying Corps. The tragic upshot of his "voluntary" act - in reality no more voluntary than Mary's role as a paid drudge - provides the bare plotline of "Mary Postgate". Wynn trains on home soil, flying his plane home to the village to be admired by the two spinsters, the young man careful to explain "the dials and the sockets for bomb-dropping till it was time to mount and ride the wet clouds once more" (616). A few days later Wynn is killed during a trial flight. Mary organizes and attends his funeral on Miss Fowler's behalf. She then disposes of his clothes to worthy causes; and after carting his remaining effects to the garden destructor, a brick-enclosed furnace, goes for paraffin, and sees a German bomb kill the nine-year-

old Edna Gerritt, when the cart-lodge in which she is playing collapses. Persuaded by the local doctor to blame dry rot in the cart-lodge's beams to avoid discomposing the villagers, Mary returns to the garden at dusk and burns Wynn's effects, the fire-light revealing a fallen and badly-wounded German airman nearby. Deaf to his pleas for assistance, she tends the fire, experiencing a sexual frisson at his death agony, before scandalising the routine (629) of the house by taking a luxurious bath.

To this savage climax is appended a poem, "The Beginnings", which delineates the point at which "the English began to hate", impelled by an unnamed (and of course German) atrocity, which the reader will immediately link to the bombing of innocent children. The poem adds weight, as Bernard Bergonzi notes, to the view expressed by some critics that the actions of Mary Postgate reflect Kipling's personal feelings. Bergonzi suggests that "Kipling seems to have had not merely a detached interest but a real commitment to the ethics of revenge", although acknowledging that other critics have "tried to defuse its morally problematic quality by arguing that Kipling by no means endorses Mary's behaviour" (1972, 138-9). Revealingly, Bergonzi takes as the default position that the real author is using the internal narrator purely as a mouthpiece in "Mary Postgate".

Still, a close reading of "Mary Postgate" reveals genuinely subtle patterns that belie any caricature of an angry Kipling failing in the act of literary craftsmanship. The tale is intricately constructed. The social relations between Miss Fowler, Mary Postgate and the village worthies are precisely calibrated, largely through dialogue. Small details, like Wynn's proud explanation of how bombing technology works, are slipped into the tale to reverberate later, like King's use of the term barbarian in "Regulus". Is aerial bombing rather than a duel in the sky really the proper behaviour for a British adventure hero? As Fowler's plane rises into the clouds, Mary Postgate, proud of her surrogate son, exclaims "[w]ait till our Flying Corps gets to work! Wynn says it's much safer

than in the trenches” (616). Her moral obtuseness about bombing and touching concern for Fowler’s safety are fused; the self-deception will have a terrible outcome as her implied lust for revenge takes its course in failing to help an enemy airman. As the third-person narrative moves subtly from presenting a passive woman to one becoming passionately vengeful as she stokes the pyre, there is an extraordinary orchestration of detail. This is particularly true of the central motif, aerial bombing (rarely fully commented upon even by careful critics). A detailed exegesis places the presupposition that Kipling endorses revenge in a different light.

The unspoken but suggestively maternal bond between Mary and the “unlovely orphan” Wynn is an important emotional connection to bear in mind when her reprisal against the German is considered. For it is made abundantly clear that where Wynn’s behaviour is concerned Mary’s “trained mind” is cloudy. As soon as he enlists, her heart and her interest are “high in the air” with Wynn, echoing the language of their garden game. The text repeatedly reinforces her nebulous grasp of the amorality of civilian bombardment by making the air a physically invisible realm. Mary hears rather than sees Wynn passing over head at dawn; another time she sees his plane as “a little blur”; and even after his death, when she goes to the village for paraffin it “begins to mist” and she can “almost hear the beat of his propellers overhead” (622) although in a deliberate narrative conflation they are the propellers of an enemy plane. A moral connection is made here (that Wynn and the German airman might be expected to undertake the same sort of sortie) which Mary is unable to entertain.

Her difficulty in distinguishing what is really happening in the air asserts itself again in relation to aviator uniforms. At his death, Wynn’s uniform, carefully detailed as that of a five-foot-eight Second Lieutenant, passes to another youth who will take on his airborne role, and probably his fate. At his funeral, two of his Flying Corps comrades, described as children, stand by the grave in “buttoned-up uniforms” (618). By the garden destructor, Mary at first thinks that the German

aviator "in a uniform something like Wynn's, with a flap buttoned across the chest" (625) may be one of these young men. Some commentators, Robson for example (1964, 262), note the symbolic identification, but not Dobrée, for whom Kipling the real and implied author are the same. Fewer note the identification between the German and the dead girl: when Mary goes for a pistol and not the glass of water the dying man thirsts for: "[t]he mouth even tried to smile. But at sight of the revolver its corners went down just like Edna Gerritt's" (626). The previous association of airmen with children undercuts the proposition that the German's grimace, and its similarity to Edna's, serves only to emphasize his come-uppance.

Pace Peter Parker, who in *The Old Lie* contrasts Wilfred Owen's understanding of the essential pity of war with the warrior ethos of boy's adventure stories, Kipling does seem close to acknowledging that the enemy killed shares human kinship with his killer. Indeed the narrative, rendered through Mary's own internal monologue, expresses the callousness of her action, and distinguishes her inability to acknowledge the enemy's humanity from what would be the male perspective: A man, at such a crisis, would be what Wynn called a "sportsman"; would leave everything to fetch help, and would certainly bring "It" into the house (628). Wynn is at no point described as a paragon of virtue: in fact, his adherence to the 'sporting' morality of offering assistance to a fellow enemy combatant - the Boy's Own code, so to say - co-exists not only with a general obtuseness, but also the capacity to regard the Germans as "bloody pagans". Even though she goes explicitly against what he would *do*, Mary echoes what he would *say*, repeating his curse passively, like a grieving mother. But she lacks the imaginative sympathy to help the dying young man, of a similar age to Wynn, who has been consistently compared by the narrative to English airmen and a dying child. Given the carefully placed reference to the bombing dials on Wynn's biplane, it is probable that the implied reader is not expected to take quite at face value Mary's insistence that "Wynn was a gentleman who for no

consideration on earth would have torn little Edna into those vividly coloured strips and strings" (627). Her tragic predicament, a point of view with which the narrative becomes enmeshed, is to be driven by a burning love, hitherto unacknowledged, to an act of destruction. As powerfully as the blazing furnace which consumes his effects, and with it the last physical vestige of his identity, her fixated desire for vengeance consumes any capacity to emulate his values. The narrative has not endorsed the act of revenge but instead, in Sandra Kemp's words, described "a contraction of moral sympathy and wisdom" presented with "a Modernist emphasis on disjunction and solipsism" (1988, 69). Mary's earlier retreat into a troubled private world which distorts reality is rendered complete by a small detail that generally passes unnoticed. When Mary returns with the paraffin, Miss Fowler tells her that "a couple of aeroplanes had passed" overhead, meaning the dying German may not have dropped the bomb. Far from endorsing Mary's fury, the narrative coolly undercuts it.

Evidence of narrative indeterminacy within the text therefore conflicts with the historical assumption that Kipling deliberately placed the *conte* in a wartime magazine as an act of propaganda. And it is possible that the journalist in Kipling was aware that, far from being safer than the trenches, the Royal Flying Corps (by far the most 'public school' and socially elite of the Armed Forces) saw two-thirds of its fatalities occurring during training at flying schools before pilots reached the front (Mackersay, 2012, 66). Any writer wanting a (coded) metaphor for the farcical waste of and callous disregard for young life (since pilots were not issued with parachutes) need have looked no further than a Second Lieutenant in the Flying Corps: Wynn's rank, and John Kipling's in the Army. The implied author of "Mary Postgate" is not the ideologue of wartime photographs giving emotional appeals on behalf of recruitment officers, but in John Lyon's provocative phrase, "Kipling the insider – for many, too much the insider – looking, at times mischievously, at times sneeringly out at his readers" (1989, 134). The narrative cannot be read once, superficially, to establish its meaning, even though it



appears, unlike its modernist counterparts in Woolf, Joyce and Lawrence, to be the continuation of a Victorian tradition of story-telling, not a rupture with it. It has to be re-read, with a willingness to establish details and to search for linguistic patterns. The process might be likened to undertaking a Latin construe, leaving attentive readers feeling a little as if they have been worked over by a schoolmaster, like King keen to examine and if possible expose failings in their literary competence. Remembering Beetle, the young Kipling at the opening of "Regulus", Kipling may also be anticipating the critical working over to which he would be subjected by post-war critics, and so putting in a literary performance high in subtleties.

Indeed, I contend that Kipling's fictional technique has evolved from an early-career reliance on anecdote and incident, often set against an exotic backdrop, to a fine-tuned orchestration of small and outwardly mundane details, which set off new speculations on every re-acquaintance. His fictions are no longer prey to a "man-of-the-world" knowingness, an arrogated right-mindedness as to how young men should behave that occasionally infects the narrative voice of the early *Stalky* stories. As an *enfant terrible* of English literature, Kipling's powers of description and organisation were always on display and simply awaiting a maturity of outlook to invest them more thoughtfully. In the poem used as a heading to chapter eight of *Kim* (a novel that develops the syncretic representation of competing worldviews), having two discrepant sides to one's mind is celebrated as artistically enviable. The language of neurology can be applied profitably to the late-career stories which set up competing but interdependent neural circuits, employing logic and feeling, depth and detail, spontaneous response and imaginative recall, and are as capable of playing tricks with perception as the human mind itself.

To this insight, I would add that for Kipling the near-impossibility of comprehending an ethically coherent pattern within life's seemingly random events is most feelingly exploited in his fictions by a recurring motif: the

predicament of the child, forced prematurely into a preternatural vigilance in the face of an inscrutable universe. In early *Stalky* and *Kim*, the metaphorical buffetings of life (and sometimes literal too, at the hand of a hero-worshipped headmaster) are sloughed off or even worn as initiatory markers of entry into the Great Game of adult instrumentality. The energy of retaliatory pranks, the excitement of mastering the dissembling tricks of espionage leave no time for asking serious questions about the core values lying behind the power-structure that is the motor of public-school life, and, indeed, imperialism.

By the time of "Regulus" and "Mary Postgate", the energies of the text are less outwardly directed and have developed an inscrutable inwardness, aligned to a greater responsiveness to the pathological effects of being beaten or of experiencing love turning into incandescent fury. The outlook behind these stories has grown beyond a conniving allegiance with Number Five Study or Kimball O'Hara to consider their protagonists more coolly, and therefore, paradoxically, more compassionately. In "Mary Postgate" the intimations of love - *her* love of children - is allowed to pierce Wynn's boyish veneer of emotional imperviousness, and to receive the faintest echo of reciprocation when Mary discovers amongst his effects "a packet of all the letters that Miss Fowler and she had ever written to him, kept for some absurd reason through all these years" (622). Finally in boy's own adventure, a piece of paper, a domestic letter, passes back from its place among the effects of a dead boy to its female author in a tacit admission of love. In such a cruel universe that has started to admit to human love - and to adults being loved back by children - it is not surprising that the most haunting image is, I would argue, not the "woman's work" at a garden incinerator, but the violent death of a nine-year-old girl at play to whose dying question, "Am I hurted bad?", there is no satisfactory, consoling answer.

Not only do both "Regulus" and "Mary Postgate" in the face of unbearable trauma become recessive and indeterminate texts, but they also demonstrate the blurring of the separate characterisation of male and female experience,

continuing a shift in gender constructions observable in "Marklake Witches". Both stories entertain the masculine ethos of adventure (the first directly and the second tangentially), an ideal that reveals its distinctiveness from the values of domestic realism most vividly in martial colours. But they entertain the ethos elegiacally as if obituarising adventure itself, for as Paul Zweig has shown "[t]he adventurer is in flight from women. Because he cannot cope with the erotic and social hegemony of women, he flees them even into death" (1974, 61). The general Regulus spurns before the Senate, for the greater welfare of Rome, the personal considerations of his friends and family and voluntarily returns to inevitable execution by the Carthaginians. Figuratively, he embodies masculine virtues of fortitude, duty and stoicism. In making him the subject of the text against which the literary competence of the United Service College's army examinees will be tested, Kipling pays tribute to a mode of experience, adventure, whose code is, as Zweig indicates, largely lost on modern and post-modern readers.

Yet Kipling no longer privileges (if he ever truly did) adventure over other modes of experience. Perhaps his acute literary antennae anticipated that the type of masculine values celebrated in the 1899 *Stalky & Co.* would be rendered permanently anachronistic after the Great War ended. Perhaps wartime visits to the Western Front before penning dutifully chauvinistic propaganda had enforced, at first-hand, a realization that the random horror of mechanized slaughter would permanently eclipse for the rising generations of post-war readers any meaningful concept of personal sacrifice. Consequently, his muted - indeed ambivalent - tribute to a post-imperial cohort of subalterns (the contemporary counterparts of Winton, the Wynns and the John Kiplings) contains a private animosity towards the military powers that could unleash so ineffectively the poison gas at Loos or prosecute so dispassionately the aerial bombardment of civilians, the latter representing a permanent rupture with the convention of warfare as an exclusive (and honourable) masculine theatre. Taken representatively, "Regulus" and

"Mary Postgate" are texts that do not force any particular point of view on their implied readers and they merit a forensic exploration that discourages the presumption that passages from his admittedly doctrinaire verse might be used definitively as glosses on his fictional technique. Therefore "Mary Postgate" should not be regarded as an endorsement of vengeance against Germans. Nor, conversely, do I see Mary's improvised cremation of Wynn's effects as a "bonfire of the vanities", a symbolic immolation of the reified values of the Boy's Own ethos - honour, patriotism and self-sacrifice - or even as an enactment of Kipling's intrinsic rejection of this philosophy. Instead, I favour the view that "Mary Postgate" actively encourages a diversity of interpretations, symbolically linking Wynn, Edna Gerritt and the German airman in different ways so as to make the figure of the aviator ethically dubious, thereby discouraging the primitive distinctions between good and evil that Mary catastrophically makes. The only critical viewpoint that does deserve to be questioned is the belief that for aesthetic or ideological reasons, Kipling's fictions in themselves (or as typifying the best in the strain of adventure examined in this thesis) do not warrant a close reading at all or should be subjected to critical foreclosure in academic discourse, notwithstanding a natural recoil from imperialism.

The figure of the airman I shall return to in the concluding chapter, initially in the person of T.E. Lawrence. Before doing so, I want to examine why, sixty years on from *Tom Brown* and *Eric*, Kipling should have returned to the subject of the public school examination. For in subject matter, although not in literary technique, "Regulus" may seem an anachronism. Why, in 1917, after boys' adventure stories - tales that blur the distinction between "big" and little boys, as Haggard noted - had moved from the school to the sea to the colonial margins and then back to the homeland (in paranoid fantasies of invasion or infantilizing games of make believe) should they go back to school? From one viewpoint, of course, this is an oversimplification since tales of all types were being written concurrently up to World War I. Yet, in revisiting the public school ethos at

school, Kipling seems to be returning to first principles during wartime, to tackle at its root once more the incurable fixation upon reading and interpretation of Victorian and Edwardian adventure. At the opening of "Regulus", Kipling intuitively focuses upon the drama of the classroom, the literary examination which is also a moral examination: the quest for ethical action informed by interpretative acuity which is at the heart of the yarn.

I would suggest that the nature of Mr King's hated business, to defeat the Army examiners and his war against another enemy, the natural reluctance of adolescent schoolboys to wrestle with the prose of a foreign tongue is the key to Kipling's return, since linguistic proficiency provides the only passport to professional status in the Victorian-created world of blind, competitive examination. Just as the Victorian establishment is haunted by the prospect that the increasingly literate working class will be inevitably harmed by what they read - a belief that led to the establishment of the *Boy's Own Paper* - their descendants are haunted by the fear of masculine dysfunction through 'examination' failure. This anxiety gives British adventure fiction of the time its particularly sombre atmosphere, since any 'success' (such as Jim's redemption after the *Patna* incident or Ludwig Holly's struggle against the entrapment of Ayesha) is unconsciously measured against the binary reality of potential failure - a process for which Kipling's poem "If-" provides the paradigm. As suggested earlier, "Regulus" takes the trope of exam preparation and reverses the relationship of English translation to Latin original in its heading. It then questions the usefulness of examinations by becoming almost a facsimile of a prepared script, and by foregrounding, as both honourable but also faintly ridiculous, the daily grind of the classroom teacher.

In Bates, Kipling celebrates "downiness", that is, sharpness and shrewdness, above all other qualities. In "Regulus", King is at last valorised. King rises impassioned above the perennial educational battle against dullness, the struggle to yoke obdurate young minds to textual subtleties, revealing a

gratuitous love for a great literature that has been conscripted to facilitate the socially functional requirements of the examination. In so doing, and specifically in the prejudices as well as the insights that King showers on his pupils, Kipling illustrates the thwarted nature of literary criticism, as well as its importance: the sense of it as compensating for something altogether more significant, such as the life of the creative artist or, indeed, of the actively engaged army subalterns that his charges will soon become.

Yet, at the same time as "Regulus" demonstrates the yarn to be complex and self-reflexive, it shows teaching to be a heroic activity, the uncoiling of the wonders of literature. Literary interpretation is also a brave, personal endeavour. Even the feeble attempts at translation undertaken by the schoolboys are practices for going over the top. "Regulus" is compassionately alert to the moments of inattention of King's pupils, the inevitable sequel to their testosterone-fuelled growth; to the spasmodic quality of their enforced and variably successful close reading; and to the alternation between childlike dependence and adult apprehension that the growth towards literary competence occasions. In a characteristically ingenuous end-of-class aside, between Beetle and Winton (but also between Rudyard the implied author within the text and Winton the implied self-sacrificing subaltern *outside* the text), Kipling places in a tragicomic context the limited pretensions of academic discourse. When the enormity of Montefiore's discovery about chlorine gas at the Battle of Loos is considered, it becomes clear that Kipling has managed to pit adolescent scholastic incomprehension against the tragedy of mass warfare and the loss of a generation and his son ("When King's really on tap he's an interestin' dog. Hartopp's chlorine's uncorked him") without - in that very Kiplingesque phrase - "breathing a word about one's loss". The ripping yarn has become a form of code, which when broken, can be seen both to celebrate a form of masculinity associated with a boarding school education and to acknowledge its brokenness in war and in life.

## Chapter 7: The View from the Air – The Yarn Reconsidered

I took up my pen then and wrote how since the age of twelve I'd helped myself with scholarships and benefits through school to a university and past a degree in history to a research fellowship in political theory. Afterwards I had wearied of abstractions and thrown up that life and enlisted; and wanted no more intellectual knowledge, my brain being already too ingrown for the daily practicalities of Hut 4.

T. E. Lawrence, *The Mint*

### Introduction

In this concluding chapter of the thesis, I shall examine the last symbolic theatre open to the masculine hero at the conclusion of the Great War: the air. The main focus of this exploration will be T.E. Lawrence, who, with the intelligence officer's acute intuition, exploited a social shift in the valorising of heroism in the early 1920s by exchanging the dress of a Bedouin prince for an airman's overalls. Lawrence's journey towards modernity is mirrored in his writing, which abandons the baggy trappings of Victorian Orientalism in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) for the elliptical sparseness of literary modernism in *The Mint* (1955). Yet the discontinuity in style does not totally obscure a perpetuation of the themes of boy's own adventure in his work, its conduct anxiety, its retreat into an exclusively masculine world, its fixation with education and class. A more conventional story-book flirtation with airborne heroism will also be touched upon in the Biggles stories, which after their launch in the 1930s eventually became a staple feature of the *B.O.P.* under Jack Cox's editorship. After evaluating Lawrence's effect on the next generation of writers, particularly Auden's use of the airman, I shall follow their cue by taking an aerial view of the landscape of the yarn. First by exploring "Boy's Weeklies", a 1940 essay about the story paper by George Orwell, which received a trenchant response from Charles Hamilton, the most prolific writer of school stories. Then in the thesis Conclusion I shall indicate the major landmarks in the yarn's topography and human geography.

## **T.E. Lawrence and the Cult of the Airman**

“We had thought the rumour of school and schoolmasters a joke; but inside the echoing room whose pitch-pine desks had little ink-spattered wells sunken along their top edges we hushed quickly, under an access of infantilism” (T.E. Lawrence, *The Mint*, 124). The “we” is a group of men, mostly uneducated and products of ordinary schools, with the exception of one, the author, a former fellow of the most intellectually prestigious Oxford College, All Souls, his sophistication identifiable by the high-flown but obscure phrase “access of infantilism”. The sort of awe evoked by Lawrence chimes with that of Stephen Greenfield in *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s*, except that the fear and loneliness of the vulnerable new boy is shown here to remain dormant in grown men as a retrievable layer of masculine experience. Perhaps, too, his referencing of infantilism is a sign of an ambivalence in Lawrence about enlistment. His success in life had been built on the foundation of scholarships, yet by enlisting in the ranks in 1922 he had chosen to retreat into an all-male institution, the R.A.F. at the lowest rung on the social ladder. The decision to join up after the Great War as an ordinary aircraftsman with establishment collusion under the pseudonym John Hume Ross had been inexplicable to his carefully cultivated intellectual circle. Lawrence had taken care to convert his celebrity into a literary network of established men of letters and modernist iconoclasts, including George Bernard Shaw, John Buchan, E.M. Forster, Thomas Hardy, Robert Graves, Ezra Pound and Noël Coward. In his 1940 memoir, *Memory Hold-The-Door*, Buchan did his best to defend his friend by quoting him directly, arguing that the majority of those who survived the war “refused to bury themselves in what T.E. Lawrence used to describe as the ‘shallow grave of public duty’” (183). This does not explain why Lawrence did not accept a commission, the natural path for a national hero, famous for his desert exploits in the Negev between October 1916 and October 1918. A clue might be found in Lawrence James’s suggestion that Lawrence “wanted to be a respected man of letters”, citing E.M. Forster’s belief that his



literary ambitions surpassed all others (1995, 396). Burying himself within the ranks under an assumed name might be interpreted as freeing Lawrence from his legend while providing the space to write.

Another biographer, Michael Asher, characterizes Lawrence's psychological reflex of drawing attention to himself, by failing to melt inconspicuously into a drab backdrop, as reverse exhibitionism (1999, 43). Lawrence's depiction of world-weariness as exam-weariness in the chapter heading carries something of the competitiveness of Buchan, since the R.A.F. recruit is careful to list all his attainments before decrying them – including the one scholastic attainment to elude Buchan, a Fellowship of All Souls. Furthermore, the *ennui* that Lawrence affects would matter less in anyone not possessing the status of a wartime boy's own hero. Indeed *The Mint* is inevitably celebrity-driven. The author's tortured state of mind dominates the first-person narrative. *The Mint* reads like a yarn turned inward. Its plight is the desperate hope of a disguised protagonist (doubly a hero since his cult status is obscured by the clothes of an ordinary conscript) that his war-torn body can withstand the physical examinations of square-bashing and drill. Its quest is the ontological shift from desert warrior to airman. Yet stylistically, *The Mint* retains the self-consciousness of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* which Zweig describes (the overstatement containing a grain of truth) as "a book which Virginia Woolf might have written" (232). Lawrence's physical disguises might change but he remained addicted to the affectations, even exhibitionism, of a mannered literary style.

This is not to suggest, however, that Lawrence does not attempt to change his literary spots. *The Mint* is a journal of late-night barrack-room jottings, a day-book recording the routines, trials and miseries of the ranker as he is stamped into shape and minted to the precise requirements of the Air Force. The longueurs of *Seven Pillars*, harking back to a Victorian liking for detailed descriptions of people and environment and for philosophical passages, are ruthlessly excised. It is as if Lawrence is responding to literary modernism's

emphasis on taut, spare form, just as he seems attuned to what Aaron Jaffe (2005) has noted as its symbiotic relationship with celebrity. Zweig recognizes that “[i]t is hard now for us to imagine the enthralled atmosphere in which Lawrence’s legend thrived” (1974, 228). *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and *The Mint* feed cannibalistically off the Arabian Lawrence. As soon as Lawrence had used up himself as subject matter, he produced no more original work. If these two autobiographical works have faded into neglect without the lustre of their author’s personality cult, when considered in literary terms as yarns they still embody the preoccupations that led to its success.

To put this another way, Lawrence is keenly aware of the central importance of the narrative voice in the yarn and how it must convey courageous resourcefulness in the face of unfamiliar and forbidding conditions. Factual veracity is therefore less important in his memoirs than matching heroic potential to a seemingly insurmountable challenge. In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the desert provides an elemental trial equal to any faced by the adventurer of modern times or of antiquity. Lawrence can exult almost masochistically in his powers of endurance: “I always rather liked a khamsin, since its torment seemed to fight against mankind with ordered conscious malevolence, and it was pleasant to outface it so directly, challenging its strength, and conquering its extremity” (1962, 254). With Lawrence’s small, unprepossessing physique strained to breaking point, his pedigree as a linguist, archaeologist and Oxford intellectual may be fully exploited without weakening the overwhelming sense of being put to the test. On the contrary, the daunting terrain and exotic desert peoples, its situation “outside the usual continuity of this life” (1971, 188), to repeat Simmel’s definition of adventure, make it part of the protagonist’s natural remit to act as his reader’s interpreter. In Chapter LIX Lawrence pauses from his exploits to act as an ethnographical guide to Syria. With the air of cultural superiority which was natural, as historian Kwasi Kwarteng observes (2011, 6), to the Oxford-educated imperial administrator, Lawrence contends that “[a]ll these people of Syria were

open to us by the master-key of their common Arabic language" (343). Adding the mystique of the master-linguist to the consummate man-of-action, Lawrence presents himself as a cultural crypto-analyst. However uncertain Lawrence's grand claim to transcultural understanding might be, the metaphor of master-key is a reminder of how skilfully Lawrence exploits the potentialities of the yarn. A physical test, a journey into a warrior's world, a foreign country to be interpreted, the body and mind stretched to the limit, standards of conduct to measure oneself against; these are the building blocks of the yarn combined in strikingly different ways in the glamour of a desert campaign and the mundane tedium of an R.A.F. training camp. His eccentric poses and convoluted prose notwithstanding, Lawrence's mastery of the plot conventions of the yarn and his instinctive understanding that the Great War required a recalibration of heroism make him a fascinating transitional figure.

Lawrence captures the storybook intensity of masculine adventure and its struggle to come to terms with the shattered illusions about honour and sacrifice of First World War battlefields. In the Introductory Chapter of *Seven Pillars*, with the perfect manners of a British hero, Lawrence self-deprecatingly plays down his own role in the desert, suggesting that "[m]y proper share was a minor one" before memorialising a roll-call of forty-one men who "also did their best" (22). Isabel Quigly has referred to him as the last full-scale Stalky, suggesting that "retirement from action and leadership proved a pathetic anti-climax" (*Stalky & Co.*, 1987, xxvii). Lawrence is the schoolboy antagonist turned military strategist. In *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence contends that "[i]rregular war was far more intellectual than a bayonet charge, far more exhausting than service in the comfortable imitative obedience of an ordered army" (348). In this claim can be heard, perhaps, the echo of Study Five's disdain for the prefects of 'The Coll' who are content with schoolmasterly platitudes and establishment conventions. Certainly, Lawrence is the sort of free-thinking in-the-field subaltern that Beetle, as a stand-in for Kipling, congratulates himself for chronicling in the concluding tale, "The

Slaves of the Lamp, II". Passive-aggressive games with conventional authority mark out Lawrence too; Asher records, during the Arab campaign, his tendency to saunter rather than march, ignore salutes, speak to all ranks in "the same matter-of-fact, studious, eccentric, pedantic Oxford tones" and refer absent-mindedly to the Intelligence Department as "the faculty" (131). As a writer, Lawrence also takes delight in pranks. The account of his homosexual rape at Deraa, now thought invented, plays, as A.N. Wilson suggests, to "the side of his nature which enjoyed baiting and annoying Colonel Blimps" (2005, 145). The 1955 first edition of *The Mint* has blank spaces for swear-words thought too improper to print, the spaces thoughtfully elongated to the length of the missing term, as if encouraging a reader to break the invisible code.

Yet Lawrence's imaginative range extends well beyond Kipling's *Stalky*. He acknowledges the waste of war, the "rings of sorrow" that widen from an individual death, like a pebble dropped in water (1962, 199) whereas in 1899, before the *mea culpa* of "Regulus", Kipling can only imagine *Stalky* let loose on the south side of Europe. The thwarted ambition of Kipling to join his school-friends in uniform makes him blasé, whereas Lawrence's post-war determination to fashion himself into a writer makes him reflective and experimental. There is a clear progression between *Seven Pillars* and *The Mint* in the sophistication of the literary resources that Lawrence is expecting his implied reader to draw upon. The air memoir experiments with proletarian realism, Lawrence choosing to "plunge crudely amongst crude men" (1955, 18); the desert memoir calls upon an education in the Classics and the Christian tradition, since Lawrence is returning to the Semitic region from which "Christianity, translated into the diverse spirits of Greek and Latin and Teutonic tongues, had conquered Europe and America" (1962, 37). A.N. Wilson suggests *Seven Pillars* has been misread as a literal war record. Instead it should be approached "as Malory, Homer and the Bible are intended to be read, as a mythological compendium whose stories interpret, as they describe, the world" (144). In Wilson's reading, it would be more appropriate

to see Lawrence as guided to “anoint” the true Arab Leader, Faisal in the same way that Samuel or Merlin were guided to David or Arthur. This Biblical underpinning has a likeness to the other-worldly intellectualism of Farrar’s *Eric*, whose allegorical portrayal of the passage of a boy’s soul Margaret Markwick has sought to recover (2007, 48). It is also true that Lawrence’s style has affinities with Farrar’s scholarliness. In discussing his philosophy of war, Lawrence draws upon the *diathetics* of Xenophon “which had been the art of Cyrus before he struck” (1962, 200) and references Plato’s *doxa* in support of the true general’s ability (naturally his own) to intuit the psychological reaction of his troops at any specific moment of crisis (201). Parker notes that Lawrence took Homer to war with him (225), and that in war memoirists generally, such Greek phrases are “used with an ease and naturalness which seems as much as anything to divide their era from our own” (221). A reader might be forgiven in such abstracted passages for forgetting that the Arab campaign was a “minor episode” that “might well have gone unnoticed” (Zweig, 228) without Buchan’s political involvement during the war, or that his “participation in Iraqi affairs was peripheral” (Kwarteng, 25). Lawrence, like the intellectual elite of his generation, was determined to elevate war-heroism and the role of the individual by seeing them through a Christian and Classical terministic screen.

Yet, unlike some of his contemporaries, Buchan for example, Lawrence could envisage a post-Victorian template for heroism. *The Mint* is designed to be interpreted very differently from *Seven Pillars*; in contrast to *B.O.P.*, the enterprise from which it does not shrink is a full engagement with working-class language and slang in all its real or implied frankness. In the classroom scene already alluded to, Lawrence divests himself of the scholar’s robes, lets the hour of study pass, before finding himself “[t]en minutes late for dinner. Odds and sods to eat. Damn all school” (125). Henceforth the skill with military strategy and Oriental languages is rendered redundant. Granted, Lawrence still acts for his reader as a cultural intermediary to the proletarian recruits with whom he shares

dormitory space. The manner anticipates George Orwell's accounts of down-and-outs in the East End and the ethnographies of Mass Observation. Yet gone is the sheen of romance provided by the courtliness of Arthurian chivalry as transmuted by Malory or the Christian backdrop of the Crusades. The blank spaces in *The Mint's* dialogue point to an oral demotic that is at the lowest point on the spectrum of linguistic sophistication. The interpretative challenge for Lawrence in this second memoir, and for his reader, is to discern something honourably formative in the forging of an airman from such unpromising material. And where schooling is rejected by Lawrence as too abstract, ordinary drill is, immediately afterwards, commended as offering hope: "Salacious and wholly Welsh is long-suffering Sergeant Jenkins, florid in description, florid in abuse, florid in praise. He seems not disappointed with our failures, while we are trying; and he has a fine nose for a try" (127).

Martin Green suggests that Lawrence's tormented side "led him to throw away the hero-identity he had so brilliantly built up, by entering the Air Force under an assumed name" (1980, 327). An alternative reading is that the very fluidity of Lawrence's identity made it possible for him to construct a masculine heroism of the air. Lawrence was no stranger to living under different names. The atmosphere of bourgeois respectability in which he grew up in Oxford and family attendance at St Aldate's, an Oxford bastion of Anglican Evangelicalism, hid his illegitimacy. His father, Thomas Chapman, was the son of an Irish baronet who had started an affair with and married the family nanny, Sarah Lawrence, obliging him to leave the country and relinquish his title. As A.N. Wilson notes, the home in Polstead Road was not a "smart" address, since Chapman could not afford to "educate his sons as gentlemen" and Lawrence's pleasure in igniting pompous rage in the officer class derives from this class-consciousness (141-2). In his person Lawrence embodies the confused patrilineage that marks the basic plot of the Gothic novel, "the young and rightful heir deprived of his birthright" (Turner, 19), a crisis of identity he compounded by assuming the surname of George

Bernard Shaw, the Irish playwright. It is Lawrence's confidence that he can build up (that is, forge in both senses) chosen identities which makes him romantically alluring; it was this genius for fulfilling a nation's wishes for a larger-than-life, story-book hero that John Buchan understood. Even before meeting and befriending Lawrence, Buchan had already made Hannay's German arch-enemy in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* an archaeologist with the gift of looking into the British gentleman's soul and mimicking his dispositions. In the subsequent Hannay thrillers, Lawrence has a clear influence upon the characterisation of Sandy Arbuthnot, a highly-strung Scottish laird, with an aptitude for languages and disguises.

The close of the First World War marks a parting of the ways for the writers. In his memoir, during an eight-page character study of Lawrence, Buchan discerns a "crack in the firing" of his friend's nature (1940, 215), and the phrase may be a gentle reproof to Lawrence's second memoir, which would have offended Buchan's fastidious Victorianism. Buchan's *Greenmantle* (1916) functions as a creative laboratory for reformulating old chivalric ideals as a restorative to the mud of the trenches: boyish openness in the quest to the East and a totally alien culture; practical initiative in mastering languages and cultural rituals; stoic hardiness in crossing continents; and personal courage during military skirmishes reminiscent of imperial encounters where the theatre of war is not yet subordinated to the machine. In *The Mint*, Lawrence dispenses with the romanticism of the Buchan world-view. This requires a break too with the dispositions of the Classics-educated Christian gentleman. At a compulsory church service, as a fellow recruit, Sailor, gustily renders a hymn, Lawrence recalls his lusty rendering the day before of an obscene shanty, proceeding to print it, shorn of what only can be c-words. Tacitly goading his reader to acknowledge whether they can translate the unprintable, Lawrence mocks the feeble, throaty parson's homily: "Our ranks were too healthy to catch this diseased Greek antithesis of flesh and spirit. Unquestioned life is a harmony,

though then not in the least Christian" (*The Mint*, 54). It is clear that in Lawrence's reformulation of the chivalric ideal there is no room for the Christian and Classical element of the *B.O.P.* formula.

Lawrence seizes upon the technological and mechanical aspects of the airman's role to fill the void that has been left by this renunciation. He turns the R.A.F. engineer into a new type of superior being, and it is crucial in understanding Lawrence's cult of the airman to realize that the ground staff rather than the pilot are heroic. Where the path to social success in mid-Victorian Britain required a mastery of Greek particles, at the aerodrome, "those we regard as our natural aristocracy show three generations of artisan forebears by their mere grip of the tool handle" (194). By force of will, Lawrence, the illegitimate son of a baronet, turns himself into a professional engineer, not a clergyman, lawyer or scholar, locating Arnoldian sweetness and light in a new cultural paradigm which celebrates the aircraft mechanic. The romance of the technician lies in keeping lesser men in the air, for "[t]he Air Ministry recognises a rightness in our worship of the technical engineer [...] those who have understanding of the souls of engines, and find their poetry in the smooth tick-over" (195). A pilot is a philistine only capable of "ham-fisted cruelty to machines" (194). Maintaining engineering standards is a democratic process where "intelligence is taken for granted" (182). Technical competence is examined ruthlessly: "Our machines fly when they're as good as it lies in our powers to make them. If that is not good enough, we drift to mess-deck fatigues or to sanitary squad: forfeiting the technical esteem of our pals" (182-3). Indeed, Lawrence implies that the officer class are irrelevant to the air force's success, for the working mechanic has "the weight of the effort towards indefinite victory on his unguided head: - unguided, largely because the Officers' Mess achieves the public-school tone, and so dares not look beyond the concrete" (194).

It is revealing, though, that Lawrence does not allow his convincing delineation of a new masculine formation, the aircraftsman, to stand in its own



right without a criticism of the paradigm of the public-school ethos that it is replacing. Perhaps the atmosphere of the all-male R.A.F. depot or aerodrome is too similar to a public school for the comparison to be thrown off completely. And in a sense, *The Mint* can be read as "T.E. Lawrence's R.A.F. days". He is partly attempting to achieve for a new armed service the same formative analysis that Hughes produced for the public school, undertaking the same overview of the topography and human geography of the institution, its power structure, rituals and ideals. Like Hughes, Lawrence anatomizes very skilfully what it feels like to live within an all-male environment. He describes the balancing of sacrifices in personal space for the sake of *esprit de corps* with the need to keep claustrophobia at tolerable levels in a system whose mechanistic function is, like the public school, to mint young males into a certain mould. How it differs from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is in the permanence of the aircraftsman's affiliation to his service; he has chosen to abide there rather than pass through to better things. There is a slightly "stuck" quality to Lawrence's embrace of modernity.

Lawrence's chosen regression into a masculine environment similar to a school, where, as P.G. Wodehouse observed, very little happens, is certainly a paradox; the new paradigm of heroism has its infantile side. In his early days at the depot in Uxbridge, Lawrence's discomfort with his chosen environment, his "fear of failing, fear of breaking down", is couched in terms of school: "there is the school-fear over me, that working against hazardously-suspended penalty which made my life from eight to eighteen miserable" (151). Manliness in *The Mint* is demonstrated by overcoming this boyish vulnerability, and the one link with *Seven Pillars* is the heroism of Lawrence's powers of endurance which he describes as the cause of his winning through: "Here I have been on my own, and up against it: stretched almost beyond my failing body's bearing to sustain the competition of youth. [...] And the gain of it is that I shall never be afraid of men, again" (160). The ontological shift in the narrative is Lawrence's successful passing out from the recruitment Depot as a fully-fledged airman. The winning

through opens up for Lawrence, on transfer to R.A.F. Cranwell, access to an idyllic, woman-free existence not unlike the life imagined in Kipling's "The Army of a Dream".

To compensate for the lack of excitement on the aerodrome itself, Lawrence offers, near the conclusion of *The Mint*, a vignette in the form of a cross-country ride on his beloved Brough Superior motorbike, Boanerges. There is an inevitability, perhaps, about Lawrence turning to speed as the antidote to the enclosed and cloistered world in which he is voluntarily immured, particularly as he has forsworn the glamour of the pilot's vocation. It is as if only through speed can the moribund code of honour inherited from all-male pedagogic institutions literally pick up momentum and be made rip-roaringly adventurous again. Ever self-conscious, Lawrence connects the experience of riding a bike competitively with his past heroic endeavours in the desert, the novelty of speed being of course superior: "A skittish motor-bike with a touch of blood in it is better than all the riding animals on earth, because of its logical extension of our faculties, and the hint, the provocation, to excess conferred by its honeyed untiring smoothness" (202). On part of his trip, which the reader learns is to pick up eggs and other provisions, Lawrence is accompanied by a Bristol Fighter from a neighbouring aerodrome. The two machines race each other, with Boanerges outstripping the pilot. Back at the camp, the purpose of Lawrence's mission is clear: he has been on a tuck errand for his colleagues. "The other ten fellows are yarning in a blue haze of tobacco, two on chairs, eight on the forms, waiting my return" (203). The uncrowned king of Arabia, the man who, almost alone, has lived up to Victorian standards in the cruel examination of masculinity occasioned by the First World War, has reverted to an eternal boyhood. Without any evident sense of irony, Lawrence presides over the proletarian version of a study meal with chums, set in a timeless, homosocial idyll whose complacency George Orwell was to mock in his seminal essay, "Boys' Weeklies". The brave new world of modernity, its technological advances, is inextricably tied in Lawrence to an older

masculine ethos which, despite his disavowals, he is never truly committed to escaping.

In his encyclopaedic study, *British Writers of the Thirties* (1988), Valentine Cunningham observes how “[a]jirmindedness and being *airminded* are characteristic concepts of the period” (167). He also recognizes how writers of the Auden generation “found the idea of T.E. Lawrence so seizable” (172). Cunningham suggests that the identification was personal: “some consolation was to be derived [...] from the notion that if the manifestly small, boyish, homosexual, neurotically self-conscious man could become as ‘big’, as ‘Truly Strong’ as T.E. Lawrence had contrived to be, there might be some personal redemption possible for the members of Auden and Isherwood’s generation of small, boyish, neurotically self-conscious homosexuals” (174). For Auden, that personal redemption was connected in the thirties, before his return to the Anglican Church, to a political affiliation with left-wing thought. In a 1934 review of Liddell Hart’s *T.E. Lawrence*, Auden contends that Lawrence’s enlistment in the Air Force was “absolutely modern” (*The English Auden*, 321). Adopting a very traditional boy’s own melding of intellectual and physical, Auden writes of Lawrence that “no one has [...] better demonstrated the truth that action and reason are inseparable”, before making a radical departure in likening Lawrence to Lenin for austere commitment to a heroic ideal. The modern requires political commitment.

Cunningham suggests that this was an exaggerated political posture “whose nerve broke when Auden came to his own Airman” (174). Cunningham’s observation recognises the ambiguity at the heart of *The Orators*, which contains “The Journal of an Airman”. In his Preface to *The English Auden*, Edward Mandelson notes that *The Orators* (1932) was Auden’s memorial to Lawrence and took as its theme the failure of the romantic conception of personality (xv). Mandelson also quotes Auden’s later dissatisfaction with the poem’s obscurity; his acknowledgement that although it “is meant to be a critique of the fascist outlook

[...] on rereading it myself I see that it can, most of it, be interpreted as a favourable exposition" (xv). Despite his desire to expose the romantic conception as a failure, Auden appears to be fascinated by the austere personality of the airman, only one of several experimental masks in the poem, whose fragmented nature is a marker of its literary modernism.

Yet the post-war alienation of *The Orators* is subtly different from that of Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), being the product of a generation too young to experience the war. Indeed, *The Orators* is marked out by its celebration of youth and undisguised hostility to the middle-aged and older, in particular a certain type of schoolmaster who represents the enemy. Parker argues that, for the Auden generation, "[t]he old men who had apparently sacrificed the young were symbols of a conservative and oppressive authority" (274). In "The Journal of an Airman" a psychological test is devised to mark out the enemy, a learned man whom it is wiser to shoot at once (Figure 9).

This visual motif turns on its head the avuncular assumptions of the *B.O.P.* optical illusion, where cross-generational collaboration in reading and interpreting is taken for granted. The old are no longer a source of trustworthy wisdom but constitutionally unreliable (even untrustworthy) interpreters, for reasons which are sinisterly withheld. Published a mere fifteen years later, *The Orators* uses psychology as a means of undermining the pre-war regime, replacing muscular Christianity with a modern diagnostic tool for correcting personal and social ills, and destroying any residual fellow-feeling with the older generation who started the war. Mischievous disdain for pedagogy has already been signalled in Section 1, "The Initiates", which opens by anatomizing the perceived failures of post-war civilisation in a pastiche of a public-school address for a prize-day. It ends with a revolutionary call, still couched in the condescending tones which Kipling lampooned in *Stalky & Co.* in the figure of Raymond Martin, M.P., yet chillingly pre-figuring the rounding up of "proscribed persons" which came to characterize totalitarian regimes. Yet the "rotters and slackers", categorised into groups of

pariahs, who are to be pitched into a Black Hole under the school hall, are teachers: "Committees for municipal or racial improvement – the headmaster. Disbelievers in the occult – the school chaplain. The bogusly cheerful – the games master. The really disgusted - the teacher of modern languages. All these have got to die without issue" (64).

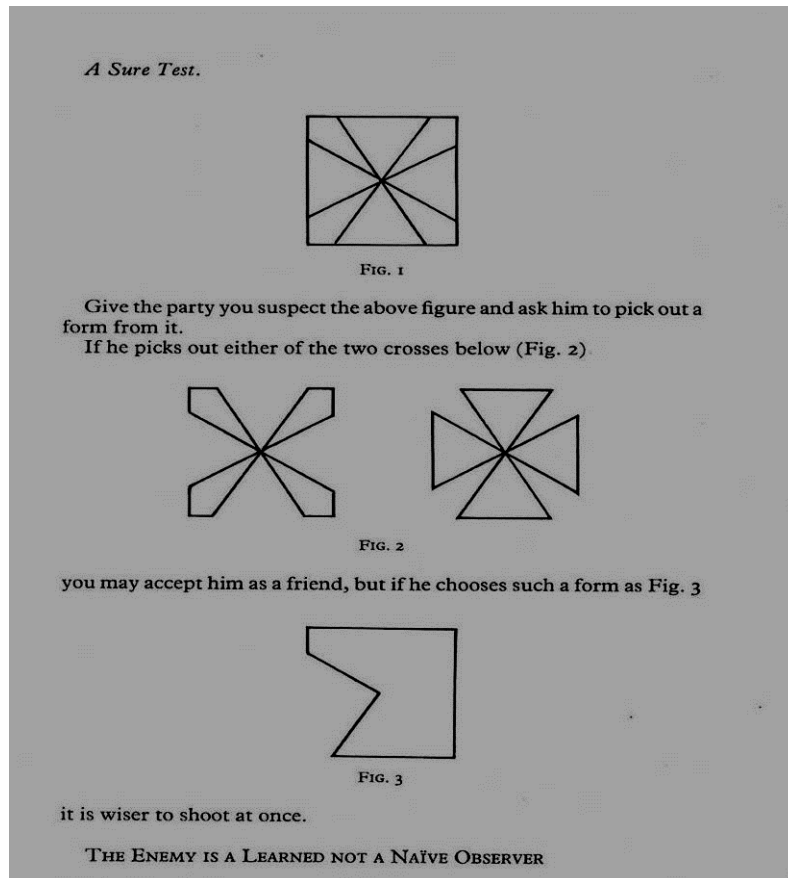


Figure 9 Psychological test, "Journal of an Airman", *The Orators*, 1932.

In "The Journal of an Airman" even family members from the fathers' generation mark themselves out as excluded by their forced conviviality, as the airman, an emblem of the young and alienated, decides that flight is the best solution: "We leave tomorrow. Uncle Sam is arranging the final sing-song with all the assurance of a non-airman" (78). The in-group, the elect of the air, is hard to define but appears to be made up of a secret fictional coterie of mysterious names, such as Derek, Punch, B, E, Allen, Page and Percy, which pepper the text.

To this group Auden adds real youthful contemporaries as the dedicatees of several odes. In its tone of mock-paranoia, in its tacit celebration of a post-war, coterie intelligentsia, *The Orators* marks a flight from - a fundamental repudiation of - the *B.O.P.* paradigm of manliness.

The modernist representation of the airman is not the only exploitation of the symbolic theatre of the sky to develop in the 1930s. As the one sphere where individual bravery could still be heroic after the War, the air awaited a hero who did not, like Lawrence, self-consciously renounce the old-fashioned individualism of the fighter-pilot. As truth in connection to Lawrence seems sometimes to march just within the borders of the possible, it is an unlikely fact that the creator of that boy's own hero, Biggles, was the recruiting officer responsible for Lawrence's induction into the Air Force in 1922. W.E. Johns tells a very different story about the episode, as his biography, *By Jove, Biggles!* indicates, taking an instinctive dislike to Lawrence's off-hand, insolent manner (1981, 107). Lawrence's talk about endurance appears to be nothing more than a yarn; having failed the Air Force medical, he entered on the instruction of Chief of Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard. Stalky-like in his dependence upon a head of service, Lawrence continued to treat the officer class of the Air Force with the unconcealed disdain that Stalky reserves for schoolmasters.

Although Biggles is not given a religious faith, many of the other *B.O.P.* pieties are restored in his characterisation. He is a public-school man, possessing like Tom Brown an energetic self-confidence which is caught in his deep-set hazel-blue eyes. Johns also gives him girl-like hands, which perhaps suggest the delicacy of a George Arthur, as if the ideal boy's own hero is a meshing of healthy extroversion and fine sensibility. No longer demonstrating his heroic status by a reading of Latin, Biggles instead is defined by his close reading of the sky, a deciphering which takes on supreme importance because, in air-duels, death is instantaneous. *Esprit de corps* is vital in the service too, and this puts a limit on the excessive romanticism exhibited by a Lord Jim, for as Biggles observes of the

groundlings he is training “If you want to commit suicide do it here, because then someone else can have your bus” (*By Jove, Biggles!* 137).

The Biggles series exhibits, too, the perennial uncertainty about whether the yarn is really aimed at men or boys. The early stories appeared in *Popular Flying*, a magazine for adults in 1933, but then ceased to be published there when Johns sold serial rights to *The Modern Boy* in the same year. As his biographers, Berresford Ellis and Williams note, the abrupt change necessitated bowdlerisation, since kissing, swearing and the consumption of anything stronger than lemonade disappeared from the texts (135). Still, the settling on the schoolboy as implied reader helped to give the series a timeless quality and the series moved away from realism. The introduction of new characters, a teenager called Ginger and Sergeant Smyth, who keeps the plane in the air, also ensured that the stories had a youth and inter-class appeal.

The decline of realism allowed Johns to shape an escapist formula which literally revisited older settings of the yarn in different directions of the compass as the modernity of flying gave a geographical range to the story-telling. In *Biggles Flies West* (1937), the airman encounters buccaneers and buried treasure. The first edition carried a photograph of two doubloons, which were owned by Johns himself. Ellis and Williams record how Johns carried them in his pocket so that if he was stopped by any boy-readers, they could “handle something that was probably carried in the pocket of a gory-handed pirate” (140). This anecdote shows Johns placing himself in the tradition of the yarn as best-seller traceable to *Treasure Island*, and his understanding of cultural transmission. It is as if the physical status of manliness could be transmuted to a boy by the handling of a pirate’s coins owned by a famous R.A.F. writer. Unsurprisingly, the Biggles stories were a popular feature of *B.O.P.* under its last editor, Jack Cox. The timeless, ageless Biggles epitomizes the honourable public-school hero in his final manifestation, coming to terms, at least in his technological sophistication, with modernity. Perhaps fittingly, the last interview given by Johns to a BBC radio

programme was about the death of *The Boy's Own Paper* in February 1967. Johns died less than a year later.

### **"Boys' Weeklies": An ethos reconsidered**

The second European war in the space of little more than twenty years saw an important critical reconsideration of a literary form, the popular school story, which accused it of a regressive purpose. In March 1940, a few months before the aerial bombardment of Britain's capital commenced, a ground-breaking piece by George Orwell, which has been described by Michael Shelden as "the first important essay of its kind written in England" (1989, 46-6), filled almost a third of the London literary magazine, *Horizon*. Orwell looked seriously at a lowbrow subject, the content, tone and style of ten story papers, including the Amalgamated Press's *Gem* and *Magnet* which had, even before the First World War, published the Greyfriars school stories. In doing so, "Boys' Weeklies" was a signpost to the (then) less travelled academic pathway to where, using a later coinage by Raymond Williams, "culture is ordinary" (1989, 4). In it, Orwell anticipated a break with the contemporary Leavisite orthodoxy of high-mindedness - in this instance about the value of studying the popular press and what Orwell took to be its manipulation of readers - which Williams would make in his development of cultural materialism over a decade later.

While constituting a welcome advance in what was deemed suitable to be considered seriously by a literary monthly aimed at the capital's intellectual elite, "Boys' Weeklies" nonetheless evidences a continuity in the patrician assumptions of its commentary, from which Williams would make a radical departure. It has been noted that Cyril Connolly, *Horizon's* editor, was the last man of letters in England to quote Latin naturally in his own prose (Gross, 322). When he agreed to print Orwell's essay in a highbrow magazine with a limited circulation at the end of the phoney war, he was doing a fellow Etonian a favour, since the projected book for which it was intended, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*, had



still to find a publisher (Shelden, 45). Although, as Shelden convincingly suggests, "Boys' Weeklies" impresses because Orwell is able to bring to life the "small world" of working-class story papers with a novelist's skill (46), its narration of how ordinary readers supposedly respond to the Greyfriars tales has something of the cultural superiority of T.E. Lawrence when writing about the Syrian people. Orwell is very much the guide to a culturally "foreign" country, even if the indigenous people described are only from a lower class in Britain. However, as will be seen, writing that is authoritative because of the social status of its author is not necessarily accurate in its conclusions.

Certainly Orwell is not fully in control of the detail behind his hypothesis that a gap in left-liberal writing has been exploited by a conservative press since "popular imaginative literature is a field that left-wing thought has never begun to enter" (1998, 76). "Boys' Weeklies" makes the dogmatic assertion that the boarding-school world that dominated the *Gem* and the *Magnet* was inspired by Kipling's *Stalky & Co.*, and in this belief its author is wrong as a matter of historic record. Because he suspected that the story papers were produced by a syndicate, Orwell did not anticipate a response from one specific purveyor of Greyfriars tales to challenge his presumption about the apolitical and subjugated consciousness of the bulk of the British lower middle and working classes. So he was surprised by the spirited rejoinder published in the subsequent issue of *Horizon* by Charles Hamilton who, as Frank Richards, was the prolific and almost sole architect of Greyfriars. Hamilton convincingly refutes the evidence for Kiplingesque derivation, which is based on some common vocabulary. Jape, Hamilton notes, is extant in Chaucer and frabjous in Carroll; the shared name of a master, Prout, is in Hamilton's view irrelevant since "[n]o two characters could be more unlike" (1998, 80). Orwell catches the linguistic anarchy of *Stalky* that Hamilton too exploits, but misses the point later made by Humphrey Carpenter that the tradition of children's literature deriving from Lear and Carroll could also throw up satirical and social critique (1985, 16); irreverence also surfaces in their

writings, although it is disguised by nonsensicality. Hamilton's more vigilant reading of literary precedents is indicative of the strength and seriousness of his rebuttal. Indeed, the polite but adversarial prosecution by Orwell of the boy's story paper and defence by Hamilton provides here an ideal prelude to the summing up of my thesis. For Orwell's claims and Hamilton's responses also illuminate the historical context in which the yarn has been considered by academics and commentators.

Hamilton sets out and takes on individually the charges against the *Gem* and *Magnet*: "Mr. Orwell not only reads a diehard dunderheaded Tory into a harmless author for boys: he accuses him of plagiarism, of snobbishness, of being out of date" (1998, 80). As to plagiarism, the suggestion that Gunby Hadath and Desmond Coke are, with Kipling, sources for Greyfriars is roundly dismissed. Orwell's proposition that the story papers "have to be written in a style that is easily imitated" (59) is met with Hamilton's assertion that his style is "inimitable" (81) because the careful grading of his characters in Greyfriars' stories is only possible to "the born story-teller" (81); in Hamilton's view, Dickens could make a character live, Ibsen and Chekhov cannot. Hamilton then turns the tables upon Orwell, teasing him about a supposedly highbrow naivety in equating an author's foreign name with genius. Despite a light-hearted tone, the contentious issue of social class lurks behind the exchange. It is not clear whether Hamilton is aware that Orwell is an old Etonian, but facing the legitimate charge that Greyfriars bears no resemblance to a real public school, Hamilton resorts to trying to undermine Orwell's empiricism by caricaturing *Horizon* contributors as "young men with expansive foreheads and superior smiles" who "contrive to live [...] on bad prose and worse poetry" (82).

On the issue of snobbishness in his tales, Hamilton is on firmer ground. Bringing to bear the complexities inherent in the literary field of cultural production, he points out that a writer cannot risk alienating nine-tenths of the population who are from the working class (82). But he still combines publishing

common sense with a deferential respect for the class system. Arguing that "the word 'aristocrat' has not wholly lost its original Greek meaning" (82), Hamilton believes that noblemen are better fellows than commoners, and represent the rule of the best. By aristocracy he appears to mean a Trollopean squirearchy applying *noblesse oblige* like the Browns of Hughes's novel; selfless to the point of obsolescence (an anxiety strongly voiced by Hughes), since "they cannot and will not do the things necessary for survival" (82). Yet he also argues that the workman is the backbone of the nation (83), applying a tolerance of the class spectrum of Britain - highbrows excluded, of course. More than this, Hamilton appears pointedly to discountenance political "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness" (82), undermining the class-solidarity that Orwell would prefer to see in working-class readers, and placing himself a huge cultural distance from the public-school modernists in the Auden circle.

On the charge of being out of date Orwell appears to be at his strongest. He suggests that at Greyfriars "[t]he clock has stopped at 1910" (72), returning to this criticism in the essay's closing proposition that Hamilton's work is "sodden in the worst illusions of 1910" (76). That pre-war year appears again in the most famous passage from the essay, which commences, "[t]he year is 1910 - or 1940, but it is all the same", and takes the reader through the complacent assumptions of the school story: rosy-cheeked boys of fourteen settle to study tea after an exciting football match, while "ivy clusters thickly round the old grey stones", against the solid constitutional and economic certainty of the King on his throne and a secure pound. Orwell throws in imperial certainties too, based perhaps on his false supposition that Greyfriars is based on *Stalky*: "the grim grey battleships of the British Fleet are steaming up the Channel and at the outposts of Empire the monocled Englishmen are holding the niggers at bay" (67). Applying the novelist's art, Orwell amasses the detail of his caricature, complaining of Greyfriars that "[e]verything is safe, solid and unquestionable" (67).

Hamilton is no less robust in his defence, arguing philosophically that human nature is timeless and that “[a] character that lives is always up to date” (84). He draws on a critical tradition dating back to Chesterton, which argues that the simple romance speaks to perennial human needs. E.S. Turner concludes *Boys Will Be Boys* with a quotation from Chesterton which eloquently makes this claim: “The vast mass of humanity, with their vast mass of idle books and idle words, have never doubted and never will doubt that courage is splendid, that fidelity is noble, that distressed ladies should be rescued and vanquished enemies spared” (297). But Hamilton launches a more subtle counter-charge. He admits that his fiction does not deal with political realities, but suggests that his purpose is to give a boy confidence and hope, that daydreams have their purpose in creating optimism in a boy’s character. The sting in the tale of his argument is that “Mr. Orwell would have him told that he is a shabby little blighter, his father an ill-used serf, his world a dirty, muddled, rotten sort of show” (83). Hamilton espies - but has the delicacy not to say it quite directly - snobbery lurking within Orwell’s show of social concern.

In his trenchant defence, Hamilton exhibits some of the cultural dispositions found amongst the autodidacts in Jonathan Rose’s *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (2001). It was common for ordinary readers to prefer home-grown to foreign literature. Examining the memoirs of avid Greyfriars readers, Rose finds Paul Fletcher, a colliery winder’s son from Lancashire, still echoing, in 1972, Hamilton’s straightforward tastes. Fletcher is glad to have encountered “yarns which had a beginning and an end, and were completely free of drugs, dolls, crude Americanisms, and lavatory wall adjectives” (323). Hamilton’s enthusiasm for straightforward morals also proved attractive. Robert Roberts suggests that “[t]hrough the Old School we learned to admire guts, integrity, tradition” (324). Rose suggests that “[m]uch as the actual public schools created a common culture for affluent children, public school stories created a common frame of morality, ritual, and literary references that enabled

working-class children to socialize with one another" (325). Yet this class solidarity is demonstrated by Rose not to convert into supine social conformity, but to encourage free-thinking. For Walter Citrine, school stories awakened a thirst for literature that led eventually to the works of Karl Marx (331). Rose records that "C.H. Rolph, a member of the Left Book Club and later director of the New Statesman, felt Orwell has been terribly unfair: 'I do not believe that any writer has ever given me greater pleasure than this incredibly many-sided man Frank Richards'" (332).

Against this evidence, Orwell's dismay at the effect of the Greyfriars stories on working-class readers, as if the tales simply "pumped into them the conviction that the major problems of our time do not exist, that there is nothing wrong with laissez-faire capitalism, that foreigners are unimportant comics and that the British Empire is a sort of charity-concern" (1998, 74) appears almost condescendingly naïve, a point that Hamilton may be too gentlemanly to make. Orwell makes more of the Empire than Hamilton, who barely mentions it in his response, supporting the view of historian Andrew Thompson that imperial concerns impinged upon ordinary people less than the intellectual and social elite understood. On the domestic political front, it is also surprising that Orwell writes in "Boys' Weeklies" as if there had been no working-class political movement in Britain, as if the cultural ascendancy of the Classics-educated upper class had still to be challenged. Yet in *Tom Brown's Universe*, Honey notes the decline of that common culture inherited from the Victorian ruling class after the War. Epigrams from a classical author were no longer possible in House of Commons exchanges since "the products of a different educational system were represented in Parliament in large numbers" (132). Honey describes the derision in the 1930s when a speech by Sir John Anderson suggested, "As Horace has it, 'If you drive out nature'" only to be drowned out by shouts from the Labour Party of 'Good old 'Orace!' (132).

Standing back a moment from the context of 1940, and indeed starting to take an aerial view of the yarn from the first publication of the *Boy's Own Paper* until "Boys' Weeklies", the distrust that a certain type of upper-class individual shows towards the reading competence of the ordinary boy is strikingly consistent. This is not the only position taken. E.S. Turner follows in the Chestertonian tradition, which generally trusts the good sense of the common reader. In relation to the penny dreadful's supposedly corrupting influence, he notes Chesterton's belief that any reader who wished to revel in corruption could do so by buying a full-length novel by a fashionable author (12). Turner is happy to take on personally Orwell's *Horizon* concerns about Greyfriars. If the guilty reader of *Boys Will Be Boys* is forced to consider whether he voted Conservative "because he was pretty sure that was how Sexton Blake voted in 'The Great Election Mystery' [...] he should lay the blame on George Orwell who brought the question up" (14). Nevertheless, reading as infection, because of the failure of ordinary readers to inoculate themselves against unwholesome influences, is a recurring trope of some commentators.

In 1878, Lord Shaftesbury ominously warned the Religious Tract Society about the increasing volume of story papers, and that even respectable juveniles were being tempted to sample this fare: "It is creeping not only into the house of the poor, neglected, and untaught, but into the large mansions, penetrating into religious families and astounding careful parents by frightful issues" (Dunae, 1979, 139). The language he uses is suggestive of permeation, as if the penny dreadful is a contagion that can be contracted, like cholera. Writing in 1987, Parker suggests that Orwell wrote "Boys' Weeklies" because he had detected "a deliberate plan to infect the working class with upper-class values" (126) using the same metaphor as Lord Shaftesbury. Parker goes on to argue that Orwell's concern would have been even more justified of the *Boy's Own Paper*, since "there is no doubt as to the tendency that underlays its ripping yarns" (126). Differing only on whether the *B.O.P.* is a disease or its remedy, Shaftesbury and

Parker are united in the belief that working-class readers amount to little more than human tissue for the virus of fiction to inhabit. The possibility is ignored that readers may be immune to infection or have their own defence mechanisms in the form of individual responses that place literature within a personal context including home, school and society. Puzzlingly, the confidence they possess, one would presume, in their own habits of discriminating reading are not extended lower down the social scale. The potential for complex, individualised responses to literature that is evidenced by Jonathan Rose is not envisaged by Shaftesbury or Parker, any more than by Orwell in "Boys' Weeklies".

## Thesis Conclusion

My ambition in this thesis has been to recast the imaginative framework for adventure, linking the development of the yarn specifically to a late nineteenth-century transition to mass literacy. This is in contrast to the conclusion of *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, where Martin Green confirms that his intention has been “to build a new imaginative framework for the adventure tale” (1980, 339) by linking it to imperialism. It is no longer so easy to presume the supposedly deleterious influence of empire across the domestic class system because, although the propagandist impulse was strong in the case of popular literature, “even here reader surveys, oral histories, and working-class memoirs show how propaganda did not always have its desired effect” (Thompson, 240). It is difficult to conceptualise imperial control as other than quixotic and contradictory in a chain of command “where individual officials wielded immense power, leading to ‘disorder and even chaos’” (Kwarteng, 2011, 3). The painstaking work of reconstructing working-class memoirs in the 1980s and 1990s has changed the perception of how literature was read historically. Jonathan Rose has made the challenging contention that Matthew Arnold might have understood, better “than the preoccupations of critics”, canonical literature’s tendency to “ignite insurrections in the minds of workers” (9). It is no longer possible for academics to assume with quite so much confidence the hegemonic effect of literature for working-class boys, only that the 1870 Education Act, which spurred the creation of *B.O.P.*, also encouraged the spread of reading.

Probably the major change in cultural conditioning between the 1850s and the First World War was in education: the introduction of the written examination, an article of faith of Victorian pedagogy. I have traced its effect upon adventure fiction through the trope of a piece of paper coming into a protagonist’s life, isolating him from female company and inciting a masculine quest towards self-knowledge and refashioning. Whereas Joseph Bristow in *Empire Boys* asserts that “towards the end of the Victorian period, the types of adventures absorbed



outside school would be modified and so make their way into the classroom” (1991, 27), I delineate a more organic development evolving from the classroom. Initially an examination paper at a public school, but then a treasure map, a Masonic or maritime officer’s certificate, a Buddhist pictogram and a potsherd all force themselves upon male consciousness and demand vigilant scrutiny. In contrast to Bristow and Green’s focus upon Empire, I show that the testing of masculinity does not cease in the domestic arena. There may be concessions to what must be interpreted, certainly, when the yarn crosses the boundaries of realism, fantasy and class, and engages with a younger audience and addresses the Board school boy; the landscape sometimes stands in as proxy for the classical text. Yet a telegram from the Baltic, a map of Kensington Gardens, a Sussex landscape, a suburban street for tenderfoot scouts and an American agent’s pocket book continue to demand vigilant interpretation. The intensity and wholeheartedness of the resultant assessment defines the protagonist who undertakes it, morally and socially. Assisted by Neil Postman’s insights into the mutually constitutive nature of literacy and secrecy, of how the training in reading that was overseen by pedagogues led to the development of the concept of childhood, I have isolated the specific characteristics of the yarn as an exercise in cultural transmission. The adventure story can then be seen as having a parallel pathway in forming masculinity to the formal education system. Late-Victorian adventure is a profoundly bookish form in which successful acting and deciphering merge decisively as the hallmark of the true hero. By identifying a paradigm shift in which ethical action is contingent upon the cognitive breaking of secrets, of right interpretation, I anatomize a specific type of adventure, the yarn, missed by earlier critics.

In conceptually developing the nature of the interpretative process demanded of the yarn’s hero I connect the wrestling with symbols (Greek particles) of Classical translation with the art of crypto-analysis. The most successful spy-thriller writer of wartime, John Buchan, has been cited by Richard

Usborne as embodying the social eminence attainable by a First-in-Greats mind (1974, 86) from a relatively humble background. Writing specifically of Stevenson, Haggard, Kipling and Conan Doyle in his *Victorian Quest Romance*, Robert Fraser observes that "in most of these stories the information thus acquired is the property of another closed society whose unique possession of it must be violated and broken down in the process" (1998, 17), and this exposition fits *The Thirty-Nine Steps* perfectly well. As Usborne has been quoted as observing, Buchan remained a model for schoolmasters and willing scholars of how the passing of examinations could lead to success in life. It is in this matter of ontological development – the hero's sense of being or becoming, and his developing position within a male social hierarchy – that I move beyond Fraser's definition of the quest romance as being about factual verification. The yarn hero's masculine conception of himself (his self-coding, as it were) is profoundly changed by the physical discovery that he makes.

Yet in developing my concept of code-breaking I avoid a mechanistic model of cultural assimilation. Where Kestner insists upon "the crucial importance of adventure literature [in] imprinting codes of masculinity: rescue, heroism, survival, courage, duty, isolation, voyaging" (2010, 1), I identify the yarn as interpretatively open-ended. My conceptualising of the yarn as a civil (even civilising) code containing competing discourses about masculinity has the advantage of emphasizing the subjective range of the adventure tale and the capacity for self-doubt as well as resoluteness that plays out in the internal dialogue of its protagonists.

Thompson has recognized not only that *B.O.P.*'s imperial ideology was less militaristic than many of its rivals but also that "a variety of authorial voices characterised this (and other) magazines" (104). This insight supports my contention that the boy's own ethos is a compendium made up of differently-shaded constructions of masculinity, placing therefore considerable interpretative demands upon a reader. I have adopted an optical illusion (Figure 4) found in a

wartime Annual to confirm both how relaxed and sophisticated the *B.O.P.* could be about different representations of reality co-existing. One might legitimately suggest that the civilising mission of *B.O.P.* is to encourage its readers to puzzle out the complexities of interpretation, allowing for the fact not only that others might see things differently, but that over time they might too.

Taking my lead from Orwell, Williams and Green and a tradition within cultural materialism of personal interjection, I want to conclude on a more autobiographical and reflective note. Several people have pointed out that my thesis itself represents an interpretative journey, a quest to decipher codes of masculinity, even a trek to a foreign country, the past, where they do things differently. Like masculine formation itself, the development of a thesis entails the acceptance or necessary rejection of existing models, growth spurts, passages of difficulty and moments of revelation, before the assumption of a distinctive personality and the grounding in certain patterns of perception. Reflecting upon this process will help to elucidate how I came to structure the thesis and decide upon its focus, explaining the issues it chose to concentrate upon and the reasons why.

Although it has been gratifying to find David Kahn noting in *The Code-Breakers* that the wartime employment by the British of the Playfair system of crypto-analysis extended to Lawrence of Arabia (312), there has been less actual codebreaking identified in my primary texts than anticipated at the start of my research. Nonetheless, the movement of literature towards espionage is very clear in Buchan's appointment to a position of authority in the Ministry of Information during the war. And as my expectation declined that further examples of code-breaking would be located in primary texts, the parallels between the elite Classical education of the Victorians and Edwardians and the cultural practices within the Black chambers of espionage increasingly emerged. It became clear that A.E. Housman and a cryptographer at Bletchley Park would be making use of much the same training in literary analysis, forged in the

unseen translations that were part of university examinations. A further parallel suggested itself between the evolution of espionage codes towards increased complexity and the metamorphic development of the yarn. Because of the developing chronology of the school story, the maritime yarn, the colonial encounter and so forth, it seemed natural to group tales by type. Fairly late in conceptual development, Kenneth Burke's cultural theory about man as the symbol-making animal added weight to the clear sense of linguistic hierarchy that was emerging between Greek, Latin and English in the *B.O.P.* and school stories generally; Burke also contributed to a sense of each locale representing a separate symbolic theatre where different masculine challenges were faced by the protagonist and interpretative challenges by the implied reader.

It will have been observed that although the term "binary" occurs occasionally in my analysis, the language of binomial oppositions, of protagonists encountering the oppressed "Other", has been avoided. Partly this is a reflection of the tone of the yarn, which, in my reading experience, seems to be less about imprinting codes of masculinity on passive recipients than acting as the repository for a whole spectrum of masculine anxieties. Indeed, I tend to endorse Nicholas Daly's finding that "those critics who specialize in the mainstream of Victorian letters are often keen to demonstrate how anxious even the official culture is" (15). In this regard, the symbolic importance that Burke ascribes to the negative I have taken as supporting a dualistic tendency in the yarn's protagonist: this dualism can be linked, as context demands, either to self-doubt or the possibility of seeing new and different things (particularly threatening things) within his environment. Thus, as indicated in Chapter 5 about the invasion scare story, any author delineating the extroverted tale of imperial expansion is simultaneously acknowledging the possibility of invasion. The *B.O.P.* optical illusion is itself emblematic of binomial complexity, of the perceptual difficulty of the close reader in settling upon one interpretation, being ever vigilant to other perceptual "translations". In making this critical preference, I have hoped to restore the

contingency of interpretation to the yarn, or as Valentine Cunningham puts it, "a rational, proper, moral even, respect for the primacy of text over all theorizing about text, a sensible recognition that though reading always comes after theory, theory is inevitably the lesser partner in the hermeneutic game" (169).

Where Burke and Cunningham buttress the sense of an autonomous relationship between the individual reader and the text, Bourdieu and Williams emphasize the autonomy of the writer within a prescribed literary field or structure of feeling. Taking a cue from cultural materialism I have in this thesis traced certain authors in their responses to the literary market: Haggard determined to repeat the financial success of Stevenson or Kipling, taking cognizance of how Edith Nesbit had combined fantasy with a historical sense. The yarn came to seem both naturally metamorphic and a resource - even a prop cupboard - where literary borrowings were more acceptable than in the domestic realist novel. Writing at a time when my own children, female and male, were immersed in the Harry Potter series, the debate over the exact nature of children's literature, when Rowling's works were being read by adults and children as separate publishing packages, seemed less important than the affinity across time between the Stalky triumvirate and Harry, Ron and Hermione. As Richard Jenkyns has noticed in his article "Potter in the Past" (2000), the bookish Beetle, modelled on Kipling himself, chimes with "the bookish Hermione (who Rowling has said, similarly, contains a good deal of herself)" (40). Jenkyns suggests that Potter's round glasses and perpetually untidy hair seem to be modelled on Geoffrey Willans' Molesworth (41), but there is an argument to be made that the spectacles are a less obtrusive version of Beetle's gig lamps. My children's love of Hogwarts provided a link with my growing interest in wartime Kipling, and this made me increasingly uneasy with the presumption of hegemonic control over the imagination of the young. If my children were one day to be caught up in a natural apocalypse caused by global warming, would they wish surviving academics in the twenty-second century to assume that Harry Potter had seduced

them into complacency towards the environmental effects of *laissez-faire* capitalism? I think not.

Since I had not encountered his work on my undergraduate English course, the interpretative puzzle of Rudyard Kipling grew towards central importance in the thesis. Having been asked to write the liner notes for a CD of classic children's songs featuring work from Lewis Carroll to Spike Milligan, my research led me to encounter dreamy, other-worldly men who were far from the caricature of the stern Victorian paterfamilias. Kipling's affection for and understanding of children is memorialised in books with the title of *Kipling and the Children* (Lancelyn Green, 1965) or *O Beloved Kids* (Gilbert, 1984), yet he was destined to outlive two of his three children. I encountered in the archive of Sussex University a facsimile of the letter written to Rudyard by an officer of John's battalion, reciting the standard clichés about pluck in the lost code that I cite Paul Fussell as noting in the introduction to this thesis. There seemed to be a deep irony in this piece of paper concluding the life of a subaltern in a letter to his illustrious father, when the yarn's inciting incident is often a piece of paper coming into a young man's hand. The irony deepened as I became aware that Kipling, as a War Graves Commissioner, is almost the sole architect of the language of Remembrance; and that a man sometimes falsely accused of didacticism should pen for young men like his son, whose bodies were blown beyond recognition, the mordantly open-ended inscription, "Known Unto God". This led me to want to integrate the Bard of Empire with the intensely private family man and proto-modernist.

Taking a last aerial snapshot of the landscape of the yarn, what strikes me now is how striated the terrain is by the hierarchical layers of class. The more that writers like T.E. Lawrence and Kipling were concerned about their own social status, the more they fight passive-aggressively against the restrictive formations of the class system. Conduct anxiety, status anxiety and linguistic anxiety seem deeply intertwined. A line from George Bernard Shaw's Preface to *Pygmalion*,

running successfully in the London of 1914 when war was declared, sums up this reality: "It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him" (1912, eBook). Even Shaw, detached from the English class context by his Irish background, cannot conclude his introduction to the play, a Greek subject popularised by the Latin of Ovid, without connecting language to code. He refers to "the most inscrutable of cryptograms" ("Preface", eBook), a description of the form of shorthand pioneered by the eccentric Oxford phonetics expert, Henry Sweet, one of the models for Professor Higgins. English public-school men like Orwell and Parker cannot shake off their own education sufficiently to entrust interpretative agency to ordinary readers any more than the founders of the *B.O.P.* can set aside their own greater gentility shadowed in the secret meaning of "Quicquid agunt pueri nostri farrago libelli". The status of the gentleman is, in the last resort, a continuing guarantor of a privileged and "superior" reading. These strong links between class and conduct in the yarn offer a field for continuing research.

Lastly, it will be clear that in defining the yarn as a multi-generational text I have deliberately avoided entering the crowded and complex critical debate about what exactly constitutes children's literature. It is perfectly feasible in view of the historically renegotiable boundaries of the implied readership of many yarns to take this approach. And in relation to those shifting boundaries I have found particularly apposite Kipling's comments in his posthumously-published memoir about the Puck tales: "I worked the material in three overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth, and experience" (1937, 111). Kipling presents himself as an expert craftsman working lacquer and mother o' pearl into the same scheme as niello and grisaille. The process is partly conscious and partly intuitive, for Kipling makes much of the unpredictable guidance of his Daemon, or creative unconscious. He implies that for author and reader the text is a striated

landscape in other senses beyond class-consciousness: architectural in its construction and archaeological in its layering of present and past readings.

In a forthcoming article, Alison Waller writes of childhood books as time capsules, citing Matei Calinescu's observation that they are "pretexts for remembering, occasions for attempting to re-explore certain spaces of memory and to relive certain events and impressions of our personal past which coincided in time with their reading" (1993, 96). Waller recognises that "the adult who remembers a buried book is separate both from the adult re-reader who digs it up to reread, and from the image of the child reader who is released from the capsule alongside it; this remembering adult provides a connection between the other two selves which allows us to imagine a textual subjectivity that exists over time". In the light of P.G. Wodehouse's attitude to Farrar's *Eric* evolving over time, Waller's recognition of the complexity of memory in the re-reading process adds the third strand to the trio of subjectivities that the thesis envisages for future critical consideration of the Victorian masculine adventure story. The yarn is more complex than has been previously acknowledged because of the interpretative challenges it is designed to elicit, the autonomy of the author within the literary field, and the interplay of current and previous readings within the consciousness of the reader. Future readings of the yarn need to be vigilant to this complexity.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Sydney Colvin of 9 or 10 November 1891, Robert Louis Stevenson describes *The Wrecker* as "a good yarn" (*Selected Letters*, Ed. Mehew, 475). Conrad, in distinguishing Marlow's style of story-telling in *Heart of Darkness* (1901) from the direct simplicity of other seamen, still acknowledges his "propensity to spin yarns" (6). In writing to Andrew McPhail on 5 December 1911 Kipling asks "Did I ever tell you the yarn of the young civil servant in India – otherwise an ass – who rose to great honour and position" (Pinney, *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, 1911-1919, 73). In his third camp fire yarn in *Scouting for Boys* (1908), Baden-Powell sets out the organisational structure of Scouting as if it is an improvised story (32-43). In *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), Richard Hannay having cracked the code in the pocket book of the dead American agent Scudder is struck by "the reliability of each stage of the yarn" (Wordsworth, 39).

<sup>2</sup> Achieving a first class degree in *Literae Humaniores*, the undergraduate Classics course at Oxford University, sometimes known as Greats, is used by Osborne as a shorthand for the highest level of intellectual distinction. It was through a First in Greats that Buchan, from a middling Scottish family, rose to be a British colonial administrator under Alfred Milner in South Africa after the Second Boer War. In *Ghosts of Empire*, Kwasi Kwarteng observes that in imperial administration as "a manifestation of cultural superiority" a "first in Greats [...] ensured that a man would be held in the highest esteem (2011, 6).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson in "My First Book" acknowledges his debts to Washington Irving, Poe and Defoe – and for the dead man's chest, Kingsley (*Treasure Island*. Oxford University Press, 1985. 192-200).

<sup>4</sup> In *Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard: The Record of a Friendship* (Hutchinson, 1965), Morton Cohen documents the vital importance of the Savile Club in linking writers, book and journal editors and publishers, noting that Stevenson was the lynchpin of the Club in its formative years and that Andrew Lang was responsible for bringing both Haggard and Kipling into its fold (9-20).

<sup>5</sup> "See here – nobody, not you, nor Lang, nor the devil will hurry me with our crawlers. They are coming. Four of them are as good as done, and the rest will come when ripe; but I am on another lay for the moment, purely owing to Lloyd [Stevenson's stepson], this one; but I believe there's more coin in than in any amount of crawlers: now, see here, 'The Sea Cook, or Treasure Island: A story for Boys'". Letter to W.E. Henley, 25 August 1881 (Maixner, Paul. Ed. *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1981. 124).

<sup>6</sup> The symbolic resonance of the cigar is, of course, a commonplace of Freudian psychotherapy. As Eric Hiller notes in *The Journal of International Psycho-Analysis* "cigars can symbolise the penis" (1922, 477). However, in the thesis, I have concentrated on smoking as a physiological demarcation of manliness from boyishness, when a man can smoke without retching. For Kipling, smoking is an affectionate signifier of adult masculine intimacy with his father John Lockwood, whose opinion of his son's latest work was often earnestly sought. When having difficulty with the Puck tales, Rudyard "smoked it over with the Father who said – not for the first time: 'Most things in this world are accomplished by judicious leaving alone'" (*Something of Myself*, 109).

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<sup>7</sup> As Andrew Lycett notes, the United Services College was a line of twelve boarding houses converted, by a consortium of service men, into a "rudimentary public school where the gymnasium doubled as a chapel and assembly hall". It was "filling a gap in the caste-based English education system" (*Rudyard Kipling*, 1999, 51). The ban on the purchase of commissions in the Army in 1871, part of the process of making career advancement dependent upon examinations, had created a "frenzy of competition amongst public schools to prepare pupils for the army training academies at Sandhurst and Woolwich" (51). Wellington College, a more prestigious institution, priced itself out of the market. In *Stalky's* introductory poem, Kipling celebrates the College's "[t]welve bleak houses by the shore!" (1987, 6), flaunting its Spartan atmosphere in an act of class-conscious defiance.

<sup>8</sup> In an historical irony, Kwarteng observes that the soldier most associated in the popular imagination with recruitment to the Western Front during the First World War, Kitchener, advanced in the Army because of facility with an Oriental language. A posting to Palestine in the mid-1870s "gave him the opportunity to learn Arabic, which accomplishment would define his career in Egypt and the Sudan, where he would make his name" (211). Major-General Lionel Dunsterville, the model for *Stalky*, also found passing "the Higher Standard Urdu within a year" a useful springboard to transfer to the Indian Army from his overly conventional regiment (*Stalky's Adventures*, 1933, 56-57). T.E. Lawrence bases his Arabian persona on his knowledge of the language and therefore the indigenous peoples, a 'mastery' constructed characteristically as an examination: "There was a country called Arabia; but this was nothing to the point. There was a language called Arabic; and in it lay the test" (*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 31).

<sup>9</sup> In *The Great Boer War*, the patriotic Conan Doyle is still magnanimous enough to pay tribute to the Boers as "one of the most rugged, virile, unconquerable races ever seen on the earth" (1900, 1).

<sup>10</sup> Buchan, as a skilful literary politician, is very careful to position himself in 1940 against Stevenson, whose reputation had declined from its nineteenth-century peak. Buchan acknowledges that Stevenson was "a most potent influence over young men" (42), by which he means writers like himself. Buchan then admits to a disenchantment with the older writer's style: "He seemed to me too much of a looker-on, a phrase-maker in life, and I wanted robuster standards and more vital impulses" (43). Then, turning back (partly) towards his first enthusiasm, Buchan opines, "I do not think that he was a great master, but he was a master" (43), before suggesting that Stevenson will always appeal to youth. As a man of action as well as a mere writer, Buchan neatly distinguishes between Stevenson's boyishness and his own "vital" manliness.

<sup>11</sup> That *Stalky* falls within the classification of the roman à clef is left in no doubt by the publication of a memoir by 'Stalky' (L.C. Dunsterville, *Stalky's Adventures*, 1933).

<sup>12</sup> Dunsterville records how successful the United Services College was: "Price [its headmaster] passed us all into Woolwich and Sandhurst direct from the school and without the delay and expense of cramming" (1933, 48).

<sup>13</sup> These are, with first publication dates, "Regulus" (1917), "The United Idolators" (1924), "The Propagation of Knowledge" (1926) and "The Satisfaction of a Gentleman" (1929). "Stalky" (1898) which had been repressed from the 1899 edition was included in 1929 as well.

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<sup>14</sup> In his study of the unofficial codes of the public schools, F. Bayford Harrison records the prefects at only one institution, Alleyn's College, being permitted to administer corporal punishment to offenders for not turning out to "nets and training for footer." ("School Etiquette: Customs that are Unwritten Laws at Winchester, Eton, Harrow, etc." *The Boy's Own Annual, 1916-17*, 102).

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