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Masculinity Under Siege: Gender, Empire, and Knowledge

In Late Victorian Literature

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ABSTRACT

Using the works of Rider Haggard, Jules Verne, Rudyard Kipling, and Bram Stoker, this dissertation critically reassesses the state of masculinity in the Victorian fin de siècle. The last quarter of the Victorian era witnessed a proliferation of narratives emphasizing the role and importance of the ‘manly man.’ Rejecting the comforts of domesticity and household duties, men fled to the far corners of the British Empire. Here they hunted both man and animal while establishing an authoritative presence through the appropriation of native customs and cultures. I also contend that a stable masculinity was shaken and the ‘flight from domesticity’ was a reaction against anxieties both at home and abroad. The empire itself was perceived to be in danger since other European nations were also entering the imperial arena. Further, a language of degeneration and the rise of Social Darwinism led people to fear for the virility and vigor of the British man. Moreover, the rise of the New Woman created a great degree of anxiety on the part of men. My dissertation discusses the ways in which men, reacting to these disturbing new developments, rebuilt and refashioned masculinity both at home and abroad. In order to support my argument I make use of the hunting grounds of Africa in Rider Haggard’s She, the cosmopolitan traveler in Jules Verne’s Around the World in Eighty Days, the adolescent who ‘passes’ as the native in Kipling’s celebrated novel Kim, and the tussle between masculine rationality and the feminine occult in Bram Stoker’s Mystery of the Sea. In conclusion I consider the early twentieth century hero, T.E. Lawrence and the ways in which heroism continued to be constructed by new media forms.
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Introduction

While, as feminists have rightly asserted, there is no shortage of histories of men (and of the public spheres of war, diplomacy, and statecraft in which they have been traditionally predominant), the history of masculinity – the study of men as gendered beings – has been a recent historiographical departure. However, in the last decade, historical interest in masculinity has dramatically increased. This development is partially explained by cultural trends outside the academy, in particular a debate about whether the close of the twentieth century ushered in a “crisis of masculinity,” as men in the western world were obliged to come to terms with second wave feminism and the erosion of patriarchy. However, while this ongoing debate has rendered the history of masculinity highly topical, it has been bolstered by a shift in scholarly paradigms, in particular the emergence, within the field of women’s history, of ‘gender history,’ which insists that femininity has always been defined relative to masculinity (and indeed vice versa).

Historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have recently highlighted the inadequacies of the ‘separate spheres’ model of gender roles, revealing that the boundary between the female/private and male/public realms was unstable and regularly transgressed (Vickery). Such research has not merely allowed the public lives of women to be recovered and fully registered, but conversely has suggested that the histories of the domestic environment or of the family might need to pay more attention than hitherto to the male presence. From a very different direction, the expansion of queer history has reminded historians that normative masculinity not merely seeks to make distinctions between men and women (and between men and children), but also between different categories of men. Of particular value have been the writings of R.W. Connell, who has promoted a number of useful categories, including ‘hegemonic’ and ‘subordinate’ masculinity, and ‘complicity’ (the process by which men who do not fully match
the tropes of hegemonic masculinity nevertheless collude with it in order to receive the benefits accorded to men by patriarchal systems of authority). This flourishing new field of historical inquiry has greatly impacted the historiography of nineteenth and twentieth century Britain.

Early considerations of a gendered history of men in modern Britain clustered around nineteenth century debates over ‘manliness,’ most notably as associated with muscular Christianity and the creation and consolidation of elite public schools. This of course is not surprising given that the writings of Charles Kingsley or Matthew Arnold appeared to represent the promotion of an explicit ideology of masculinity, and that these codes of honor and chivalry had considerable purchase among cultural, social, and imperial elites of Victorian Britain. The concern with this sort of study of ‘manliness’ is that it inevitably privileges elite over popular conceptions of masculinity, focused as it is with the conduct of Rugby schoolboys, Oxford undergraduates, clerics, members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, or the Aesthetic Movement. For John Tosh, whose model I use in the chapters that follow, these studies are not merely socially exclusive, but they are largely concerned with homosocial environments – especially the boys’ private school – from which women were excluded. Throughout the 1990s Tosh set out to recover the other side of Victorian masculinity, in a series of articles on middle-class men and domesticity, all of which appeared in *A Man’s Place* published in 1999. Drawing on etiquette manuals, divorce case records, private diaries, and letters, Tosh mapped the domestic responsibilities of nineteenth-century middle-class men, as husbands, fathers, and heads of household and insists that men were both significant and present in the home. As Tosh points out this does not mean that there were no limitations to and contradictions within male domesticity. For example, men took little or no interest in the rearing of infants. Men were nominally in overall control of the household, but they were not expected to involve themselves
in the details of domestic management. Another potential source of friction was that although the Victorian male as head of household was the disciplinarian, moral authority was invested in the female (untainted as she supposedly was by public life). Men were then obliged to navigate this somewhat difficult terrain with much trepidation. And as Tosh discusses, many men chose to ‘flee from domesticity’ and escape into the empire, rather than traverse an ambiguous domestic terrain. Such a flight can be seen as integral to Tosh’s main contention that the Victorian male was a highly domesticated creature.

What might help to resolve this paradox is a fuller appreciation of how male responses to domesticity remained complex and ambivalent throughout the nineteenth and even the twentieth centuries, and that it was possible simultaneously to both embrace and reject attributes of domestic manliness. Men constantly traveled back and forth across the frontier of domesticity, attracted by the responsibilities of marriage or fatherhood, but also enchanted by fantasies of the energetic life and homosocial camaraderie of the adventure hero. From the 1870s, middle-class men married later or chose not to marry at all, and the great imperial expansion of the closing decades of the nineteenth century was fed in part by a generation of permanent bachelors – men such as Rhodes, Kitchener, or Gordon – who eschewed family life in favor of the attractions of overseas adventure. Between 1870 and 1914 the imperatives of empire celebrated a militaristic and robust hypermasculinity, which found its apotheosis in the homosocial world of the boy’s adventure story. This trend is the focus of this dissertation. Making use of four popular novels written in the late nineteenth century, I explore the many different aspects of a troubled masculinity in which some protagonists travel to distant foreign lands in the company of other men, while others fight their battles at home.
The act of leaving home and going to the colonies itself required a convincing display of masculine attributes – the qualities of self-reliance and perseverance which were integral to popular understandings of ‘manliness.’ Firstly, the momentous and testing decision to leave one’s native shore was a test of manly character. Secondly, as John Tosh reminds us, settlement overseas was embraced as a means of achieving the material and social prerequisites of a secure adult masculine status. Traveling to the colonies both demonstrated masculine potential and was expected to make possible its full realization. This notion that traveling to the colonies might be the making of manhood could be understood in different ways, but physical strength was fundamental. It is often forgotten that the primary, traditional meaning of ‘manliness’ was strength and vigor of body. A ‘manly figure’ was athletic and robust; ‘manly exercises’ were the most commendable leisure pursuit; to be weak or sickly or impotent was to be less than a man. In many walks of life men were acutely aware of this. For example, in industrialized Britain a feared loss of manhood was one expression of the alienation from physical pursuits that resulted from labor in the factory or office. As one advice manual put it as early as 1838, competition between one man and another in the industrialized world was leading Englishmen to “seriously hurt their constitutions by working beyond their strength” (qtd. in Anderson 56). The colonies were then constructed as a place where men would be liberated from these debilitating circumstances. Empire was quintessentially the sphere of physical manliness. It was widely depicted as a strenuous open air life, requiring energy, resilience, and physical adaptability. Rider Haggard’s novels, for instance, frequently make use of Africa as a wide open space, full of big game hunting, and helpless natives whose fate (be it death or safe passage) helps resurrect the traveling protagonist’s masculinity.
The freedom to hunt is a widely used theme in many of Haggard’s novels. If bodily vigor and the cultivation of an athletic body was an integral component of the meaning of contemporary manliness, meat consumption itself was viewed as highly necessary to achieve this goal. Almost all the published letters home from newly arrived travelers and settlers who speak of high wages and cheap food, especially meat. As one agricultural laborer put it in 1851, “Off we go to Adelaide, as fast as we are able. / Beef and mutton we expect to see upon the table” (Price 90). Meat consumption was also enhanced by the freedom to hunt. Most colonial destinations were rich in game. Plentiful game and cheap joints of meat held out the prospect of better health and enhanced masculine vigor.

Empire was largely a man’s business. By this I do not mean that men possessed an imperial monopoly, or that the empire aroused no interest in the other sex. Both missionary work and travel attracted a great deal of attention from women in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Yet these concerns made comparatively few inroads on the construction of British imperialism, which, as Clare Midgley has pointed out, was “an essentially masculine project” (14). Empire was a man’s business in two senses: its acquisition and control depended disproportionately on the energy and ruthlessness of men; and its place in the popular imagination was mediated through literary and visual images which consistently emphasized and valorized male attributes. Overseas expansion depended on manpower, and the supply of men of a certain type – practical, resourceful, and self-reliant. Conversely, men who chose colonial careers or set off in search of adventure overseas were making a statement about their masculinity. Empire, was, in a fundamental sense, a test of the nation’s virility.

1 The settlers were emigrants who settled in various colonies – Australia being the most popular. My dissertation does not delve into any settler narrative.
Two arguments can be made about gender and New Imperialism. The first is that a heightened awareness of opportunities and threats overseas induced a harsher definition of masculinity at home; if the empire was in danger, men must be produced who were tough, realistic, unsqueamish, and stoical. It can be argued that the overseas requirements prompted efforts to increase the appeal of imperial careers in the eyes of the young, especially by recasting the approved attributes of manliness. Secondly, it can be said that the ‘crisis’ in masculinity had its primary locus not in the empire but in Britain itself and in gender relations at home. According to this perspective, enthusiasm for the empire at the end of the century was a symptom of masculine insecurity at home in Britain. Anxieties which had their root at home could be displaced onto the empire as a site of unqualified masculinity, and as a result both career and travel choices were influenced. Strong as this argument is, I suggest that paradoxically both of these dynamics were at work together – that the needs of the empire and a domestic crisis in masculinity played off each other in mutually reinforcing ways which powerfully conditioned the popular response to empire.

During the era of New Imperialism the empire was widely perceived to be in danger. Looking back today it might seem unsupported since the first losses of British territory did not occur until the 1920s and the end of empire was not a prospect on the horizon until the 1940s. But the scale of contemporary colonial domination was such that any failure to contain insurgency or attack called the British imperial resolve into question. And many such ‘failures’ occurred between 1879 and 1885. The Zulu, the Boers, the Afghans, and the Sudanese all inflicted humiliating defeats on the British. At home Fenian violence was on the rise and

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2 Imperialism took a new turn after 1875. If trade was the backbone of the Old Imperialism, now the imperial venture was defined by social Darwinistic ideas of the superiority of Western culture and the idea that the untapped wealth of the countries in question ‘needed’ to be used. New Imperialism was also aided by development in technology with inventions such as vaccines, guns, and the train.
reaching new heights in Ireland (Marshall 134-5). General Gordon’s death at Khartoum in 1885 was another catalyst for these anxieties. As one journal put it, “There is the danger that not only Africa, not only Asia, but throughout the world, the idea should take root that England is too weak or too indifferent to hold her own” (qtd. in Porter 118). Fears for the security of the empire prompted a revival of the greatest imperial crisis of the previous decades – the Indian Mutiny of 1857. From the mid-1880s there was a proliferation of novels set in the Indian Mutiny, as if there were still lessons to be drawn from that most catastrophic failure of control.

If these anxieties were not enough, Britain faced international competition in their colonies. The era of New Imperialism witnessed the entry of a number of European nations who were anxious to get a piece of the colonial cake. These new entrants were desperate knowing that there were few areas of the globe which now remained for colonial expansion: this was the last chance to secure boundaries, to ‘protect’ commercial interests, and to stake out spheres of future exploitation. As the Pall Mall Gazette complained, ‘whereas, since Trafalgar, the Englishman has never found himself confronted by any other opponent but the savage with his spear, or the pirate in his prah, we now find every ocean highway furrowed by European ironclads, while over many a colonial frontier frowns the cannon of Continental rivals” (qtd. in Porter 118). British manhood now had to prevail not only over the ‘low’ races, but over competitors whose inferiority could not be taken for granted.

The language of degeneration, which became so fashionable during the 1890s, brought home these fears, for it pointed the finger of blame at inadequacies on the part of the British themselves. Imperial reverses were viewed as a reflection on the virility of the British people. ‘Degeneration’ was a catch-all term for pessimism about the birthrate, the nation’s physical fitness, its mental and moral health, and its cultural vigor (Pick). Fears that the human condition
was declining permeated *fin de siècle* culture, and its attendant pseudoscientific discourse became, as Stephen Arata explains, part of the realm of “common sense” (“Fictions” 14-15). Social Darwinism was also an important strand of degenerative thought, and it produced a heightened sensitivity to any indication that the British race might be losing its place at the top of the hierarchy. Darwin himself warned in *The Descent of Man* “we must remember, progress is no invariable rule” (177). Degeneration was also believed to be particularly endemic in the urban working classes due to both environmental and hereditary factors. Following a Lamarckian understanding of inheritance, the results of degeneration was believed to be passed on such that some believed “a pure Londoner of the fourth generation is not capable of existing” (qtd. in Steadman-Jones 127). Degeneration also had its puritanical followers: the British Empire was held to be vulnerable to the same danger which had allegedly brought the Roman empire down – sexual depravity. This view was voiced both by the Social Purity Movement and the mainstream educationalists including Baden-Powell. The practical outcome of degenerative thought was an unprecedented scrutiny of the fitness of both sexes which had strong imperial overtones: women as mothers, men as active beings. As Lord Rosebery put it in 1900, “An empire such as ours requires as its first condition an Imperial Race – a race vigorous and industrious and intrepid,” exhibiting “health of mind and body” (Lord Rosebery 23-4). The defense of the empire required more men and better men.

The main target for empire propaganda was not the working class but the ‘service class’ – the upper levels of society from whom colonial administrators and officers in the army and navy had traditionally been recruited. By the 1880s this grouping was nearly synonymous with those who were graduates of public schools. During the period of reform and expansion of the public schools between the 1830s and 1860s, training boys for the empire had been incidental to the
main purpose of the schools. Neither the curriculum nor the institutional ethos was deliberately and consciously imperial. By the 1880s a major change had taken place. The schools vigorously recruited boys for colonial careers, and they laid claim to the role of educator for empire par excellence. The curriculum certainly reflected an imperial agenda – in history, geography, English Literature, and the classics. But the public schools did not base their claim to colonial service on academic grounds. What they specialized in was manliness, or making men out of boys. Manliness was acquired through a process of physical hardening imposed by the often harsh living conditions at school. It was about renouncing the ministrations of women (Honey 209-17). And it was about finding oneself in a deeply hierarchical society. These qualities had an obvious relevance to life on the imperial frontier, where conditions were Spartan, respectable female company scarce, and survival often depended on an overstretched chain of command.

Superimposed on this bedrock of schoolboy culture was a more sophisticated understanding of manly character, articulated by teachers and educationists. This rested on the notion that the individual was, if not master of his fate in an eternal sense, at least fully responsible for the mark he made on the world. A high value was set on energy, as displayed in resolute action, and on self-control. The Thomas Arnoldian ‘man of character’ was still an ideal with some changes. Duty was now redefined as commitment to an overriding imperial loyalty, an identification with a set of collective imperial values, and the ability to be an effective team member or ‘mate’ (Field). Two innovations of the late Victorian period confirm this trend: the officer cadet corps and the rise of team sports. The latter taught boys to obey and subordinated the individual to team effort (Mangan, “Athleticism”). By the 1890s the public schools were well focused on their imperial rationale. Physical fitness, military skills, and team dynamics were given precedence over academics. As H.H. Almond (headmaster of Loretto) put it, in a
future Indian Mutiny the scholar would be of little use; it was “the man of nerve, high courage, and animal spirits” who would make the difference (qtd. in Mangan, “Games” 28). The public schools, in short, had become adept at producing men for imperial service.

But the question remains: why was the frontier itself so appealing? Why did it seem plausible to many that the empire might be the making of men? If the empire needed men, men also needed the empire as a resource, a refuge, and an object of desire. In popular imagining empire was synonymous with adventure. The colonial world symbolized the freedom which was in theory available to men and in the metropolitan imagination the association of empire and adventure was well established. Martin Green has identified a tradition of imperial adventure in popular fiction dating back to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. From the mid-nineteenth century the volume of work in this mould increased dramatically, first as a moral fable for children, and then by the 1880s as the preferred reading matter for adolescent boys, and for many adults too. Adventure fiction presented its readers with a romanticized picture of the overseas world, in which pluck and guts always won (*Imperialism*). Patrick Brantlinger maintains that in reality opportunities for overseas adventure were waning in the late nineteenth century, as the big problems of geography were solved (37-45). This is true with reference to state or public objectives. But on an individual level the challenges were still many and various. Big-game hunting was, for example, a new preoccupation at this time. It fed on what purported to be reliable travel literature about the penetration of Africa, and on its embellishment in the hunting yarns of Mayne Reid and W.H.G. Kingston (Mackenzie “Empire”, Bratton).

But ‘adventure’ is not an adequate framework for interpreting popular attitudes towards empire. Adventure only made sense when set against the conditions at home from which it represented an escape. The appeal of adventure rested not just on the allure of the exotic and the
dangerous, but on renunciation of the mundane. Overseas adventure was, in Green’s phrase, “a breaking of the social contract,” an appeal against moral reason (“Adventurous” 71). Colonial postings had attracted men on the grounds for generations, but in the nineteenth century the gap between metropolitan respectability and colonial licence grew wider than ever. For any man who fretted against the conventions of domesticity and sexual continence, the colonies offered the promise of release, and the chance to explore alternatives ranging from concubinage to pederasty (Hyam). In gender terms the homosocial culture of the colonies, appealing especially to young men. The empire was a site where comradeship was valued, domesticity disparaged, and sexual escapades overlooked or even approved. These traits were particularly appealing to graduates from public schools, who embraced the opportunity to continue living in a familiar homosocial culture. Empire then represented an intensified version of the bachelor world which most young men inhabited between their late teens and marriage in their late twenties or beyond.

A final point that must be made is the existence of violence in popular literature of the time. Since the 1850s ‘penny dreadfuls’ had featured bloodthirsty yarns for boys and had been much criticized for it. Towards the end of the century, however, these magazines began to be seen in a more positive light, and to influence writers like Rider Haggard and G.A. Henty (Boyd 124). As Richard Phillips observes, “never before, in respectable Victorian literature, was violence so graphic, gratuitous and lighthearted, so calculated to entertain” (69-70). It must be remembered that the empire could not be run on kid gloves and had, in the first place, been acquired by force. With its skeletal or non-existent administration the frontier was a by-word for lawlessness, often met with summary justice. Moreover, fantasies of violent reprisal which were inadmissible in England could be freely indulged in a colonial setting – as in 1857 and again in 1865 during the Jamaican rebellion (Hall). In the atmosphere of crisis which prevailed in the
1880s and 1890s there were renewed calls for a strengthening of masculine resolve. The journalist George Steevens puts it bluntly: “we became an Imperial race by dealing necessary pain to other men, just as we became powerful men by dealing necessary pain to other animals” (“New” 104).

My argument so far has turned on the varied appeal of empire as a marker of manhood, through its association with adventure, sexual licence, personal authority, and even violence. These activities were pursued in the company of other men, or were intended to earn respect in their eyes. But masculine status also depended upon on maintaining a dominant position with the opposite sex, through privileged access to the public sphere, domestic authority, and rational thought. The connection of these aspects of masculinity with empire is less obvious. But indirectly their implications for imperial commitment were important, particularly when relations between the sexes were perceived to be in flux. If men’s power in the domestic situation was called into question, the attraction of empire as an indicator of masculinity was likely to be intensified. That several categories of men were thrown into the defensive in their relations with women during the 1880s and 1890s is highly relevant to understanding the popular appeal of an assertive masculinity.

The Victorian ‘woman question’ and the rise of the New Woman in the late nineteenth-century in particular was disturbing to a traditionally male-dominated patriarchal society because it was not confined to any one area but touched on a number of issues. Certainly employment was the most material issue. By the late nineteenth century large corporations and some Civil Service offices had begun to recruit female typists and telegraphers as a cheaper and more “docile” workforce (Anderson 56). Male clerks opposed this trend not only because they feared redundancy or wage reduction, but because the gender status of their occupations were at stake.
One correspondent in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1886 complained of the specter of a world turned upside down: of girls “unsexing themselves by taking men’s place at the desk,” of men driven to “seek employment in drapers’ and milliners’ shops and restaurants” (Anderson 57).

But the gender turbulence of the *fin de siècle* was not only about employment; it also affected sexuality and marriage. It was these areas which occasioned the greatest amount of feminist polemic – and the greatest degree of anxiety on the part of men. Partly because of the expansion in female employment, unmarried young women had greater freedoms than before. Smoking and cycling – symbols of the New Woman – stood for more fundamental challenges to patriarchal convention: women who lived alone or in all-woman households, and who chose their own male company, and in some cases dispensed with it entirely. The terms of marriage were also changing in favor of women. The Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 gave wives control over the funds they brought into the marriage, while the courts were gradually liberalizing the terms on which wives could secure a marital separation or sole custody of their children (Hammerton).

Of course the response of many men was to engage in an unyielding defence of patriarchal marriage. They were supported by fashionable writers on science who tried to shore up traditional wisdom about sexual differences by adapting the theory of evolution to their ends (Russett). But in the context of empire the most telling male reaction was to vacate the disputed ground altogether by disparaging domesticity. Middle-class culture of the period was molded by the experience of two – and sometimes three – generations of masculine domesticity. What had appealed to the early Victorians as a necessary retreat from the often alienating world of work now tended to appear routine-bound and stifling. Many writers commented on how such a life
made men dull and spiritless. As Robert Louis Stevenson put it, “the air of the fireside withers out all the fine wildings of the husband’s heart” (5).

Among the business and professional classes, the “flight from domesticity” was a clear trend. An increasing proportion of young men postponed marriage until they were on the threshold of middle age; others remained bachelors all their lives. Professions like the army or public school teaching acquired a higher profile. Gentlemen’s clubs and passionate (or ‘Uranian’) male friendship flourished as emotional alternatives to marriage. The personal histories of empire builders include many references to the trammels of domesticity: the most prominent were either single for life (Gordon, Rhodes, Kitchener), or else married well after their empire building days were over (Milner, Baden-Powell). Such an equivocal standing of domesticity was perhaps best symbolized by Kitchener’s famous refusal to accept married officers under his command in the Sudan campaign of 1897-8 – the most coveted military position of the day (Steevens “Kitchener” 50).

In this context the traditional image of the colonies as preeminently a man’s world was greatly reinforced. Of course the reality of empire included the settler wife and the missionaries, but these figures did not figure prominently in popular representations of the empire, which was equated with the complete antithesis of feminine domesticity. This message came across loud and clear in the work of Stevenson and Rider Haggard, which spanned the gap between highbrow and lowbrow, and in the hugely successful novels of G.A. Henty, read primarily by adolescent boys. Their stories were exciting, full of action, bracingly masculine, and staged in a real or invented colonial setting. Their heroes hunted, plundered or conquered, shored up the silent bonds of men’s friendship and were unencumbered by the presence of females. As Allan Quartermain, hero of Rider Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines, infamously boasted of the
narrative of manly courage he was about to relate, “there is not a petticoat in the whole history.” The message of male panic is clear in other works including Kipling’s early novel, *The Light That Failed* (1891) in which death in a desert battle is presented as a wholesome escape from a degenerate London and a rejecting New Woman sweetheart. A generation of boys and young men was brought up on an image of masculinity which was entirely detached from women.

The New Imperialism was not so much an assertion of strength as a symptom of weakness. The excesses of imperial fervor may have looked like the high point of national self confidence, but they were in reality a reaction to an increasingly precarious international and domestic situation. Except between 1899 and 1902, Britain did not consider itself at war, yet the need to ‘defend’ the empire and be vigilant against foreign rivals was repeatedly articulated during the 1880s and 1890s. Psychologically this situation called for a heightened awareness of empire within Britain; materially it demanded an increase in the quantity and quality of manpower available for imperial service. By 1900 the empire had become central to the identity of an expanded service class, and imperial attributes underpinned the prevailing myth of British national character. Changes in employment, marriage, and the lifestyles of young women also demonstrably caused anxiety among men and some of this anxiety was displaced onto the empire. Thus on the one hand men in Britain were being recast to fit them for an imperial role; on the other hand the empire itself had become a widely recognized means of making men.

So far I have discussed the impact of Empire and domesticity via manliness and masculinity both at home and abroad. During the 1880s and 1890s various discourses – occult, literary, scientific, psychological, and technological – converge to inaugurate shifting models of permeability and suggestibility of the individual’s mind and body. The 1890s is also the decade in which these selfsame anxieties erupt in crises around sexuality. Sexual and gender panic

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3 Anglo-Boer War
manifests itself in representative figures such as the New Woman and the dandy, in public scandals such as the Oscar Wilde trials, and in the reification of medicalizing, pathologizing, and criminalizing discourses around homosexuality. Deep and far-reaching anxieties about the stability of the traditional grounds of gender and sexuality pervade fin de siècle culture. In my last chapter I seek to relate these anxieties to real and fantasized connections which are being made at the fin de siècle between the occult world, innovative technologies, and intimate bonds between people.

Science itself received much impetus during the Victorian period as a rational body of knowledge. Since the great scientific expeditions of the Enlightenment – the voyages to the South Pacific of Cook and Banks, for instance – the work of science has been punctuated by encounters with exotic peoples and cultures. Despite the development of laboratory science in the nineteenth century, the scientific expeditions to foreign places were no less prominent a site for production of scientific knowledge. The colonial encounter, particularly during this period of Britain’s expansion of its foreign interests, underpinned the development in the latter part of the century of the new sciences of ethnology and anthropology. But as a structure of dominance and control, it also leant a framework to all kinds of scientific endeavor. Many influential texts of the Victorian period also reflected a cultural absorption in scientific issues. An early example is Charles Dickens’ Bleak House. Written in 1853, the book’s opening paragraph reminds readers of geological discoveries that pushed back the age of the earth to a startlingly distant time in musing that the sodden London streets appeared “as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holburn Hill” (49). Charles Kingsley’s 1863 Water

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4 For the purposes of my discussion here I have used the word ‘occult’ interchangeably with ‘spiritualism,’ ‘mediumship,’ and even ‘magic.’
5 Darwin’s voyages on HMS Beagle being a prominent example in the development of evolutionary science.
Babies, a fantasy spawned directly from evolutionary ideas, revealed the profound influence of Darwin’s works. The psychology of madness also captured the popular imagination, manifested in sensation novels of the 1860s, and in an obvious confluence of science and gender, rapt attention to female madness is apparent in the characterization of Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*. In our own time, critical commentary has probed the workings of Victorian science in literature, often specifically within a Darwinian framework. George Levine, for instance, investigates Dickens’ oeuvre in particular. Gillian Beer’s detailed study of the Darwinian shaping of the narratives of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy further attests to the vital role scientific precepts played in Victorian fiction.

These scientific discourses also helped to establish the emotionality vs. rationality paradigm. The traditional supposition that men were the more rational and intellectual sex, whereas women were the more emotional and intuitive sex, had long prevailed. In the nineteenth century, this cultural verity simply gained additional force through scientific pronouncements that purported to bring irrefutable evidence of a biologically determined and physiologically immutable difference. In an 1881 essay titled *Knowledge*, Allan McGrigor asserts that “man is a being of the intellect; woman of instinct and emotion” (78). Therefore he goes on to say “man reasons and reflects; woman perceives and feels” (78). Prominent psychologist George Romanes echoed Allan’s opinions a few years later, maintaining that a woman’s emotions “are almost always less under control of the will” making her “more apt to break away…from the restraint of reason” (657). Even the final decade of the century saw such opinions being voiced. Psychologist Harry Campbell advised in 1891 not only that women were “less intellectual” but that the “emotional and intellectual portions” of females and males exist “somewhat in inverse ratio” (84).
As a corollary another belief that existed was that males excelled in complex abstractions, judgement, and originality, whereas females evidenced greater sensory ability, perception, and rapid thought. It is not surprising then that women flourished beneath the overarching rubric of spiritualism and were considered central to spiritualist practice. Alex Owens notes that women learnt the art of mediumship quickly and effectively, perhaps more so than men. By the 1870s, years during which the most successful séances gained a certain glamorous status, most of the popular mediums were women (5). Spiritualism validated the female authoritative voice and permitted women an active professional and spiritual role largely denied them elsewhere. But this was not an uncomplicated moment in some mythical march of feminist progress. Spiritualist validation and exercise of female spiritual power was a clouded issue, riddled with social and sexual tensions. It drew upon a Victorian codification of gender inscription and a problematic inheritance. The acceptance of women as powerful mediums was built on a nineteenth century scientific understanding of femininity. As mentioned earlier the constituent categories of ‘the feminine’ and ‘the masculine’ can invariably be traced through the dominant discourses of the day. In order to understand the debate between science and spiritualism, and the gendered power struggle associated with this debate I have used Bram Stoker’s little known novel The Mystery of the Sea. Usually known for his most popular work, Dracula, Stoker himself was deeply interested in both the Gothic and the science of his day. Written in 1902 Mystery is able to make use both discourses of the day – scientific and spiritual – to reveal some of the unsettling issues which surface at the time.

My dissertation makes use of four novels in order to discuss the relationship between troubling shifts in masculinity, imperialism, and knowledge at the fin de siècle. These novels are Rider Haggard’s She (1889-87), Jules Verne’s Around the World in Eighty Days (1873),
Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1900-01), and Bram Stoker’s *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902). Although many novels of the late nineteenth century reflect the ways in which stable masculinity was undergoing changes, I have used these particular novels to explain and elaborate my thesis for a number of reasons. Rider Haggard was popularly known as a writer both of mystery stories and of galloping adventure stories for boys. Both *She* and *King Solomon’s Mines* were extremely popular at the time, and continue to be so. In the chapters that follow, I have not considered masculinity in isolation. My attempt has been to show that one of the factors leading to the destabilization of traditional forms of masculinity was the rise of the New Woman figure. On the one hand Gagool, the demonized woman in *King Solomon’s Mines* represents the strong intersection between the racialized body and female power rather than the New Woman figure. She demonstrates in Robert Young’s words, “the ways in which the links between sex and race were developed in the nineteenth century through fantasies…in which blackness evokes…a dangerous…, but threatening fertility” (15). On the other hand, the character of Ayesha or *She-who-must-be-obeyed* in Haggard’s *She*, effectively brings the relationship between the unsettling figure of the New Woman and masculinity to light. I therefore, focus on *She*.

My choice of Jules Verne’s much-loved book *Around the World in Eighty Days* can be viewed as problematic. The author is of course French and the inclusion of a French work in its translated version, in a discussion of late nineteenth-century British writing on empire might initially seem puzzling. Certainly, there is no dearth of English novels to choose from as representative of the adventure genre: G. A. Henty’s early Ashanti stories and even Kipling’s *Plain Tales from the Hills* are examples. Still, if science and adventure were both an integral part of the ‘movement outward’ discourse, tourism was also an essential theme in this particular narrative. As such, Verne’s *Around the World*, succeeds in combining the tourist with the
austere man of science who is able to ‘understand’ foreign cultures and customs. Johannes Fabian in his book *Time and the Other* notes how anthropology constructs “its other in terms of topoi implying distance, difference, and opposition…its intent being to construct ordered Space and Time – a cosmos – for Western society to inhabit” (111-112). In its use of the ‘gentleman’ traveling along with his butler to far away countries, appropriating ‘other’ forms of knowledge (in this case the custom of *Sati*) and returning after buttressing his male self with chivalrous acts, the novel succeeds in bringing together different discourses surrounding masculinity and empire and is thus significant to my argument.

Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* is perhaps an obvious and inevitable choice. Recent critical response to *Kim* emerging from the boom in postcolonial studies, has engaged with the imperial context of the novel, finding in Kipling fertile, it at times surprising, ground for analysis of the dynamics of imperialism. Interestingly enough, despite the degree to which Kipling’s work in general, and *Kim* in particular seem almost the archetype of the hand-in-glove cohesion of cultural production and imperial rule, the novel also eludes easy characterization. At home in England, the shifts in masculinity were expressed in many different ways. Apart from the “flight from domesticity” which John Tosh elaborates on, there were other figures such as the dandy, the aesthete, and even the wandering *flâneur*. Given the flamboyant dissidence of these figures, and the homosocial environment they lived in, they invited much public fear. Kipling’s *Kim* effectively combines this fear through his pre-adolescent hero’s adventures and the use of Buddhism with a celibate monk playing a central role in the novel.

My fourth and final choice is a little-known novel by the extremely popular Victorian writer, Bram Stoker. *The Mystery of the Sea* published in 1902 features a plot packed with adventure, romance, and the supernatural. It is this final element that encouraged me to choose
this book. My earlier chapters draw a connection between the growth of empire and the growth of a body of rational, scientific knowledge driven by male imperial enterprise. At the close of the century, however, one hears rumbles of unease from within this so-called male frontier of science. These rumbles originate from a rise in feminist power through the popularity of the occult. Combined with the already rising fear of the New Woman, the occult became closely intertwined with theories of degeneration. The challenge mesmerism and other forms of the occult posed to masculine superiority is clearly present in the subtext of the novel through the presence of the seer, Gormala. Certainly there are other texts which express these fears, but Stoker’s novel is particularly interesting given his own interest in science and the emphasis he places on technology in this and his celebrated earlier work, Dracula.

The changes traditional patriarchal masculinity underwent in the Victorian fin de siècle had and continues to have long-reaching effects. In my conclusion I refer to the inter-war years and the ‘creation’ of the most famous male figure of the time, the military hero, T.E. Lawrence. As the century progressed, we continue to witness the popularity of the adventure narrative, a rise in fears regarding the independence of women, and the tendency to view the empire as training grounds for a manly man. In addition, my conclusion posits that, a rising media (printed and visual) is also responsible for the creation of the adventuring hero who represents a complex masculinity which continues to be troubled and unsure of itself.
Triangular Erotics: The Politics of Masculinity, Imperialism and Big-Game Hunting

Animal imagery and anthropomorphic parallels abound in Rider Haggard’s fantastic African adventure, *She*. Africa itself is presented to the reader as a landscape peopled with “beastly” natives and wild animals galore. Even the novel’s overpowering female presence, that of *She-who-must-be-obeyed*, is eventually reduced to a simian status. Undoubtedly such a textual focus fitted comfortably into a more extensive Victorian dream of empire and lends the novel cultural, as well as fictive, power. The animal images helped to produce durable models of African identity and Otherness which were compatible with current ideas of geography, race, and human evolution. As such the Africa of *She* may be seen not just as complimentary to, but as an integral component of the cultural apparatus of British imperialism and its mechanisms of propaganda, subordination and control at the *fin de siècle*. At the same time, the subtext of the novel is fraught with many inconsistencies and what Joseph Bristow calls “fatalistic overtones” (153). In the vast hunting grounds of Africa, Leo and Holly, live a life which is the stuff of contemporary boys’ fiction. They overcome a tempestuous squall, narrowly escape a “hot-potted” fate at the hands of native cannibals and eventually defeat the novel’s central evil power before returning home intact. And yet these actions seem to arise from trepidations of masculinity at the turn of the century. In fact as Michael Roper and John Tosh recognize regarding contemporary ideas of masculinity, the masculinity that underpins this novel, is able to define itself only “in relation to ‘the other’” (1). That ‘other’ takes various forms including nature, the body of the African native and last but by no means the least, that of Ayesha.

Descriptions of the natural world and physical landscape of Africa appear repeatedly in this novel. As John Mackenzie demonstrates in his exhaustive work, *The Empire of Nature*, this
is not at all surprising. The earlier Romantics placed the natural world on a pedestal and killing animals was largely frowned upon. Reading Keith Thomas’s work on man’s relationship to the natural world, Mackenzie points out that “meat-eating” became suspect and animal welfare became a matter of prime concern. It was in this atmosphere that the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1824 (Mackenzie 26). But the movement from these more peaceful ideas to those of hunting and violence was not as abrupt as it might appear. Critiquing Thomas, Mackenzie reminds us that the Gothic horror, which was “one of the true manifestations of Romanticism,” had a thread of violence, cruelty, and “raw nature” woven into its fabric (27).

As the nineteenth century progressed, both these cultural manifestations (nature as an idolized entity and nature as a wild, cruel body needing to be tamed) combined with the growing scientific discourses of the natural world and the need to establish dominance over unexplored, hostile, and colonial terrain. Furthermore, natural history was already a well-established science. In the years following the Romantic era, the natural historian’s efforts to order and classify the world of nature became an integral part of the imperial project. Hunting in the vast corners of the empire “became a ritualized…display of white dominance” (7) and a source of “scholarly examination” (36). As mentioned earlier, these spectacular and often violent exploits found their way into a number of popular juvenile fictional accounts of the day. Holly, the protagonist of Haggard’s She who relates the story, constantly offers a description of the landscape (including extensive details of the flora and fauna) and the inhabitants of his imagined/real Africa. Even the gothic, supernatural thread is expressed in scientific terms. Later on in the story Ayesha, the seemingly ageless woman, professes to be a scientist and not a mystic. In her various encounters with Holly, Ayesha proves to be more than aware of a bewildering mix of ideas garnered from a range of far-reaching subjects, including chemistry, astronomy, and philosophy. In one instance,
when she reveals scenes in a font of water, Holly reacts with shock. Ayesha confidently reassures him: “Nay, nay; oh Holly”, it is no magic; that is a fiction of ignorance. There is no such thing as magic…” (She 151). Her scientific materialism supersedes Holly’s fear of the supernatural. Later, when the superstitious Job is horrified by seeing images of his long-scattered family in the water’s surface, Holly also comes to dismiss it as a mere “instance of glorified and perfected telepathy” (196).

Power and control is also established over these distant lands through the hunting of wild animals. As John Mackenzie writes, trapping and hunting were integral to the spirit of exploration and adventure which infused the nineteenth century (“Empire” 45-7). Many contemporary narratives, including those of writers like Henty, Reid, and Ballantyne, revolved around manly virtues like physical courage, endurance, the ability to surpass hostile terrains, a capacity for violence, and an impulse to explore new lands. Stalwart writers like Baden Powell upheld the image of the hunting pioneer as a prototype of ideal masculinity. The Victorians placed a high premium on environmental knowledge and the understanding of natural signs, on a largely masculine heroic encounter with often adverse elements, on physical fitness and cool courage in the face of highly dangerous animals. The hunter’s grappling with the wild not only called for endurance and stamina, but also for the qualities of ‘character’ admired by the Victorians, stoicism, application, command of self and followers, and the capacity to encounter high risk and triumph. Hunting is indeed an important concept in Haggard’s She. In fact, one could read the novel as a series of hunting adventures strung together; working together to form what might loosely be described as a sub-plot. These offer opportunities for description of the natural environment, the habits of wild animals, and a series of tests and trials of knowledge,

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6 The occult was a popular science in Haggard’s day. Carolyn Burdett writes that occultists often claimed scientific credibility by claiming that the soul can only be properly understood in its “material dimension via a transformed notion of physics” (227).
skill, and courage through which the protagonists, Holly in particular, become imperial masculine figures. Although there are many such examples in the book it would be worthwhile to look closely at some of the impossibly skilled feats Holly and Leo perform.

After surviving the squall, Holly and Leo, along with Job and Muhammad begin their long trek to the mountain head. On their way Holly describes their various encounters with crocodiles and waterfowls among other exotic creatures. Shortly afterwards the little group espy a “beautiful water-buck” (She 65). Here the reader is offered three different sets of descriptions. Firstly Holly informs us that the buck had “great horns curving forward” (65). Next he writes that Leo (and presumably himself) was “thirsting for the blood of big game” (65). And finally he presents a sweeping description of the majesty of the scene. In a curiously aesthetic tone, Holly describes the “desolate” and “fascinating” picture the buck cuts etched against a fiery setting sun. The buck’s solitude is repeatedly emphasized by a long description of the empty, primitive landscape stretching away as far as the eye could see. Holly ends this rather Romantic description of the buck (before describing the kill) and the surrounding landscape by noting that they, the three “modern Englishmen,” appear to jar with that “measureless desolation” (66).

While these descriptions do bespeak a traveler’s fascination with the exotic, they also reveal a masculine imperative to establish control over “wild” Africa. A rather complex relationship can be traced between earlier more peaceful Romantic preoccupations with nature and the rather violent desire to disrupt that nature which Holly’s description clearly gravitates towards. Nowhere is this more clearly revealed than in the paintings of Sir Edwin Landseer. A mid-Victorian artist, Landseer’s paintings reflect the Romantic predilection with landscape. However, the haunting quality of his landscapes contain something more – a passion for the chase and the search for anatomical accuracy. John Mackenzie notes that the stag and lion were
his great passions. The stag in particular appears to have fascinated him. Many of his paintings (including the famous “The monarch of the glen” and “The wounded stag swimming”) reflect this fascination with the beauty and the glory behind the hunting prowess which humbles such a romantic ideal. As Mackenzie notes, Landseer himself could not term the killing of a stag as anything other than an “assassination” (“Empire” 33). When Holly offers the reader a description of the magnificent animal before the final act, he sets the stage for a grand kill. As he continues, he offers a violent description of the landscape in contrast to the sentimentalized picture of the buck. On one side lies a “death breeding swamp” and the whole scene seems to be bathed in the dying light of the setting sun, described as a “lurid stain of blood” (She 66). Like a natural historian, Holly gives us minute details of the landscape. But it is left to him, the white “modern” imperial hunter to ponder on the primitive sublimity of that landscape, and at the same time to understand that the role of humbling that primitivity is assigned to the Englishman. In other words it is the hunter who seems to be capable of moving between these two worlds while surveying and, more importantly, interpreting both.

Shortly after this the party is visited by a pair of lions. These “hungry beasts” seem to be close enough for Holly to “catch the glare of their ferocious eyes” (68). While the female is killed almost instantly by Leo, the male meets a rather gory fate. As the lion emerges from the water bank a crocodile latches on to the beast’s hind leg and the two fight a “duel to the death” (69). The descriptions offered in this part of the narrative step beyond the forte of the natural scientist and appear to tip over into a graphic enjoyment of the violent face of Mother Nature. However, natural history is not entirely lost; the crocodile’s “soft throat,” the lion’s “great hind claws” and other physical characteristics do not reduce the horror revealed in this extremely violent battle (69). John Mackenzie points out that Landseer’s paintings frequently revealed an
obsession with “the majesty and the cruel potential” of the national and imperial icon, the lion (“Empire” 33). In paintings like “The cat’s paw” and “Last run of the season,” he heightened existing violence and even added it where none existed. Most importantly his art does not appear to decry human participation in such a cruel world. Rather human involvement is glorified as an imperative command over nature (33). Like the Roman gladiators of yesteryear, Holly and his compatriots follow the “extraordinary scene” and clamor for a “clear view” (She 69). Again civilization is brought face to face with the wilds and it is the hunter who can, like a modern-day journalist, gaze upon and provide the one and only true picture of such a battle.

The male protagonists in the novel clearly establish their control over the natural landscape by both appropriating knowledge and hunting down the wild “essence,” thus taming and humbling the vast African landscape. Nowhere is the masculine imperial presence more clearly present as when he is stalking and chasing the beasts of Africa. But the novel offers another interesting twist to this same sub-plot. One cannot forget that the two chief male protagonists of the novel, Leo and Holly, have come to Africa to hunt for the truth behind a legend surrounding the presence of a powerful and beautiful woman ruling the “dark continent.” As such, connections, some explicit some implicit, can be made with this larger “hunt” framing the novel, and sexuality. The act of hunting itself was occasionally recognized as a pseudo-sexual act. Hunting diaries of the time are full of descriptions of the physical agonies of the Hunt, of the exaltation no civilized world can supply, the tensions induced by great risk, and the ecstasy of release when the hunter prevails and stands over his kill (“Empire” 42). As such the whole journey, the quest which lies at the heart of the plot can be seen as a hunt which culminates in the complete physical submission of She-who-must-be-obeyed. Moreover trophies were themselves sexual emblems, representing the war of males for sexual conquest. One cannot
but help notice that after the death of Ayesha, both Leo and Holly draw a “shining lock” of her hair as a “sole memento” (She 298). With this “trophy” in hand the duo returns home to England.

This straightforward “trail of glory” narrative is however marred by certain inconsistencies. To begin with Holly himself, the novel’s chief narrator, is endowed with anthropomorphic characteristics. As Daniel Karlin reminds us, we cannot forget that Holly is constantly equated with a monkey, a particularly Darwinian connotation (She xxiii). With his bow legs, deep chest, long arms, and hairy features, “he reminded me forcibly of a gorilla” says the story’s fictional ‘Editor’ (2). Later on in the novel, Billali confers the name “the baboon” on him. The only saving grace being that this “baboon” had been gifted with a superior intellect. On the other hand, Leo, Holly’s ward and the novel’s other male “hunter” is as handsome as Adonis who was “brilliant and keen-witted, but not a scholar” (She 21). Curiously enough the first twenty five years of the young Leo’s life takes place in a world where women make no appearance. In what can be interpreted as misogynistic, Holly removes the young lad’s only female caretaker and replaces her with the staid Job. In fact he makes it clear that he would have “no woman to lord it over me about the child, and steal his affections from me” (19). In the face of such an extreme antipathy towards womankind it seems illogical to assume that Holly himself would want to go to the far corners of the earth in order to hunt for an unknown woman. The question which then arises is who hunts whom? Is this a hunt for Ayesha or does the plot narrate a hunt for Leo by the two hunters, Holly and Ayesha? If so why would Leo be the target of both a man and a woman’s desires? Perhaps the answers to these questions lie in a further response to the internal crises of domestic Britain, particularly sexual ones, to be located in this book.
Victorian England, like Ancient Greece or the Medieval West, was a male-dominated society. For the upper middle classes, life revolved around all-male institutions: the public school, the university, the armed forces, the church, parliament, the club and the city. Marriage tended to be deferred for economic and social reasons. Male love came to seem as finer, nobler and more fulfilling, just as it had in Ancient Greece. In a world in which clergymen, schoolmasters, dons and army officers were regularly bachelors, it is not surprising that many of them became enthusiastic proponents of male comradeship and male love as a central emotional factor in their existence. As the century wore on such manly love became an important strand of Victorian culture through public school education. Further, as Jeffrey Richards notes, these emotional friendships carried on into University life too. For example at Oxford, the Tractarians were notable for intense friendships, some of them probably sublimated homosexuality, and others part of the extravagant emotionalism of the age (Richards 104). It is against this background that we can see the importance of the relationship Leo and Holly share in the world of Cambridge. At the same time as the fin de siècle cult of male bonding, there was a mounting concern about sexual relations between men. The Labouchere amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment of 1885 outlawed sexual relations between men (acts of ‘gross indecency’), even in private. This notorious amendment – later known as the ‘blackmailer’s charter’ – formed part of legislation raising the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen years. Viewed within the context of the punitive Criminal Law Amendment Act, Labouchere’s clause was a defining feature of new perceptions about sexual desire and sexual morality (Dellamora 200-202).

There is, of course, no explicitly homosexual content in Haggard’s She. But its homoerotic elements are legion, and they are designed to rise up as a superior amatory force against the love of woman. Wayne Koestenbaum provocatively argues that, along with
Stevenson’s work, “Haggard’s romances make room for pederasty by excluding marriage” (153). Haggard takes great pains to banish women from the early part of “She.” Yet try as he might to keep women away from the boy in his charge, Holly leads his young ward on an expedition towards a final confrontation with Her: the ultimate in feminine evil. In this manner, the novel reads like an initiation into manhood where sexual temptation stands as the greatest sign of weakness in men.

On the one hand we have an ugly Holly who clearly shares a somewhat intense idealized relationship with Leo. He informs us that young Leo is the “handsomest fellow I have ever seen” and resembles a “Greek God” (She 109). Believing that the “boy was old enough to do without female assistance,” Holly arranges for “a suitable male attendant” to look after Leo (19). The first sentence Leo utters to his guardian seals the homoerotic bond set against Her sexually consuming energies: “I like you…you is ugly, but you is good” (She 20). As Holly goes on to say, “Few sons have been loved as I love Leo” (20). Love between these men by far surpasses that which Ayesha shows for Kallikrates.

Such a love is also highly idealized. The marvelously handsome and agile Leo is anything but a strong masculine figure. At key moments in the plot, when the traveling group comes close to death Leo is almost always absent. His physical presence is eliminated by putting him into an exhausted “profound sleep” (36) or worse still, twitching in the “death-throes” of a malarial attack (198). Oddly enough a “man of his unusually vigorous constitution” does not even share the narrative (56). In fact, as Karlin comments in his introduction to the Oxford edition of “She,” not only is Leo excluded from an active narration, Holly seems to control the narrative. So although Leo is physically a virtual embodiment of a Greek God, his attributes seem to fall far short of them. Eve Sedgwick reading K. J. Dover’s study, “Greek
Homosexuality,” describes pederastic relationships in classical Greece. Young boys were often pursued by older men and these relationships were frequently described using romantic terminology. Such a love had a “strongly educational function” for the younger partner, while at the same time assigning him a relatively inferior and more “oppressive” role (Sedgwick 4). Using this framework one can conclude that Holly is Leo’s older “lover-mentor.” And it is in this light that we can now turn to the entrance of Ayesha on the scene.

Sedgwick explains that a pattern of “homosocial desire” cannot be understood “outside of its relation to women” (1). Using Rene Girard’s concept of the “erotic triangle,” Sedgwick explains that in Girardian terms, “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense…as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved” (21). In fact, she goes on to say, the Girardian triangle claims a stronger relationship between the rivals than that between the rivals and the beloved. Her argument with this theory is that the participants in the triangle have no subjectivity and as such are rendered ahistorical. The power “asymmetries’ contained in such triangles in turn contain other imbalances which are ignored in the Girardian analysis. These “hidden obliquities” reveal more than the body of sexuality, they open texts out to resistances displayed within that triangle. In the light of a triangle, Holly professes to be in love with Ayesha, who in turn loves Leo and who in his turn loves Ayesha. In simple Girardian terms, two men are in love with one woman and are therefore rivals with a strong bond which precedes the entrance of the beloved. But as Sedgwick so importantly finds, there are power imbalances here that need to be looked at closely.

As discussed earlier, Holly’s relationship with Leo is tinged with a flavor of classical Greek homoeroticism. The ugly Holly constantly draws attention to Leo’s magnificent figure and form. Although his mind is neither “brilliant” nor “sharp” his golden locks are extolled
repeatedly to distraction. If Holly is the “Beast” with the “mark of Cain” stamped on him, Leo is the Beauty admired by one and all (She 21). At the outset, Holly does not appear to want to launch himself on an expedition in search of a “white sorceress living in the heart of an African swamp” (She 46). But Leo is stubbornly determined to go and Holly decides to go along while admitting that “I was far too much attached to him for that” (46). And so the two male protagonists depart on their hunt for the beautiful “remote ancestress” (45).

After a number of impossibly fantastic adventures, the duo finds Ayesha or “She-who-must-be-obeyed.” Leo is unconscious and on the brink of death. As Holly waits for Ayesha to reveal herself, he wonders what lies behind the heavy curtains that screen her perfumed harem-like recess: “some naked savage queen, a languishing Oriental beauty, or a nineteenth-century young lady, drinking afternoon tea?” (141). These three stereotypes suggest the range of Holly’s misogynistic imagination: women are either lustful savages, pliable exotic creatures, or guardians of social manners. Ayesha turns out to be something else. A “great chemist” who has a cave fitted out as a laboratory, a mind reader who can project upon a pool of water what is “actually in the mind of some one present”, she is an intellectual given to lengthy philosophical and political disquisitions (151). In fact Ayesha can be seen as more than an erotic fantasy. In unveiling herself, Ayesha suggests, albeit from a male narrator’s perspective, that she is all that Holly and Leo are and more. The natural scientist and historian in Holly finds its match in this ageless woman.

Many critics, including Nina Auerbach have interpreted the fear Holly frequently expresses for Ayesha to be the cultural fear of the New Woman. In “Woman and the Demon,” Auerbach describes Her as a “galvanized and transfigured Victoria” for whom “love does not tranquilize womanhood into domestic confinement” (Auerbach 37). The Kingdom of Kor itself
appears to be economically non-productive. Its inhabitants do not seem to perform any labor for
Ayesha beyond prostrating themselves at her feet. The Amahaggers live in an uncolonized time
warp, in a landscape composed at its outer edges of almost endless swamp and marked by
volcanic plain grazed by cattle and goats – a “great morass” whose worst feature is a dreadful
smell of rotting vegetation. In Holly’s words the Amahagger cultivation was “primitive in the
extreme” (She 89). In fact this is an empire of the female body, self-sufficient unto itself. As
John Mackenzie notes, hunting and imperialism went hand in hand because both projects shared
a belief: that wild lands, capable of being tamed and rendered economically productive must be
allowed to do so albeit at the cost of violent confrontations. Billali and his entourage of natives
sullenly acknowledge Holly’s supreme skills when he shoots an eland with ease and mastery.
Billali even asks the white man, if he could teach him to “slay in this fashion” (She 128). During
the last quarter of the nineteenth century a number of organizations were marshaled to protect,
encourage, or celebrate the killing of wildlife for sport. One such organization, the Shikar Club
attacked the utilitarian killing of wildlife by natives because their hunting lacked the “training
and testing” so essential to a display of middle-class masculinity. More than this, the native
inability to dominate the environment and the dangerous animals within it was construed as
evidence of feebleness and lack of male control. Flawed African manhood was contrasted with
the European version which had mastered the physical environment and its inherent dangers –
and achievement based on scientific rationality (Mangan and Mackenzie 194). Ayesha’s empire
is peopled by these “feeble” natives and is a barren body laboring to produce neither economic
advantages nor strong sons and daughters for the empire. The only animal they seem to be
eating (and therefore killing) is the goat. The endless narcissistic power to terrorize is all that
Ayesha holds and must thus be destroyed. Mangan and Mckenzie emphasize the fact that for
organizations like the Shikar Club, the ‘virility’ of imperial big-game hunting was increasingly contrasted with the emasculated sport of fox-hunting. In the view of radical conservatives the sport of fox-hunting suffered from the debilitating presence of women (Mangan and Mckenzie 185). As early as the 1850s women were asserting a striking equality in the foxhunting field. In equestrian skills they yielded nothing to the men, especially after they changed from the side to the cross-saddle (Mackenzie, “Empire” 21). Thus the ineffectual subsistence hunting of the Amahaggers is equated to a feminized and thus ineffective activity.

As a huntress, Ayesha has been stalking Kallikrates for generations gone by. If Leo is pictured on classic Greek lines Ayesha can also be pictured as a deity of the Hunt, Artemis or Diana. In Woman the Hunter, Mary Zeiss Stance implicates both Diana and Artemis with gender-bending. The “lost Diana or Artemis” represents a power – female power – that can be perceived as highly problematic. The Goddess of the Hunt is a virgin goddess who is ‘one-in-herself,’” not the consort or property of any man (or god). Stance interprets such resolute virginity to symbolize the rejection of socially constructed norms of conventional femininity (138-39). But this very virginity renders her vulnerable since to be virgin is to inhabit a space upon which the male figure must write in order to confer the status of womanhood. Stance further points out that both Artemis and Diana are simultaneously moon goddesses, at once “enticing, romantic, and remote” (139). Artemis is, above all, the Goddess of the Outdoor World or the world beyond the city. She is thus all Woman and therefore the one to be hunted down. On the other hand she embodies a primitive huntress quality, trapping and killing those in her path. It is this femme fatale quality that is identified by Susan M. Gilbert and Sandra Gubar as the source of the astonishing hold of “She” over the late Victorian imagination. In their extensive study these writers point out that the image of the femme fatale graced the walls of
many art galleries and filled out the lines of a host of woman-hating poems (Gilbert and Gubar 19). This is an “anti-Victoria” image, one which would, according to Holly, “assume absolute rule over British dominions.” (She 178) Certainly, Victoria herself was exerting more representational power over her empire than earlier in the century, as the Jubilee celebrations of 1887 and 1897 indicate (Bristow 140). Moreover, emerging suffragist and native demands for independence created, as Gilbert and Gubar note, a link between the forms of resistance voiced by both groups (Gilbert and Gubar 36). Female authority and female vulnerability, in the shape of Ayesha as the Goddess of Hunting, then shapes the contours of this particular version of empire.

The final reduction of Ayesha to a monkey puts the dreadful power of woman’s physical attraction in its proper place. After picking their “trophy” Holly and Leo escape from “the very womb of the Earth, wherein she doth conceive the Life that ye see brought forth in men and beast” (She 197). They have originally entered her home through “the mouth of a dark tunnel” (129). Once they escape Holly and Leo return to their all-male Oxford digs where Holly completes his manuscript “with Leo leaning over my shoulder in my old room in my college” (316). Saved from emasculating female power – Leo recalls that after Ayesha stretches out her hand to him “he felt as though he had suddenly received a violent blow in the chest, and, what is more, utterly cowed, as if all the manhood had been taken out of him” (302). While woman might be the source of life, the evolution of society and politics is a narrative of civilization and patriarchy. Thus, Ayesha is the negative image of Queen Victoria, is the uncivilized sovereign: her entry into England would be at a “terrible sacrifice of life”; for her “proud, ambitious spirit would be certain to break loose and avenge itself” (255). Thus only the two men return across
the “horrible gulf” (316) of the abyss which separates the interiors of Africa from the civilization of the outside world. The body of the ancient queen remains behind in the cave.

Drawing an association between the male hunter and a “complimentary feminine” presence, Ruth Weidner writes that such a presence is common in classical and modern metaphor and mythology. She also makes note of the relationship the hunter forms with the hunted, a relationship that is “consummated with the kill” (Weidner 339). If Ayesha is seen as the hunted creature, Holly certainly does form a relationship with her. Despite his misogynistic impulses, the man is trapped in the “web of her fatal fascinations” (She 178). But the role of the masculine hunter does not end there. Clearly through the act of hunting, the male affirms his own masculine identity. But as suitor or husband he brings back game and trophies as “proof and emblem of masculine prowess” (Weidner 339). If leaving home for the wilds establishes masculinity, the circle is complete when the successful hunter returns to the “domestic sphere with a bag of game” (340). It is at the moment of return that the archetypal gender duality between the male prowess of the hunters and the domestic sphere of the waiting females is most accentuated. Thus it is that myth and history emphasize the concept of winning women by killing game (Weidner 340-41). Ayesha then becomes a symbolic mediator in the starting, or the restarting, of the relationship between Holly and Leo. Once Ayesha “fell down and died” (She 294) Holly and Leo attempt their long and perilous return from the mountain. In the face of “desperate” (304) danger, the two return to an easy “clubbing” camaraderie, with Leo slipping back into the familiar “old fellow” mode. Holly himself admits that he “did a thing” he had not “done since Leo was a little boy” (304). Stating that this was a man he “could not have loved

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7 According to John Mackenzie, late nineteenth century hunters were always anxious to temper bloodlusts with humor. Part of the hunting code seems to have been a love of “japes, jokes and ruses” (Mackenzie).
more,” Holly puts his arm around Leo and kisses him on the forehead. The hunter has finally come home to where he belongs.

The act and sport of hunting was at the same time a mark of the fitness of the dominant race, an emblem of imperial rule, and an allegory of human, particularly sexual, affairs. In Rider Haggard’s *She* these markers are interwoven into a complex fabric to reveal both radically conservative versions of manhood as well as homosocial versions. The “continuum” (Sedgwick) between the two versions is almost always absent, at best oddly out of place when it appears. Both versions of manhood appear to be resistant to the existing social structure and this is nowhere more clearly revealed than through the body of the animal and feminine “other.”
The abolition of *suttee*\(^8\) in 1829 was the first major legislation of the East India Company’s administration in India. That it – like the series of laws that were subsequently enacted on behalf of women – served as the moral pretext for intervention and the major justification for colonial rule itself, does not have to be argued further. What is of concern here is how the colonial imagination seized upon and ordered the self-representation of such an administrative procedure: not merely, as Gayatri Spivak has succinctly formulated it, as a case of “white men…saving brown women from brown men,” (297) but as an actual narrative scenario of a single white man saving a brown woman from a mob of brown men. In other words, it is the trope of chivalry that provides the contours of the scenario. Textual chivalry frequently provided grounds for intervention in the custom of *suttee* as both a test and a legitimization of British rule. The principal text I invoke here, Jules Verne’s adventure tale *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873), reproduces the ideological contours of the trope of chivalry in its representation of British India. Jules Verne’s popular story is the account of an eccentric English clubman, Phineas Fogg; and in the portion of the narrative that covers his journey across India, from Bombay on the west coast to Calcutta on the east, Fogg manages to rescue a young princess from *suttee* in the jungles of central India. In conformity with what had by then developed into a stereotype, the widow is young, beautiful and a princess; the dead husband is old, ugly and a king; the other villains are a bloodthirsty mob and a cabal of scheming Brahmins; and the rescue itself is an act of chivalry, combining daring adventure with the humanitarian gesture. But more importantly, such a trope of chivalry revolving around a secularized romantic hero and defending

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8 Let me start with a brief note on terminology. I am using the Anglo-Indian term *suttee* to refer to the ceremony of immolation, and the term *sati* to denote the woman who thus sacrifices herself or is coerced to do so.
womanhood in peril drives a contemporary debate on *suttee*. Romantic rescue and chivalric motifs also functioned to homogenize specific burnings and locate them in a European representational tradition; portraits such as the *suttee* scene in Verne’s fictional narrative filtered out the actuality of discursive situations and individual interlocutors, and allowed for uniform European identity.

At the outset, I must specify that this paper does not forget that Verne’s tour de force is a *French* novel and as such the novel can be read through the eyes of a Frenchman ridiculing British sang froid. Verne also enjoys making Phileas Fogg a national caricature: habitué of the Reform Club, scholar of Bradshawe’s Rail and Steamship Guide, master of a French servant and carpetbags of British pounds, Fogg has the features of a Victorian imperialist, even to the joke that he is not a bank robber he so closely resembles. Verne’s manipulation of convention – and verisimilitude – underscores key features of the *suttee* romance. He fantastically adds to the iconography of coercion by making his heroine not a Hindu at all but a Parsi, unwillingly married to a disgusting old Hindu rajah. 9 Verne’s mild sentimental plot, with its suppression of both sexuality and cultural conflict, mimics the censorship of nineteenth-century British society. Certainly these and other such caricature-like elements allow the novel to be used as a stage on which traditional Anglo-French rivalry is performed in myriad ways. And yet it must be remembered that the French had, along with the British, vied for control over the Indian subcontinent. At the height of Anglo-French colonial rivalry, French dramatic representations of *suttee* were common as were certain stereotypical representations of the custom.10 While it may be true that the French did not have the long-standing colonial bond with India that the British

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9 Parsis, a persecuted people who migrated from modern day Iran circa 1000 AD, enjoyed most-favored status among Britain’s Indian subjects, being seen as ambitious, light skinned, and quick to master English customs and language.

10 The most famous among these was Antoine-Marin Lemierre’s *La Veuve Du Malabar* (1770).
did, Verne’s sati vignette at the heart of his novel reveals the same colonial, imperialistic predilections as do other British texts.

Up until the dramatic removal of Aouda from the funeral pyre, the *suttee* scene in Verne’s novel is much like an eyewitness account of the gruesome event. Lata Mani in her extensive study on *suttee* and the colonial gaze contends that contemporary eyewitness accounts\(^\text{11}\) were almost exclusively the product of European male observers. After traveling through a remote region of central India populated by a “fanatical population inured in the most repugnant practices of Hinduism” (Verne 57), Fogg and his companions enter a “dense forest” (58). Here they stop uneasily upon hearing an approaching “confused murmur” (58). Soon the murmur turns into a “discordant” din and Fogg and his companions witness a procession through the tree branches. What follows is a detailed account organized around what Lata Mani describes as “four cardinal moments” structuring most European eyewitness accounts: that of the narrator receiving information that a burning is about to occur and hastening to the spot; the narrator’s monitoring of the widow and relatives, as well as his (or other Europeans’) attempts at dissuasion; the narrator’s observation of the practices that preceded the burning; the setting alight of the pyre and the attempted destruction of the widow. The degree of emphasis based on each of these moments varies but the bulk of the narrative is given over to a scrutiny of the widow, her demeanor, and her actions (Mani 161). A detailed analysis of these “cardinal moments” in the novel reveals an imperial gaze that “victimizes” and “saves” the woman.

Although Fogg and his companions are watching the native preparations for a “religious ceremony” from a distance under cover of “thick foliage” (59), the narrative offers a clear *knowledgeable* account of what seems to be clearly an indigenous ritual. Most of the

\(\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\) Mani notes that as opposed to the native press which contained obituaries, the English language press published “sati” as news. The *Asiatic Journal* for example published accounts of sati in its section on “Asiatic Intelligence” (Mani 160).
information comes from Sir Francis Cromarty, a “tall, blond” Englishman, who “deserved the term ‘native’ since he had lived in India from his earliest years” (Verne 48) and who had played a “distinguished role” in the Indian Mutiny (48). As the gruesome event unfolds, Cromarty offers the reader an official knowledge about suttee. But even before Cromarty provides his knowledge, the narrator informs the reader that this was a “religious ceremony” (59). In her extensive reading of suttee as a “contentious tradition,” Lata Mani argues that suttee itself as a tradition was reconstituted under colonial rule. Neither a part of religion or scripture, suttee, she contends was a voluntary tradition. Under colonial rule that tradition is reconstituted, thus allowing “women and scripture to become interlocking grounds for rearticulation” (Mani 154).

These “religious” parameters are drawn and redrawn in terms alternating between the vivid and the ghastly. The priests dressed in “embroidered robes,” surrounding by a chanting multitude is followed by a car carrying a “hideous statue” (Verne 59). Although the statue is that of a female goddess, the narrator uses a language devoid of gender to describe “it” (59). Suttee’s presumed status as a Hindu religious practice is entrenched further when Cromarty “recognizes” the statue as Kali, the Hindu goddess of love and death (59). The priests and the other members of the procession have no individual status, but the statue is described down to the last detail. Its four arms, “deep red” body, “wild” eyes, “tousled” hair and, “lolling” tongue are offered as a feast to curious eyes. The cannibalistic nature of the goddess is also emphasized by the “garland of death’s heads” and the “girdle of severed hands” (59). The apparent Hindu thirst for blood does not end there. Self-flagellation is added to the list when the fakirs dancing around the statue are observed to be covered in incisions “through which their blood was oozing drop by drop” (60). Even before the sacrificial widow has entered the scene, the mayhem and gore surrounding the Hindu religion is already emblematic of a slaughter house.
The *suttee* plot that follows moves along an old pattern or romance: the widow is the touching female victim of enchantment and the British rescuer has the heart (in this case Fogg), if not always the power, of a chivalric hero. Like other cultural myths, the *suttee* romance took hold because it organized a variety of values and fantasies. The Evangelicals exploited *suttee* to support the crusade for Christian conversion; the Utilitarians used it to demonstrate the sinister effect of any barbarous superstition on the rational ordering of society. James Mill, in his influential *History of British India*, gathers missionary corroboration for “the immoral influence of the Hindu religion and….the deep depravity which it is calculated to produce” (Mill 95). At the same time, widow burning had a sensational and sentimental power over European imagination. As James Mill remarks: “none…has more excited the scornful attention of the Europeans, than the burning of wives…To this cruel sacrifice the highest virtues are ascribed” (102). Still, British sentiment cohered around a reassuring distance from Hinduism. In *Middlemarch*, for example, Casaubon has a copious imagination for the wifely sacrifice that should continue after his death. But as Mrs. Cadwallader remarks about the rules for mourning and remarriage, “It is lawful to marry again, I suppose; else we might as well be Hindoos instead of Christians” (Eliot 499).

George Eliot, like other Victorian novelists, expresses considerable ambivalence about female self-sacrifice. *Middlemarch* comes close to being a *suttee* plot in English terms: the enchanted girl, the moribund husband demanding worship, the valorous rescuer from afar. In the climactic chapter before Casaubon’s death, the narrator extends Dorothea’s virtue of self-valorous sacrifice beyond the boundary of Victorian common sense, soliciting admiration for what the community would reject as weakness or folly. At the same time, she intensifies Dorothea’s desire for self-preservation beyond Victorian standards of feminine virtue. It is really
the intensity of Dorothea’s inner conflict that Eliot asks us to admire, but she backs away from resolving the conflict in exclusively psychological terms. By striking Casaubon dead Eliot rescues her heroine from the consequences of extreme spirituality. The impulse to self-sacrifice ennobles female character but only “up to a point,” as Mr. Brooke would say. Another suggestive example can be found in Charles Dickens’ *Dombey and Son*. Susan Nipper, Florence Dombey’s personal maid, is seen upbraiding Mr Dombey for his ill-treatment of Florence; and she describes her own courage and determination in confronting the formidable man as an “Indian widow” who would “burn myself alive” (Dickens 704) although she insists she is not an Indian widow. To sum up: in the colonial encounter the Hindu ‘good wife’ is constructed as patriarchy’s feminine ideal: she is offered simultaneously as a model and as a signifier of absolute cultural otherness, both exemplary and inimitable. 12

With regard to *suttee*, the British more simply resolved the problem by judging female self-sacrifice by denying the Hindu (in Verne’s case Parsi) victim any semblance of Dorothea’s spiritual stature. Even as the Indian widow’s death with her husband is elevated to fit into the more recognizable paradigm of religious martyrdom, it was also, less admiringly, trivialized as a form of feudal – or ‘native’ – subservience, an act of “unthinking, if not actually deluded, loyalty” (Rajan 45). In the language of feminist analysis, Hindu women did not acquire “complex subject status” within *suttee* discourse. As Lata Mani reminds us the “heroic” death remains merely conventional, a matter of costume and ceremony in which the individual woman

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12 The positive view of sati – with its flip underside – had popular currency, as the mid-nineteenth century jingle advertising ‘Maspero’ cigarettes suggests:

Calm is the early morning
Solace in time of woes,
Peace in the hush of twilight,
Balm ere my eyelids close.
This will my Masperos bring me,
Asking naught in return,
With only a Suttee’s passion
To do their duty and burn. (qtd. in Rajan 45).
loses spiritual distinction, sometimes quite literally because she is only one in a crowd of five, ten, or even a hundred other wives (Mani 171). More commonly, British accounts deny the spiritual authenticity of sati by emphasizing physical coercion of the woman. In Verne’s *Around the World*, after the somewhat bloody tirade on the native religious customs, the onlookers watch helplessly in horror as the priests dressed in the “sumptuousness of Oriental costumes,” drag a woman “barely able to stand” (Verne 60). Her extreme helplessness is repeatedly noticed by the observers. She does not “seem to be offering any resistance” and the guide proffers the information that she has been “drugged with opium and hashish fumes” (61). Watching the young widow being taken forcibly to her fate jolts the usually impassive Phineas Fogg to ask Cromarty for more information on this “barbaric custom” (61). Surprisingly Cromarty replies that this is a “voluntary” sacrifice. And herein lies what Mani calls a “fundamental ambivalence” toward *suttee*.

Mani sees an ambivalence in the valorization of apparently voluntary burnings – an ambivalence which shaped eyewitness accounts of widow immolation in two important ways. Reading eyewitness accounts from the Calcutta Missionary Register and the Circular Letters of the Baptist Society, Mani states that in most of these accounts, there is first a hastening to the scene of the pyre on hearing the news of *suttee*. Upon arriving there something in excess of the hope of dissuading the widow is often expressed in the desire to witness widow burning (Mani 175). As Fogg and his friends watch the “brilliantly illuminated victim” moments before her impending doom, Sir Francis Cromarty’s “heart leapt, and he gripped Phileas Fogg’s hand with a convulsive movement” (Verne 67). Mani’s accounts also reveal a second and more disturbing ambivalence. There is an admiration of women taking part in sati and such admiration is frequently expressed in relation to an unusual beauty. The heroine of *Around the World*, Aouda,

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13 Here I am referring to deaths by *suttee* which took place regardless of British presence and law.
is revealed even in (or perhaps because of) her helpless stupor to be a strikingly beautiful young
woman. The dress and adornment she is wearing seem reminiscent of an Oriental *houri* rather
than a widow in widow’s garb. Not only is she laden with jewelry, the sensual curves of her
young body are barely covered with “thin muslin” (60). Lata Mani notes a similar description in
the Calcutta Journal where an anonymous observer notes that “the great personal beauty of the
victim gave unusual interest to this Suttee, and rendered the tragic spectacle very imposing”
(Mani 173). Such “tender” descriptions of the personal appearance and beauty of widows
suggests the voyeuristic pleasure of a specifically male gaze, contemplating what it constructs as
the wife devoted to her husband in death as in life. In *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula notes
that the “nature of pleasure is to scrutinize its object detail by detail, to take possession of it in
both a total and fragmented fashion. It is an intoxication, a loss of oneself in the other through
sight” (49). This phallocentric reverie, by mystifying coercion as the devotion and free will
demanded by the religion, enacts a discursive violence that is every bit as cruel and indefensible
as the practice that is its referent. The pathos expressed by Fogg, Cromarty, and Passepartout is
thus not for the widow’s predicament but for the imminent loss of one so attractive. The
repeated emphasis on her beauty, her youth, and her “white as a European” complexion (Verne
60) raise the question of whether it is her beauty or her coercion that provokes the “cold Briton”
Fogg’s sympathy (66).

The final moments of impending immolation also illuminate European conceptions of
indigenous culture and agency. As daybreak approached the quiet darkness was broken by a
“resurrection” (67). People came to life, musical instruments and chants rang out while the
intoxicated young victim was brought to the funeral pyre. The account is rendered here (and in
the entire *suttee* episode) in an ethnographic manner. Events follow one another without
interruption. Persons involved seem to be enacting a transhistorical tradition, in synchronic suspension, rather than actively engaging in a social practice. The activities seem “unmotivated” in that their logic is not apparent from the description. The seamless narrative even naturalizes violence, neither hesitating nor stuttering at the placing of the widow on the pyre. Such a description of actions represented as if unfolding in a predetermined sequence contribute to the effect of reifying, naturalizing, and de-historicizing social practices, locating them “in a time order different from that of the speaking subject” (Clifford 39). Even though this is a textual account witnessed by observers (in this case Fogg and his companions), suttee emerges as a timeless, unmotivated ritual. Things seem to succeed one another steadily and without interruption. No one appears to be in control. The priests are clearly dragging around the young woman but they are merely “executioners” (Verne 67). It almost seems as if Aouda the widow, the unnamed multitude, and the priests are actualizing roles accorded to them in a prior script. The old Rajah’s motionless body centers zombie-like movements following a scripted pattern interrupted only by Passepartout’s heroism. Such representations of suttee mystify the social and material roots of the practice, “insistently rewriting it as an event, intelligent…within a presumed religious master-narrative” (Mani 183). It would appear from the suttee episode observed by Verne’s intrepid eyewitnesses that nobody stood to gain from the custom; that it was merely a disinterested religious performance whose repetition is to be understood as unreflective obedience to scripture.

Although, Sir Francis Cromarty points out in his encyclopediac explanation that suttee is a voluntary act, there is no sense in finding Aouda’s actions in any way “voluntary.” The observer’s critical perspective repeatedly draws her out to be a hapless victim who appeared to be feebly attempting to express some resistance even in her “stupor of intoxication” (Verne 67).
Moreover the horror and distaste they express for the custom, places the act of *suttee* in the realm of “barbarism” in the name of religion. But neither the “barbarous” nor the “religious” version advances an explanation for the burning other than relating it in a general way to religion or a lack of civilization. One codes *suttee* as a “religious ceremony” and the other represents it within secular discourse. What remains unclear is precisely what is at stake in this *suttee*, why is Aouda being sacrificed to religion or being “barbarously” treated. No more is offered to the reader than that her dead husband’s relatives have “an interest in her death” (63). Such considerations are, in a sense, foreclosed by the way in which the narrative abstracts the events described from the landscape in which they take place. Fogg and his companions have positioned themselves in that privileged location which Mary Louise Pratt terms “monarch of all I survey” (201). And, in this fictional instance, what this unwavering gaze surveys is the unindividualized native’s pre-scripted actions and the widow’s movements. This focus bleaches out the surrounding landscape, details of which disappear when the ceremonies are being described. The multitude present (“men, women, and children”) are not visually present (one assumes their presence from the insistent beating of drums in the background). This indeterminate mass erupts only when the dead Rajah “stands erect like a ghost” only to subside into “the grip of a sudden terror” and “lay face down” (Verne 68).

After the horrible ritual is prevented and the ‘heart of darkness’ is penetrated by the band of adventurers, they emerge into the light, the railways, the British-administered provinces, and safety, with the rescued Indian princess in tow. The forces of barbarianism have been left behind and the light of modernity is visible at the end of the tunnel. But the break with the past that we associate with ‘modernity’ is never a clean one. As a law, the banning of *suttee* was largely a
successful one. The ban received support from indigenous nationalists and reformers. But a sentimental affiliation to tradition complicated the ideological stance towards issues relating to women. Thus, while suttee could be condemned on both humanitarian and religious grounds, the prescribed alternative for widows, ascetic celibacy, was not so easily opposed. The remarriage of widows remained for a long time a practically non-existent practice. Late nineteenth century European texts tend, as Rajeswari Sunder Rajan notes, to contain a colonial reaction to this emerging modern complexity. Thus, although the main structural aspects and ideologemes of the chivalric trope are retained, the discrediting of the woman’s conjugal love is a possible motive for the daring rescue itself. Aouda is described as a young “thoroughly British educated woman,” married “against her will to the old Bundelkhandi Rajah” (Verne 63). Even before Aouda makes a subjective, individual entrance into the narrative, her marriage to the Rajah has been dissolved both on grounds of physical incompatibility and coercion. Although “white as a European,” she is a ‘brown woman who must be saved from her brown man.’ The very suggestion of the rescue action as “individual enterprise” rather than “official enterprise” signals a colonial reaction to indigenous modernist dilemmas (Rajan 44).

So far, this essay has considered the suttee episode in Verne’s book as a form of colonial discourse, which, through the trope of chivalry allows a brown woman to be “witnessed,” “identified” as victim, and finally “saved” from the clutches of a barbaric custom defined by an indigenous religious framework. What appears to be a mind-boggling feat, is performed under the very shocked eyes of the natives and the young woman is whisked away and into safety. As part of a fantastic tale, packed with some amazing moments, this in itself should not pose a problem. However what is problematic is the unexpected way in which the suttee episode concludes. Fogg’s earlier “generous resolve” to spend some much-needed time in order to save

14 Raja Ramomohun Roy and Rabindranath Tagore were two leading anti-suttee supporters.
Aouda proves to be of no avail (Verne 63). It is left to Passepartout to “snatch the young woman from the jaws of death” in a grand coup de théâtre (68). Clearly the traditional tale of chivalry does not conclude as it ought to. Once the “bold abduction” was successful, Passepartout chuckles at the thought that for a “few moments,” he had been the husband of the beautiful woman” (69). Not only do we have a sati who does not harbor pure conjugal love for her dearly departed spouse, we have a sati who has already been married twice even before the possibility of Fogg becoming her lover. Although this could certainly be a reference to the indigenous reformers’ attitude towards remarriage, it does not answer for the displacement of virility on the man-servant.

Lata Mani mentions that it was not at all uncommon for suttee eyewitness accounts to posit the dead husband as old, emaciated, and faded. In other words, the native patriarchal object of eternal conjugal love is reduced to a barren, infertile state (Mani 164). In the light of this information it is interesting to take a closer look at Phineas Fogg, the intrepid hero who drops his “cold Briton” façade and expresses an intent to save the “victim” at the risk of his own life and liberty. Our hero is embodied with all the self-assuredness and extravagance of the British Empire. He lives on Saville Row and is a member of the Reform Club. The ice at the Reform Club was “brought over at huge expense from the Great Lakes” to keep his drinks at a “satisfactorily cool temperature” (Verne 9). He was polite, taciturn, and punctual – a perfect gentleman whose lifestyle would have pleased Samuel Smiles. He awoke, dressed, breakfasted, and continued his routine throughout the day according to a strict timetable – habits that served him well in the course of his race around the world. His elegant home in Saville Row was outfitted with the most precise new electric clocks and had electric bells and speaking tubes to facilitate instantaneous communication between master and servant.
John Tosh has written that as the Victorian age progressed, manliness and gentelmanliness began to be sharply distinguished. Gentelmanliness was (or continued to be) associated with birth. In fact “gentle birth gave one a clear edge in status over other brands of gentlemen” (Tosh 86). Manliness, on the other hand, was “socially inclusive” (Tosh 86). Birth, breeding and education were secondary, compared with the moral qualities which marked the truly manly character. Manliness had to be “earned, by mastering the circumstances of life and thus securing the respect of one’s peers” (86). The thrust on individual effort rather than tradition caused the term itself to remain a slippery one. Yet, in the popular imagination manliness was characterized chiefly by “manly vigor” which included energy, virility, strength and the moral qualities which enabled men to attain their physical potential – decisiveness, courage, and endurance (87). These qualities of physique and character – what Carlyle called “toughness of muscle” and “toughness of heart” – were in turn yoked to some notion of social responsibility – whether loyalty to one’s peers or chivalry towards women (Carlyle 142). In the light of this information, it is difficult to place Phineas Fogg as either a gentleman or as a paragon of manliness.

Verne’s narrative offers us little or no information about Fogg’s antecedents. Certainly he lives where gentlemen live and normally inhabits the spaces gentlemen would inhabit at the time. The novel opens with a grand virtuoso presentation of one Phineas Fogg, and yet we know practically nothing about him. And the little that we do know offers a partial picture which leaves many questions unanswered. He is an Englishman but may or may not have been a Londoner by birth; he is wealthy but the source of that wealth remains a mystery. The man has never been spotted at the Stock Exchange, at the Chancellor, or at any industry. Beyond his club membership, his elite address, and perhaps his ability to employ a man-servant, Fogg does not
appear to carry any other gentlemanly credentials. On the other hand it is also difficult to view Fogg as a salt-of-the-earth specimen of earnest, hardy manhood. The *suttee* incident posits Aouda’s husband as an old dead man, who in life had to resort to coercion in order to marry a young nubile woman. However, as a replacement for the old Rajah in Aouda’s life, Fogg does not appear to be a very effective one. Certainly he is a living replacement, but one who is a blank automaton with, initially at least, no aim in life. More a machine than a man, his life harks back to Newtonian mechanics which tells us that he will remain stationary for ever or else on a fixed linear or circular course. Like Frankenstein’s monster, Fogg can be made to iterate the algorithmic process of taking the quickest path between each two successive points. Therefore, although pointless, the journey offers the only temporal cohesion to this otherwise rudderless personality.

The zombie-like proportions which are granted Fogg are reminiscent of his more famous fictional successor, Dracula. Like Dracula, he is well-versed with his Bradshaw, is very comfortable with planning traveling routes down to the last detail, and his mechanical personality does recall an “un-dead” state. This is an interesting comparison in more ways than one. The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed a burgeoning of the industrial revolution and the growth and proliferation of science as opposed to religion. More importantly this was the heyday of the British Empire and as John Tosh reminds us “the empire was a man’s business” (193). Empire was a man’s business in two senses: its acquisition and control depended “disproportionately on the energy and ruthlessness of men”; and its place in the popular imagination was “mediated through literary and visual images” which consistently emphasized positive male attributes (Tosh 193). Such an era, defined by the interest of colonial expansion and consolidation, was constantly faced with the need to prevail over the imperial
subject as well as the imperial competitor. Amidst such pressures, the language of degeneration brought home pessimisms of the virility of the British male. As many critics have pointed out, Bram Stoker’s tale can be read as an expression of such anxieties. But despite the degeneracy Dracula points toward, he is still a vibrant creature in comparison to the lifeless Fogg. With characteristic aplomb, this centuries-old creature enters London and ensnares at least two beautiful women into his lustful snare. On the other hand, Fogg’s extreme inertia cannot even demarcate him clearly from his lover’s dead spouse. Even when confronted with sensuality, Fogg is unable to react alone. Unable to perform without his man-servant, Fogg is forced to allow Passepartout to perform in his place. Sexual symbolism in a surprisingly blatant form appears and reappears in the course of the narrative. Even before the entrance of Aouda, Passepartout is witness to a vision of barely clothed (“pink gauze”) Indian dancing girls, accompanied to the sound of “viols” (46). William Butcher, in his introduction to the Oxford edition of Verne’s novel, points out to the interesting fact that a ‘viol’ in French can also point toward a ‘rape’ as in ‘violate’ (Verne xxix). The suttee event which soon follows is literally a visual spectacle with a half-naked reclining woman as center-piece witnessed by four men. On the night before the impending suttee, Aouda is placed in a brick temple under heavy guard. At night the four men, under cover of the cloudy darkness, set to “make a hole in the wall.” The operation itself is described in language hard to misinterpret. Using “open pocket knives” they surmise that the wall would not be difficult to “penetrate” (Verne 65). The sudden arrival of guards on the scene force the team to beat a hasty retreat and it was “difficult to describe the disappointment” of the men (66). Sir Francis Cromarty appears to be reduced to a nervous

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15 The enormous popularity of *Around the World* inspired Edouard Cadol to write a hugely successful play based on the novel. William Butcher in his introduction to the Oxford Edition of *Around the World* notes that the play compares Fogg to “a spring-driven watch needing to be wound up every morning” (Verne xvi). Butcher makes special note of the obvious sexual emphasis behind the inertia.
frenzy as he is “biting his nails” and Passepartout was “beside himself, making it difficult for the
guide to hold him back” (66). Only Fogg waits impassively through all this sexual frenzy. As
mentioned earlier, the final coup de grace is performed by Passepartout when he disguises
himself as the old Rajah and “rises” from the dead to save his beautiful wife. As the old Rajah
turns young and “erect” in the form of Fogg’s valet, the young woman is saved from a barren
life. As a version of British masculinity, Fogg clearly fails to make the mark. Even after
traveling in the empire, he is unable to return endowed with the requisite qualities needed to
define him as an ideal man. The old formula of chivalry structured around the trope of a “damsel
in distress” only reduces him to an even more pathetic version of masculinity waiting and
watching for his man-servant to do the needful.16 The rescued and semi-conscious Aouda is
undressed and dressed by Passepartout while providing the reader with a sensual description of
the young lady’s physical charms. Using imagery from Eastern mythology, the narrator
(presumably Passepartout) describes the young lady’s “slim and supple waist,” the elegant arch
of her rounded loins” and, “the richness of her breast, where blossoming youth displays its most
perfect treasures” (Verne 71). The narrator even goes on to daringly remark that “under the silky
folds of her tunic, she seems to have been sculpted…by the divine hand…” (Verne 71). The
novel ends, predictably perhaps, with the happy union of Fogg and his “twice-married” lover.
Even more predictably, the narrative ends with an image of Passepartout “hammering” at his
master’s bridal door at the crack of dawn (202).

Fictional representations of *suttee*, as Verne’s text clearly demonstrates, work toward
subsuming *suttee* and the *sati* herself into a European worldview. Losing her individuality and
any possible spiritual connectivity, the widow is lost in a “victimizing” discourse wherein she is
violated over and over again. Aouda, herself remains nothing more than a delicate figurine upon

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16 Butcher informs us that in the dramatic version Passepartout even does the wooing for Fogg (Verne 231).
whom patriarchal texts are written and rewritten. If the old Rajah resorts to coercion and makes unfair use of socially defined conjugal union, the imperial British male beset with social expectations of conventional manhood, displaces his own desires on his man-servant. In his turn, the man-servant, a symbol of the old British class order, respectfully performs his master’s duties on the woman’s body. The stage is set for an uncomplicated homogenization of suttee into a universal, unchanging ritual, in which the native widow, a dark (or “white” in the case of Aouda), tragic, nubile, and nameless victim, invites the colonialist intervention of European expansionism – in Gayatri Spivak’s phrase, “White men saving brown women from brown men” (297).
Manhood, Celibacy, and Empire: Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*

In his pathbreaking work *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, James Eli Adams examines Victorian masculine identity from Thomas Carlyle through Oscar Wilde, identifying the age’s ideal of manhood as the power of self-discipline. He contends that for Victorian writers and artists facing the need to refashion the notion of manliness and of artistic manhood in a world transformed by industrialization, the figure of the monk, energized by contemporary fears about the revival of celibate religious communities, provided a rich, malleable, and available metaphorics through which to register male anxieties. This discourse of monasticism, then, became the code through which the early Victorians debated what might be called, following Carlyle, the “Condition of Manliness question.” Without a psychological vocabulary, debate about practices of the male self was conducted through the historicist formulation and reformulation, the valuing and revaluing of the monk as celibate male. Concerns about relationships among men in the present were posed as historical accounts of these all-male religious communities of the past. In this chapter I will attempt to trace the development of this celibate version of manhood and the inconsistencies it inevitably carries within it through the later Victorian era. I propose that the influence of Buddhism added another subtext to the already existing bewildering ambivalence.

The idea of celibacy and celibate masculinity is not as incompatible with domestic ideology as it might first appear. Discussing Thomas Hughes *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, Claudia Nelson notes that “Hughes’s contemporaries recommended self-discipline as a means of controlling, if not necessarily eradicating, desire” (Nelson 528). Further, some biologists and doctors agreed that “the majority of women are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind” (qtd. in *The Sexuality Debates* 61). And to further stabilize this idea, the leader of the
new Victorian discipline of sexology, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, claimed in 1886 that “woman has less sexual need than man” (48). These ideas were carried a step further when Smith H. Platt suggested in his 1875 work *Queenly Womanhood* that the good wife’s silent revulsion at her marital task will cause the good husband, unable to “behold such sacrifice for him without feeling the noblest instincts of his manhood stirred to their profound depths” (qtd. in Gay 156). Many contemporary writers felt that by adopting feminine patterns of sexual behavior, the husband improves his own lot. The medical doctor George Napheys and the Edinburgh-educated American James Foster Scott explain that celibate men attain genius through preserving their energies for their work, and even withing marriage “the proper subjugation of the sexual impulses, and the conservation of the complex seminal fluid, with its wonderfully invigorating influence, develop all that is best and noblest in men” (Napheys 62).17

Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* is arguably the most complex of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English novels of empire, and one that reminds us forcefully of the “how-to” aspects of such story-telling. In particular, these novels show how best to be a man, or rather, how to be a man well suited to further imperial interests. Male protagonists are defined by their appropriate or inappropriate management of colonial affairs, a process that requires that they restrain both natives and their own proclivities toward activities that might embarrass or threaten the legitimacy of empire. Whether these natives are cooperative, resentful, or resistant, whether they are portrayed empathetically or with suspicion, they serve – with rare exceptions – to demonstrate the ineluctable necessity of colonial rule and to frame the impressive flowering of a white imperial masculinity adequate to that mission. Central to such creative definitions of

17 Such ideas were popular on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, drawing primarily on British sources, the American J.H. Kellogg argues in 1877 that “restraint, self-control, and moderation in the exercise of the sexual instinct, are in the highest degree beneficial to man…and are necessary for his highest development” (137).
masculinity are of course questions of sexuality, of the relations between men and women, as indeed those between men and men.

The novel of colonial adventure sharpens each of these oppositions till they are inescapable: not simply the structuring divide between imperialist and colonized, but that between good and not-so-good colonizer, between colonizers who are “man” enough to know their business and those who fail to the test of duty, as they do of masculinity. The point is simply that in the colonial novel, including one as textured and unusual as *Kim*, the exigencies of empire, and of its governance, dictate the way masculinity is modeled. Thus, as Kim grows into his adult identity, the challenges he faces, as well as the guidance and help that all benefit him, all derive their forms from Kipling’s search for an exemplar of duty and of masculinity who would legitimate British imperialism in India by making the question itself redundant: Kim represents the search for a British protagonist Indian enough to cause the most visible divide of colonial power to – almost – disappear. But that “almost” is crucial, for at no time in his immersion into India must Kim forget that he is British (Irish in his genes and English in his training and affiliation). Thus, as Kim grows into his imperial responsibilities (and this novel is a *bildungsroman*) much that defines him is guided by this “almost”: British/almost Indian//Indian/but still British; child/almost man//man/but still child. As this is the case, the figuration of sexualities, and of gender relations, in *Kim* are all factors of Kipling’s contouring of Kim’s masculinities.

*Kim*, is of course, a novel of male derring-do. To put it thus, however, is already to note a crucial difference between Kim and the typical protagonist of such tales of adventure: Kim is younger, and his tale has him growing between early and late adolescence (from perhaps thirteen to seventeen years of age). This means that even as Kim travels effortlessly in adult ways, and
proves himself adept at activities that challenge men much older than himself, he remains a boy, one whose “rebirth” at the end of the novel (an ideal to which I will return) reminds us that he has not quite crossed the threshold into adulthood. This is not a story of arrested development though, far from it – Kim’s adventures are largely adult in their form and significance, and the roles he is called upon to play, and the competencies he must develop, are ordinarily those of men, particularly those intrepid sorts who would master the Great Game. That Kim remains, in the course of the novel, pre-adult, a colt still rather than the fully grown polo pony Mahbub Ali thinks he will one day become (98) is important to the world Kipling forges for a number of reasons which I will address. But most important of all is the need to preserve in Kim a radical innocence that will outlast his immersion into the cynical and manipulative world of adults, which is the world of imperialist intrigue. The ideological fantasy at the heart of Kim (Kim as white Sahib who is at once a brown native) can be preserved only if Kim is a part of the world of colonial authority and apart from it, white and British in his affiliations but not quite white and certainly not British in his everyday ways.

If Kim represents the fantasy of fusion, it is worth specifying that his character does not so much combine opposed cultural or ethical ideals as represent a particular form of the imperialist will to power and control. Kim is the fantasy of absolute, effortless surveillance, because he solves the problem of the secret agent and the ethnographer – in him the colonial agent who surveys native ethnographies and cultures is at home in and indistinguishable from them. He travels light, shows no trace of his Irish ancestry or of his connections to Colonel Creighton’s establishment, and is able to insinuate himself into any community of Indians he comes across. Yet there is never any danger that he will, as it were, “turn Turk,” and betray either his racial or his national allegiances. In the novel, this is a real fear, for British India offers
evidence of Britishers going native, or at least leaving behind a trail of children who are like – but, in the terms of the novel, very different from – Kim. The novel in fact opens by differentiating Kim from the children of miscegenation: “Kim was white,” we are told, and though the “half-caste woman” who looks after tells interfering missionaries that Kim’s mother was her sister in order that he be left alone, Kim is in fact the product of two white parents (3). Kim’s views of this adoptive mother or caretaker are made clear later, while he is being interrogated by Father Victor and Reverend Bennett. When he mentions her and is asked if she is his mother, his reaction is a sharp “No!” accompanied “with a gesture of disgust” (76).

This theme, as is only to be expected in an English novel set in a colony, is of some consequence in the novel. The embarrassment of miscegenation, of sexual liaisons outside those permitted by the self-image of the imperial ruler, takes the form of racial and class prejudice: when Mahbub Ali, jealous of Teshoo Lama’s paternal hold over Kim, suggests that it will be embarrassing for Kim if the Lama visits him at his school in the presence of other young Sahibs, Kim cuts him off by saying that only those whose “eyes are blued and…nails blackened with low-caste blood” need fear rebuke. Kim makes his point about their “pedigree,” “clearly and without heat, chewing a piece of sugarcane the while” (122). The sugarcane anchors his fulminations – chewing on it, squatting alongside Mahbub, he is of India in a way that those other “young Sahibs” will never be.

Thus, Kim represents a very precise model of imperial belonging – one intimate with India but in no danger of being contaminated by its racial difference. In that he is of a type with a character who appears briefly, but with all the force of a normative ideal, the English District Superintendent of Police who rides up to the old Rani from Kulu while she, Kim, and the Lama

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18 Despite these circumstances, Kim succeeds in ‘passing’ as white since, the narrative tells us Kim is “burned black as any native,” “spoke the vernacular by preference,” and “consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar” (Kim 3).
are on the Grand Trunk Road together. He addresses her with a flattering familiarity, and in an
idiom so local that she demands of him: “Who suckled thee?” “A pahareen – a hillwoman of
Dalhousie,” he answers, and thus confirms the Sahiba’s intuitive assumption. The force of her
intuition is however, more than personal: “These be the sort to oversee justice,” she says to Kim
(67). Not surprisingly, Kim discovers three years later that this District Superintendent of Police,
Strickland Sahib, is “the greatest” of those who play the Great Game (175). This parable of
surrogate maternity is central to the play of gender, sexuality, masculinity and the making of the
ideal imperial administrator in Kim: as there are no doubts about Kim’s bloodlines, he is free to
suckle, as it were, on Indian breasts. There is much colonial learning to be imbibed there, and
much ideal sustenance.

India as sustaining maternal body is contrasted, as we have seen, with the sexual
possibilities that it makes available to the English child-who-would-be-administrator. As we
might expect in a bildungsroman like Kim, growing up requires some articulation of sexuality,
some experience of sexual attraction, if not actually of sex. The narrative does render Kim
heterosexual, though it does not actually allow him to engage in sex – here his youth and the
urgent demands of the Great Game preserve him – but before we get to that discussion, it is
important to note the somewhat unexpected presence of homosexual desire in the novel. I say
unexpected because necessary to the confident representation of the consistently male and often
homosocial worlds of most novels of high colonial adventure is the repression of homoerotic
sentiment. Repression of course entails coding in another key, and such tales of male adventure
rarely succeed in making visible what other texts strive to keep secret. Oddly, the secret of
homosexuality is part of the entire mystique surrounding Lurgan Sahib, the man who teaches
Kim the tradecraft of a spy, and whose hypnotic urging and suggestions Kim must resist in order to demonstrate his ability to be a player in the Great Game.

In order to draw the connection between the homosocial and the concept of celibacy, I would like to once again consider the figure of the ‘dandy’ which I mentioned at the outset of this chapter. Among other things the late nineteenth century was a period in which, as Thomas Richards puts it succinctly, the “phantasmagoria of commodity spectacle” played a big role in the public imagination (Richards 53) After the Great Exhibition of 1851 brought thousands of objects together in the Crystal Palace, there was a boom in advertising transforming the passive material object into what Anne McClintock describes as “an agent of historical change” (220). Not surprisingly, such radical transformations in the significance of the material effected changes in human identity and interaction. Walter Benjamin, for example, locates the emergence of consumer culture in the model of the dandy or urban flâneur, emerging at roughly this juncture (416-55). Tellingly, the Great Exhibition and the explosion of consumer culture both spread the dandy’s aesthetic and domesticated it, turning “meticulous flâneur of he Parisian arcades into a manageable consumer of manufactured objects” (Richards 5).

One of the key parallels between Kim and the aesthetes and dandyism of the metropole lies in the centrality of clothing and disguise to Kim’s identity in the game he so loves to play. Kim’s freedom of movement also places him alongside the wandering flâneur of the metropole. Like Wilde’s Dorian Grey who explores the slums and Stevenson’s Hyde who once freed from the constraints of being a gentleman roams the streets of London in the form of Dr. Jekyll, Kim moves through the “rabbit warrens” of the bazaars.19 These various strands linking Kim to the

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19 The emergence of the figure of the literary detective (as in Sherlock Holmes) in the late nineteenth century might also be located in similar dynamics, both as so many of these figures are aesthetes themselves and because their deductive methods involve such close attention to material clues, people’s personal possessions, and the body as legible object (Barosky 438-52).
model of masculinity offered by the dandy entwine with particular force around the episode of
Lurgan Sahib, the “healer of pearls.” The most striking episode in Kim’s interaction with
Lurgan, however, is the one in which Lurgan conjures the image of wholeness out of a broken
vase on the floor. The vase itself, is growing into the fully formed whole as Kim is held
mesmerized by Lurgan’s hand pressing lightly on his (Kim’s) body. Even if not a scene of actual
fellation, the text suggests the sex act between men. This adds to the suggestion that Lurgan and
Kim be read as participating in the dissident masculinities of the aesthetes that were, especially
in the wake of the Wilde trial in 1895, widely associated with homosexuality. Perhaps more
interesting and important, it implies that a certain kind of aesthetic perception is inherently
imbued with, or enabled by, homoeroticism, this adding to the anxiety provoked by the attempt
to engage in these forms of aesthetic perception. These dynamics are further complicated when
considered in the light of the opposition between “British” and “Oriental” epistemologies in the
text. The indolence, sensuality, eroticism, opulence, and inscrutability associated with the dandy
and the flanéur are also the tropes long associated with Orientalism. Thus, the “decadence” of
the Orient reappears in the Decadents of the fin de siècle metropolis, reaffirming the distance
between both and the “sahib” ideal of British imperial manhood.

Kim is sent to Lurgan Sahib’s curiosity shop in Simla by Colonel Creighton, and almost
instantly becomes embroiled in a drama of sexual jealousy. Lurgan keeps a boy servant whose
“scarlet lips” and soft flesh Kim notices (127), and then, the very next morning, Lurgan tells Kim
that the boy is determined to kill him with a “knife or poison. He is jealous,” Lurgan explains,
“almost too jealous to trust, just now” – the boy has in fact attempted to lace Lurgan’s breakfast
with arsenic that morning. Kim is more impressed with Lurgan’s matter-of-fact manner than
with anything else: “a genuine imported Sahib from England would have made a great to-do over
this tale. Lurgan Sahib stated it as simply as Mahbub Ali was used to record his little affairs in
the North” (129). Lurgan’s sexuality is as unmistakable as his profession is covert, and each is
encoded as a species of going native. It is tempting to read what comes next – Lurgan Sahib’s
attempt to hypnotize Kim in order to test his powers of endurance – as a brief allegory of
(homo)sexual seduction and resistance. Kipling’s prose certainly suggests such homoerotic
overtones: “Lurgan Sahib laid one hand gently on the nape of his neck, stroked it twice or
thrice,” and whispered instructions. Kim freezes under Lurgan’s touch: it “held him as a vice,
and his blood tingled pleasantly through him.” He feels he is about to lose consciousness, and as
Lurgan moves his hand again, “another wave of prickling fire” races down his neck. But just
when Kim is about to give in to Lurgan’s post-hypnotic suggestion that a broken jar, now lying
in pieces on the floor, is fashioning itself into a whole again, he takes refuge in the verities of
“the multiplication table in English” (he has so far been “thinking in Hindi”).

As he repeats these tables, the shift in language and logic clears his head, and he recovers
from Lurgan’s “magic.” When Kim asks Lurgan if that was what he had been subjected to,
Lurgan replies elliptically and suggests his need to test the full range of Kim’s responses: “No,
that was not magic. It was only to see if there was – flaw in the jewel. Sometimes very fine
jewels will fly all to pieces if a man holds them in his hand, and knows the proper way. That is
why one must be careful before one sets them” (131). The “setting,” of course, is the fieldwork
of the Great Game, and all varieties of vulnerability must be checked on beforehand. Kim passes
his test, so much so that Lurgan can enlist him in returning his servant boy to favor. Within
earshot of the boy, he asks Kim: “Suppose you were fond of someone, and you saw someone
come, and the man you were fond of was more pleased with him than he was with you, what
would you do?” Kim, wise now to the blinding power of Lurgan’s touch, fashions an answer
that reassures the boy-servant, who then flings himself “passionately at Lurgan Sahib’s feet,” and
begs forgiveness (132). In his interlude in Simla, Kim learns valuable lessons from Lurgan, not
least among which is this lesson about the murky, bewildering power of sexual compulsion.

This is a lesson that comes in handy when Kim, high in the Himalayas in pursuit of
Russian spies, meets the Woman of Shamlegh. She provides refuge to both Kim and the lama in
her home and later makes a failed attempt to seduce Kim. But before he encounters her, Kim is
put through another experience that parallels his meeting with Lurgan. Before Kim takes to the
road, Mahbub Ali conducts him to Huneefa the courtesan, and as he does so, gives Kim “much
the same sort of advice as his mother gave to Lemuel,…and…Mahbub was exact to point out
how Huneefa and her likes destroyed kings.” Kim is off to spy for Creighton, and Mahbub Ali’s
warning in particular: “Most true it is in the Great Game, for it is by means of women that all
plans come to ruin and we lie out in the dawning with our throats cut” (150). Mahbub’s advice is
emphatic that “Haneefa and her likes” are seductresses to be feared, but once Kim is with the
blind Haneefa, we realize that her function is not to initiate Kim into the mysteries of
heterosexual union in order to prepare him for the women he might encounter.

Instead, she assumes a strangely maternal function, and performs a mystic ceremony
upon him, praying for his safety on the road. This time it is Mahbub who holds Kim’s neck, and
Huneefa’s “horrible soft fingers” which touch him, till he loses his senses. She speaks in
tongues, and then crumples by Kim’s side: “Huneefa’s crisis passes, as these things must, in a
paroxysm of howling, with a touch of froth at the lips. She lay spent and motionless beside Kim,
and the crazy voices ceased” (152). While he is asleep, Mahbub Ali and Hurree Babu tint Kim’s
skin a lasting shade of brown, and thus prepare him for immersion into Indian life. Kim is
reborn into a new avatar (as he is often in this novel), and this time it is Huneefa and Mahbub Ali
who parent him safely into his new life. While Huneefa is both mother and midwife to the born-
again brown and Indian Kim (which rebirth also bloods him into the Secret Service), we must
notice the *frisson* of sexual tension that renders turgid Kipling’s descriptions of Huneefa’s voices
and performance. This is scarcely surprising in that Mahbub Ali introduces Haneefa to Kim in
precisely those terms. But sex is here sublimated into the mysteries of Huneefa’s invocations,
and as she and Kim lie spent on the floor, we witness once again Kim’s exposure to, but
protection from, the “means of women” that unman men.

Thus, when Kim meets the Woman of Shamlegh, he is well equipped to hold her at arm’s
length. As is well-known, the Woman of Shamlegh is a carry-over from one of Kipling’s earliest
short stories, “Lisbeth” (from *Plain Tales from the Hills*), where, as Lisbeth, a girl brought up in
a mission in Kotgarh, she falls in love with an Englishman while nursing him back to health. He
returns her affection but eventually abandons her. Kipling first calls attention to Lisbeth’s story
when he has one of the porters pointedly say of her: “*She* has no love for Sahibs, as we know”
(206), and then the Woman herself describes her unfortunate relationship with the Englishman
and indeed with the “Englishness” and Christianity she learns at Kotgarh (219). In Kipling’s
oeuvre, Lisbeth is memorable as a reminder of the damage that can result from relationships that
cross colonial divides of race and power; that she reappears in *Kim* suggests the enduring fear
and fascination such a figure had for Kipling in particular and perhaps the colonial imagination
in general. Lisbeth is of course also important for her English education and exposure to
European ways – this is how she and her Englishman can even think of “falling in love,”
although her racial identity remains an insuperable obstacle. Now, back to her Hill ways, her
polyandrous community, and her property, she is the older Woman of Shamlegh, no longer
vulnerable, and thus a different kind of challenge to Kim, himself now returned to his Indian
disguise as *chela* to the Lama.

The Woman of Shamlegh is “fair-coloured,” with “bold, bright eyes” and a forthright
manner (211). She has no hesitation in expressing her attraction to Kim, though he helps
precipitate her declaration by smiling “ravishingly” at her. He does so because he needs her help
to communicate with Hurree Babu, but once she says that there is nothing she would not do for
him, he accepts her “compliment calmly, as men must do in lands where women make the love”
(213). She makes her intentions even clearer when she draws “a handful of walnuts from her
bosom” and even shares them with Kim, a gesture which causes him to first pretend that he does
not understand her overture, and then, when this distresses her, to promise her “payment” only
once she renders him service. Kim is here portrayed as master of the situation, in control of the
moves and counter-moves of flirtation, but he still needs to make the rhetorical move that defines
gender relations in the novel; he changes the form of his address to her: “it was on the tip of his
tongue to say Mother, but he turned it to Sister” (213). His attempt to dissipate sexual tensions
into the proprieties of kinship is made in the face of mounting offers form the Woman of
Shamleigh, who reminds him that she is mistress of her property and of her person, and offers
him all of Shamleigh. When she leaves, Kim, in half-adolescent, half-adult manner that typifies
him, returns to the fears Mahbub Ali had instilled in him: “How can a man follow the Way of the
Great Game when he is so-always pestered by women?” (214). His desire to be thought a man is
expressed as a desire to be left alone, to be celibate, for that state is appropriate both to his
discipleship to the Lama and to his apprenticeship to the Game. That is Kim then, man enough
to know the forms of sexual desire, but child enough to need to distance them. Or perhaps
simply man-child enough to want to be treated as an adult even while he believes he is one: when
he finally looks back on the Woman of Shamlegh, his summary comment on her is “At least she did not treat me like a child” (221).

Or perhaps the better way to think about Kim’s status as man-child is to see in that uneasy persona the only tenable form of the fantasy of colonial subjectivity that is enacted in the novel. Not a state of chronological limbo, as it were, but a supple way of being in the colonial world, such that Kim as (white) adult cleaves to the political tasks dictated by Colonel Creighton and his other spymasters. Any one – any woman – who interferes with the delicate balance between childlike entitlement and adult priorities must be distanced. But not before such a woman has allowed Kim to know himself as desirable and masculine, indeed enough so as to make the Woman of Shamlegh throw a jealous fit once her advances are gently rebuffed: “I was foolish…Who is thy woman in the Plains? Fair or Black? I was fair once” (219). That Kim’s hybrid identity, his identity in disguise, is precisely the issue at such moments is made clear to us when the Woman of Shamleh tells him why she is attracted to him: “Thy Sahib, though thou art only a wandering mendicant…But for awhile I thought it was my Sahib come back, and he was my God” (220). There is enough of the Sahib in Kim the chela to let the Woman of Shamlegh intuit his origins, and such forbidden knowledge is exactly the threat that intimacy of this kind presents to Kim the British/Indian, colonial/native, man/child creature of espionage. And yet, once he is about to leave, Kim is confident enough to perform for her as she knows a Sahib would. He kisses her chastely on the cheek (“Kissing is practically unknown among Asiatics,” the narrative adds gratuitously (221), but in order to make clear the cultural and racial dynamics of Kim’s act), and lapses into English: “Thank you veree much my dear” (221).

Virginity and disguise preserved (after a fashion), Kim travels his long route with his Lama. Exhausted in mind and body, they meet once again the old woman from Kulu, who takes
one look at Kim’s condition and cackles: “How did’st thou do it? Never answer me! I know. He has been running among women. Look at his eyes – hollow and sunk – and the Betraying Line from the nose down! He has been sifted out!” (226-27). Her jocularity – and her inaccuracy must not cause us to forget that being “sifted out” by women is a recurrent male fear in the novel, nor should we be surprised that Kim’s recovery is a return to maternal care. There are “but two sorts of women” in this world, the Sahiba says, “those who take the strength out of a man and those who put it back. Once I was that one, and now I am this” (229), and she, true to her word, supervises Kim’s return to health, feeding him and drugging him and arranging for therapeutic massages (by a cousin’s widow who lives in her household). She restores him, but Kim’s final recovery comes within the bosom of yet another mother. He falls into a “deeper than sleep” trance on a newly ploughed field, and we are told that “Mother Earth was as faithful as the Sahiba” (235). The hapless Kim “surrendered to her strength” (235). This is the way, and the function, of the “mother country” in Kim: to restore to health and poise a colonial Antaeus. As Edward Said suggests, this is the moment in which Kipling “renders a powerful, almost instinctive desire to restore the child to its mother in a preconscious, undefiled, asexual relationship” (21). Instinctive perhaps, but the timing is also crucial: this match of the Great Game has been won, and Kim can be returned to his status as child in need of succor and sustenance.

Celibacy is inappropriate, however, not only to Kim the spy, but, as he says to himself, to Kim the disciple (“How can a man follow the Way or the Great Game when he is so-always pestered by women?” 214). In terms of sexuality, Kim’s identification with the Lama places him at one pole, the other of which is defined by Mahbub Ali’s sexual swagger. The Lama is of course a strange figure to loom large as he does in a novel of colonial adventure – indeed his
gentle otherworldliness is far removed from the craft, and the world-view, that Kim must learn in order to be a good spy or indeed a good Sahib. Yet he does offer Kim lessons in fortitude and caring, and a model of masculinity unlike any other in the novel. He thus functions as a crucial pivot for Kim’s shifts between childhood and adulthood in the novel – because the Lama is as he is, Kim can be both son and father to him, at once *chela* and protector. More important perhaps, given the world he and Kim travel in, is the radical sexual and material innocence that he embodies, and to which Kim can return. Indeed when Kim awakens from his trance – is reborn once again – at the very end of the novel, it is the Lama who awaits him, and who offers him a vision of spiritual transcendence. That this free-wheeling vision of “all Hind, from Ceylon in the sea to the Hills, and my own Painted Rocks at Suchzen” mimics the panoptic vision that is the ideal of colonial surveillance – and knowledge-systems is not incidental: if Kim is to return to his status as *chela* and as child without giving up on the priorities established for him by the Great Game, only the Lama’s vision – of this world and not of it – will suffice.

The figure of the Lama presents another interesting subtext to the already celibate/innocent/man-boy ambivalence in the novel. In the writings of the mid-century, Buddhism appeared only in passing reference. For instance, in Elizabeth Gaskell’s 1851 novel *Cranford*, the ladies of the town mistake Peter Jenkyns, returning tanned and caftaned from India, for “the great Lama of Thibet” (111). As the century progressed, however, allusions to Buddhism became more visible and more significant in works of literature. Writers of romance novels, especially, began to employ the Hindu and Buddhist concepts of karma and reincarnation. H. Rider Haggard’s best-selling romance-adventure *She* (1887) hinges on a particular understanding of reincarnation, and its sequel, *Ayesha: The Return of “She”* (1905), carries the action into the Himalayas and a Tibetan monastery there. Sir Edwin Arnold’s poem
The Light of Asia. Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism (1879) was a cultural phenomenon in England. Christopher Clausen points out that soon after its publication and well into the next century, the poem “exercised an intellectual and religious influence” (Clausen, Light of Asia 1).

Kipling himself was interested in Buddhism and familiar with its fundamentals. His old classmate C.G. Beresford wrote in Schooldays with Kipling that “The Light of Asia, by Sir Edwin Arnold, was one of the books admired by Gigger and he possessed a copy” (205-06). If Beresford was right, Kipling appears to have educated himself fairly soundly in Buddhism, and education that was furthered by what Philip Mason refers to as “his Pre-Raphaelite friends,” among whom Buddhism had become something of a fad (183). Later he was, as he claims in Something of Myself, “Deputy Curator for six weeks” of the display (136).

And this is in fact the political import of the spectacular other-worldliness of the Lama. Teshoo Lama’s impressive lack of knowledge about, or interest in, British colonialism in India or of British-Indian relations is in part derived from his spiritual quest and in part from his origins – he is Tibetan, possibly outside the purview of the empire (though large sections of Tibet were in fact included in its boundaries), and in India only to follow the footsteps of the Buddha. Of all Kim’s mentors he is the only one unaware of, and without and opinion on, the British in India – he takes their presence for granted, and he reacts to those of them he meets no differently than he does to the Indians he encounters. They are for him a part of the human geography of India in a way that they are not, and cannot be, for even their collaborators like Mahbub Ali or Hurree Babu. In the novel then, Teshoo Lama, as someone who stands uncomprehending outside the political circuits of British India, “naturalizes” this India in a way that no other character can. At the end of the novel it is his all-seeing vision – that must note nothing about him – and his deep
love for his *chela* that return the novel, and Kim, to a model of innocence destabilized by the
travails of espionage in the high mountains.

It is worth noting that the Lama is for Kim a model of the “enlightened” male subject
who is single-minded in the pursuit of his duty, and who will let little or nothing dissuade him
from his chosen way. Similarly, Teshoo Lama’s commitment to non-violence (though he does
reach for his heavy iron pencase to defend himself form the Russian [202]) is exemplary for
Kim, and indeed for the novel itself. *Kim* is a remarkable colonial novel in that it features
virtually no violence, even as Kim ranges the length and breadth of colonial North India. For all
of Mahbub Ali’s potential for violent action, and even the presence of an injured spy, the method
of the novel abjures violence, for any violence is a threat to the legitimacy of empire, and India is
here being ruled not by military methods (although the army is on call) but by those who know it
so well that they face no resistance, or perhaps preempt resistance before it can turn violent.20 In
*Kim*, the heroes of colonial governance are not members of the military but civilians, members of
the Secret Service, gatherers of information and of local knowledge, those who use their
intellect, and not their brawn, to effect their ends. In many ways, the Lama is their anti-type, but
there are crucial parallels, and Kim inherits his way of being in the world – a Searcher and a
Seeker after Knowledge – from both. And that is indeed the suture between the world of
transcendent spirit and the world of colonial men that Kipling effects via the character of the
Lama, who is father, with Creighton, of the man-child who would inherit the empire without
boundaries, and live in a time without end.

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20 The novel’s commitment to the settled, orderly, non-violent rule of the British may explain the terms used to
describe the Revolt of 1857 (which some historians consider the First War of Indian Independence) by the old
Indian soldier who had fought on the British side then: “A madness ate into the Army, and they turned against all
their officers” (47). Political and armed opposition to the British is here understood as irrational and insane. The
old soldier’s vehement telling of this tale is contrasted with the Lama’s impassivity – in Tibet, the Lama heard only
a “rumour” about 1857, and its events or politics meant little to him.
Power and Gender in the Scientific/Spiritual Context:

Bram Stoker’s *The Mystery of the Sea*

The name Bram Stoker has been almost entirely eclipsed by the title of his best-known work, *Dracula*. And because of the undeniable popularity of *Dracula*, most people who think of the author at all today think of him solely as a Gothic writer. *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, for example, notes that his reputation depends on “a single Gothic novel: *Dracula*” (760-61). Even Stoker scholar, Stephen Arata, writing elsewhere refers to “the Gothic tales of Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker” in his entry on 1897 (“Companion” 52). And if that were not enough, his obituary in the *Times* described him as “the master of a particularly lurid and creepy kind of fiction” (15). Oddly enough, though, many of Stoker’s works reveal his interest in issues that seem antithetical to the Gothic and to its mysteries and excesses. Indeed, because much of what he wrote features the science and technology of his day and even projects that science into the future, it is tempting to see Stoker as an early writer of science fiction rather than as a Gothic novelist who came too late to participate in the great period of English Gothic literature. During his life Stoker was well known as the business manager for Henry Irving’s Lyceum Theater. In a two-volume retrospective titled *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, Stoker details his own interest in practical science, especially in the science of stage “magic,” a discipline that included lighting and other special effects. Stoker even admits to querying his brother George, who had been a surgeon during the Russo-Turkish War, about the best way to carry a dead body (Haining, Tremayne, 16) The grisly details that Stoker includes in *Reminiscences* suggest that he was interested in accurate scientific information.
Stoker’s interest in the ‘resources of science,’\textsuperscript{21} pure and applied, is evident throughout both his nonfictional and fictional works. He engages with a wide variety of the sciences and social sciences of his day and the debates they engendered, including archaeology, anthropology, geology, physics, chemistry, and criminal anthropology. His characters are themselves frequently scientists of one kind or another, and usually have all the latest gadgets and inventions placed at their disposal, from bicycles to automobiles to aeroplanes, and from Krupp cannons to Winchester rifles. The more alien and mysterious the world Stoker presents, the more enthusiastically and ingeniously he exploits the technological innovations of his time.

Stoker’s *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902) is a Gothic and adventure novel which reveals his knowledge of and penchant for science and technology. The novel narrates the story of a young man named Archibald Hunter who is attracted to an American holidaymaker in Scotland named Marjory Drake. Marjory, a descendant of Sir Francis Drake, is a millionaire active in supporting American aggression against Spain over Cuba in what became the war of 1895-98. Whilst in Scotland, Hunter discovers some documents relating to the Spanish Armada and subsequently finds some hidden treasure which was to have been used to support sedition in Britain in the sixteenth century. Don Escoban, a Spaniard, is also looking for this treasure. The narrative ends with the death of Escoban and the happy union of Hunter and Marjory. One of the novel’s interesting sub-plots—the on which I focus on in this chapter—is the inclusion of an old woman named Gormala, who possesses a “second sight” and who also informs the hero, Archibald, that he possesses the same psychic ability. The novel also explores the potential power of science and technology over all aspects of human life and suggests that people who understand these rapidly developing fields are more likely to survive natural and man-made catastrophes than are

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{21} These are Stoker’s own words. In a 1909 article for the *North American Review* on ‘The American “Tramp” Question,’ Stoker urges the necessity for swift action against this ‘wilfully-idle class’ using the ‘resources of science’ (613)
\end{footnotesize}
‘primitive’ people. Certainly, when looking at the science of the past it is appropriate to remember that what passed for science in one generation may be discarded by subsequent generations. Nonetheless, science tends to be sure of itself because it is posited on the “assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like” (Kuhn 5). It is thus the opposite of the Gothic, which accepts the world as a mysterious place. Further, as Josephine Guy observes in her introduction to the “Science and religion” section of The Victorian Age: An Anthology of Sources and Documents, science in the nineteenth century came to be equated with knowledge. Moreover this knowledge became masculinized as science and knowledge became meaning making tools in the creation of empire. In the Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire, Thomas Richards analyses ways in which the Victorian organization of knowledge was enlisted into the service of the British Empire. Fields like biology, geography, and geology began, as Richards points out, to function as extensions of British intelligence both at home and overseas. Confident in their conquest of both nature and the indigenous peoples that representatives of the Empire encountered around the globe, the typical nineteenth-century English male often came to believe that there was no problem that science could not solve.

While Stoker’s enthusiasm for technological innovation is undeniable, his overall attitude towards the resources of science generally has been the subject of some critical debate. In Dracula, for example, science is variously interpreted as the source of the vampire hunters’ ability to defeat the Count, and the source of their helplessness and confusion in the face of supernatural forces. Similarly in The Mystery of the Sea Archibald Hunter is confronted by the “imperious” Gormala MacNeil, the elderly Scottish seer, and both her “tall, gaunt” form and her powers of “Second Sight” make him feel “somehow inferior” (Mystery of the Sea 7, 12). Certainly some of this anxiety could be explained since the late Victorians had both abundant
enthusiasm and deep misgivings about the potential of science. Indeed the monstrous potential of science and technology has been a persistent motif of the Gothic genre from Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818). In Stoker, as in many Gothic writers these anxieties are both managed and aggravated: science is not only a set of reassuring discourses, suggesting that what is transgressive can be contained, but also opened up. In Stoker’s *Mystery of the Sea* these anxieties can be closely paralleled to gender anxieties of the period. Before analyzing Stoker’s novel in depth, however, I would like to take a closer look at the gendered context of Victorian science.

Statements that Victorians were intrigued by science and preoccupied with the Woman Question are certainly not extraordinary pronouncements, since both fictional and nonfictional texts of the period amply display the significance these concerns held. As numerous nineteenth-century essays and treatises composed by biologists, physicians, anthropologists, and other scientists disclose, the two issues were often overtly interwoven, with “objective” findings ostensibly providing conclusive evidence that long-standing cultural perceptions of an innate female inferiority were correct. Literature, too, brought the Victorian obsession with science and gender to the fore, albeit often in a highly subtle manner, to posit or interrogate a causal relationship between them. Though this interest in gendered science was reflected through the nineteenth century, some of the most complex and compelling texts to scrutinize the topic appeared in the last decades of the century. The 1871 publication of Charles Darwin’s *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* acted as a kind of cultural trigger for stimulating literary interest in the subject through the treatise’s gender-charged scientific assertions and the prominence of its controversial author. Among the most fascinating of post-*Descent* literary offerings providing valuable insights into gendered science are those featuring a woman directly
affected by science. Thomas Hardy’s 1882 novel *Two on a Tower*, establishes science as a masculinist enterprise by repeatedly emphasizing the female character’s interest in astronomical study as somehow alienating to her feminine persona. Another contemporary text, Wilkie Collins’ *Heart and Science* (1883) portrays a woman’s interest in science as shallow and motivated more by selfishness than by admirable dedication to the pursuit of knowledge. Such texts illustrate the telling ways in which scientific discourse could be manipulated to define, marginalize, and exclude women. Aside from the influence of scientific texts such as *The Descent of Man*, literary speculation on gendered science can be attributed to the cultural turmoil of the late century. With pressures to broaden women’s educational opportunities, expand occupational horizons, address inequities in marriage laws, interrogate sexual mores, consider the New Woman’s agenda, and alleviate dissatisfaction in sundry other matters affecting women, it is no surprise that gender-related anxieties would intensify. Nor is it astonishing that scientific speculations would be marshaled both to validate and to undermine long-standing presumptions that women were inherently and immutably inferior to men.

Despite the fact that much of Darwin’s *Descent* emphasized the animal kingdom and human development in general, pertinent passages reinforced both long-standing and contemporaneous suppositions of male superiority that carried important ramifications for Victorian society. Darwin commented, for example, that “man is more powerful in body and mind than woman,” (Darwin 620) and he displays “greater intellectual vigor and power of invention” (628). Darwin additionally pointed to certain traits women supposedly evidenced far more than did men – “powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation” (587). Certainly the issue itself was far from revolutionary. The traditional supposition that men were the more rational and intellectual sex, whereas women were the more emotional and intuitive
sex, had long prevailed. In the nineteenth century, this cultural verity simply gained additional force through scientific pronouncements that purported to bring irrefutable evidence of a biologically determined and physiologically immutable difference. Shortly before Descent appeared, anthropologist J. McGregor Allan in an 1869 essay titled, “On the Real Differences in the Minds of Men and Women,” characterized the distinction, “man’s realm is the intellect – woman’s the affections” (qtd. in Thomas Huxley 86).

Interestingly enough the nineteenth century was also the golden age of English spiritualism. This was also an era of public and private mediumship, dark séances, and daringly theatrical displays of psychic powers; of natural healing and women healers, of touching episodes, and encounters with hostile and threatening critics. In the context of gender politics and society in flux, it is important to note that most mediums were women and this created an uneasy negotiation of gender and class norms. Bram Stoker certainly gives science an important role in many of his works including Dracula and Mystery of the Sea. At the same time one cannot but note that while these works acknowledge the prominence of scientific ideas and scientific reasoning, there is yet a contradiction central to the works’ significance as cultural documents. These works, particularly Mystery of the Sea are also heavily invested in valorizing the male or masculine rationalistic authority conventionally associated with scientific thought. Archibald Hunter, the chief male protagonist, represents the rational while Gormala MacNeil, the dark Gothic woman represents the supernatural. Gormala’s ‘power’ is viewed as a dark intruding force while Archie Hunter’s calm reasoning is allowed to take precedence. In fact, Archie Hunter seems to stand outside of himself and the events which occur. As he informs us “My own intellectual attitude to the matter interested me” (Mystery 22). Stoker’s narrative certainly proclaims the power of belief, faith, and imagination, but the plot makes these dependent on
logic, deduction, and proof for their ultimate success. The novel thus speaks in two voices: one that urges the superior reality of the supernatural, and a second – and, I think, ultimately the more authoritative one – that affirms the status quo of scientific reasoning and aligns it firmly with the conventional bases of masculine cultural power.

It is no accident that spiritualism, a movement which privileged women and took them seriously, attracted so many female believers during a period of gender disjunction and disparity between aspiration and reality. Increasingly, contemporary scholarship has revealed the strong connection between Victorian women and the supernatural realm. For instance, Alex Owen, in her seminal study on Victorian women mediums, outlined in detail the ways that spiritualists deployed the cultural register of femininity proper to define mediumship whilst surpassing gender stereotypes during séances: “it (spiritualism) promoted a species of feminine power whilst at the same time interacting with contemporary concepts of acceptable womanhood” (Owen 19). In Diana Basham’s book on feminism and the Victorian occult, the main role women played in the development of the spiritualist movement is attributed to the similarities they shared with the spirits they were bringing to their audiences (9). Moreover, in The Invention of Telepathy Roger Lockhurst posits how “the novelty of psychical concepts helped the definition of the New Woman, herself a novel object” (225). Spiritualist culture held possibilities for attention, opportunity, and status denied elsewhere. In certain circumstances, it could also provide a means of circumventing rigid nineteenth-century class and gender norms. More importantly, it did so without mounting a direct attack on the status quo. What attracted them and what held these women in common was a belief in the spirit’s survival and continued connection with the world of the living. This belief has an ancient history, one often associated with fortune-telling and magic. Upon first meeting Gormala, Archie Hunter interrogates her
closely about her ‘Second Sight.’ He is especially struck by her use of the plural word ‘Fates’ 
(Mystery 14) and sees it as evidence to the fact that ‘her belief in this respect came from some of 
the old pagan mythologies” (14).

Describing himself, Archibald Hunter says that he had a “big body and athletic powers” 
(Mystery 11). Later on he also informs the reader that he had “naturally vast strength: and that 
the “athletic training of my youth had developed it highly” (35-6). But this strong young man, 
describes Gormala as a “witch-woman,” whose very thought left him with a “sense of 
oppression” (Mystery 23). This of course ties in with the novel’s attempt to create a dark Gothic 
atmosphere. And yet the reader is unsure as to why exactly he fears the unknown, which he 
clearly sees as a testing ground, a ‘splendid case’ to prove the authenticity of Second-sight (16). 
He continues to question whether “the woman had in some way, or to some degree, hypnotized” 
him (23). His very “identity” seems lost in her “presence” (23). Once Gormala leaves, Archie 
speaks of the “occult power” having “grown within me and asserting its masterdom” (25). 
Closely tied to the spiritualist movement, was the rise of a fascination with mesmerism. In fact, 
in the early and mid-nineteenth century, mesmerism was often equated with science. Famous 
members of society, Charles Dickens being one of them, frequently attested to the powers of this 
‘science.’ Dickens’ friend, John Elliotson, a professor of practical medicine, founded a monthly 
periodical named the Zoist in which Elliotson proclaims the “discovery of a new truth…the 
science of MESMERISM is a new physiological truth of incalculable value and importance.” 
This truth, he goes on to say “presents the only avenue through which is discernible a ray of hope 
that the more intricate phenomena of the nervous system, - of Life, - will ever be revealed to 
man” (2). As the century progressed, mesmerism was viewed as a ‘science’ which challenged 
boundaries. For one thing it appeared to confront accepted notions of class hierarchy. But what
is of more importance, at least for the argument presented in this chapter, is that mesmerism poached on gender and sexual roles. Certainly the very act of ‘mesmerizing’ presupposed a pliant body in a trance-like state. Since most mesmerists, in literature certainly (du Maurier’s Svengali being the most famous), were men and their subjects women, this was some cause for concern. By 1882 the ‘science’ came under the scrutiny of the Society of Psychical Research. The pliant mesmerized female subject is by the end of the century substituted with dangerous mesmerizing *femme fatales.*

Gormala MacNeil is of course no *femme fatale.* Clearly she is no seductive siren bent on luring Archiebald Hunter. She is a “tall, gaunt old woman “ (*Mystery* 7) and her “baleful, glittering eyes” (38) inspire fear rather than lust. In fact, as Lisa Hopkins explains, Gormala is a figure of great maternal power since she traces her psychic abilities through the female line. When Archie questions the source of her powers, Gormala answers with a “distinct note of pride” that her knowledge has come down through the centuries ‘frae mither to dochter…wi’ never a break in the lang line o’ the telling” (23). At the end of the novel, Archie is fraught with pain at the thought of his beloved Marjory in the “hands of her enemies,” but Gormala comforts him tenderly with eyes “soft and full of pity” (311-312); “All the motherhood which ever had been, or might have been, in that lonely soul was full awake” (312). But that very maternal power appears to have been known and far and wide and “feared o’ all men” (26). Her “evil eye” and “diabolical cunning” convinces Archie that “some purpose of her own was to be fulfilled” (37). Strong as he is, Archie is unable to save Lauchlane Macleod, the magnificent fisherman, and faints “overcome with physical weariness” (38). After the incident, this strong young man cannot even “remember anything indefinitely or think consecutively,” as “facts and

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22 One famous example being Arthur Conan Doyle’s novel *The Parasite.* Doyle himself was commissioned by the Society of Psychical Research to scrutinize claims of haunted houses. That same year he published *The Parasite,* a novel which describes the control a female mesmerist has over a young male scientist with near fatal consequences.
fancies” take over in a “chaotic whirl” (39). Whenever Archie falls into a weary sleep it appears as if Gormala, strong and sullen as ever, is waiting for him to wake. And what is even more fascinating is that as the novel progresses, Archibald Hunter’s fear of Gormala Macleod is replaced with what we see as complete immersion in her version of spirituality. He is overcome with a “new sense of the connection of things” (68) and although he continues to see Gormala as an “unwelcome” sight (83), by the end of the novel “her power is no longer a mystery” (308).

Soon after Gormala dies by the rocks and as Archie Hunter kneels over her corpse, he appears to undergo an out-of-body experience. With a “divine guiding principle” guiding his thoughts Archie is in a “dual consciousness” which finally helps him save his beloved Marjory (318).

Through the course of the narrative, Archie is then portrayed as a rational, scientific human being, whose rationality is progressively overtaken by Gormala, the ‘mesmerizer’ who soon takes over his thoughts and finally enters his consciousness. This uneasy progression can be further considered making use of ideas of sexual inversion prevalent at the time period.

Havelock Ellis’s Sexual Inversion – first published in England in 1897 – was one of the earliest English texts to attempt to treat homosexuality scientifically. Included in the section “Sexual Inversion in Men” was a series of case studies. Among these studies, and of most interest in this context, was “History XV,” the story of “T.S.” a thirty-two year old artist. Most of the story – which is one of the longest in the collection – is presented in the subject’s own words. The account appears to move towards a happy resolution when T.S. moves to Berlin, where he is able to explore his sexuality freely. Buried in this account, however, is an alternative, even oppositional, narrative – one that continues to intrude into the story.

Throughout his account he continually stresses the disjunction between his “outer” and “inner” lives. Of his inner life he wrote, “Deep interest in mysticism. Am clairvoyant. Have been used
many times as a medium. Lead two separate lives, an outer and inner psychic life. Am a fatalist and a theosophist. Profound belief in reincarnation…” (Ellis 127). He even claims at one point to be “gifted with the Second Sight” (127). Given the fact that Ellis’s editorial voice frequently interrupts and provides notes to his subjects’ lives and thoughts, an analysis of T.S.’s inner ‘psychic’ life is strangely absent in “History XV.” In this context, it might be that not only Ellis but also T.S. chose to marginalize spiritual experience.

In an earlier edition Ellis noted in his introduction the possibility of a correlation between the spiritual and the (homo)sexual: “It has not, I think,” Ellis wrote, “been noted – largely because the evidence was insufficiently clear – that among religious and moral leaders, and other persons with strong ethical instincts, there is a tendency towards the more elevated forms of homosexual feeling” (14). These ideas were later developed by Edward Carpenter in his book, Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk. Reviewing the book in the Occult Review Ellis approved Carpenter’s claim that “there really is an organic connection between the homosexual experience and unusual psychic or divinatory powers” (30-32). Ellis and Carpenter were by no means alone in articulating these connections between spirituality and sexuality. The Theosophical Society had for some years been developing a complicated understanding of sexuality and sexual identity in an attempt to explore in concrete the “organic connections” between (homo)sexuality and spirituality. Before I attempt to draw connections with current ideas of sexuality and science/spirituality in Stoker’s Mystery, I would like to offer some ways in which the novel posits Archie, and by association Marjory, as a modern young couple, at ease with the science and technology of the day.

As I have pointed out, Archibald Hunter in The Mystery of the Sea appears to waver between a rational ‘scientific’ being and his own newly revealed capacity to see into the future.
Indeed, Archie solves many of the problems posed in the novel because of his knowledge of science and scientific process. The first indication of his scientific awareness comes when he decodes the cipher. Archie informs the reader that he “knew something of secret writing” and that as an invalid in his boyhood days he had read Wilkins’ book “Mercury: or the Secret and Swift Messenger” (72-3). Once Archie concludes that the cipher has used Bacon’s bilateral code, he masters it and even teaches the cipher to Marjory. In turn they use it to communicate with one another after she is kidnapped. If codes and ciphers help the two young lovers to communicate over vast distances and spans of time, it also helps Archie to discover the buried treasure near his house. Remembering what the Spanish Don’s papers had revealed about the cave where the treasure was buried, Archie applies his knowledge to geological formations: “The one guiding light as to locality in the Don’s narrative was the description of the cave ‘the black stone on one hand and the red on the other.’ Archie applies this to what he remembers of the rocks in Broad Haven, “the gneiss and the red sienite join” (213). After this rational application it is only a matter of time before Archie discovers the missing treasure. As one of the novel’s less scientific characters, Don Bernardino, comments on the place of science in the modern world, “It is manifest to me that in these days of science nothing can long remain hidden when once a clue has been found” (251).

As if to accentuate the power of modern science, throughout Mystery Archie and Marjory, scions of the future, are contrasted with Don Bernardino, a representative of the past. Everything about the Don suggests that, like Dracula, he is an anachronism. Archie describes his physical appearance as ‘despite his modern clothes, just such a picture as Velasquez would have loved to paint...’ (205). His litany of names also links him to a bygone feudal past: “In my own

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23 The Valancourt edition of Stoker’s The Mystery of the Sea, which I have made use of throughout this chapter, provides the information that Wilkins was the first secretary of the Royal Society, and the book mentioned was the first book in English on cryptography (73).
land, the land of my birth, the cradle of my race, I am called Don Bernardino Yglesia Paleologue y Santordo y Castelnuova de Escoban, Count of Minurca and Marquis of Salvaterra!” (204)

Perhaps the idea that Don Bernardino is a relic of the past rather than a symbol of the future is further reinforced by having him die without an issue. At the novel’s end Archie and Marjory accompany his body back to Spain and lay it “amongst the tombs of his ancestors” (340).

Apart from geology and cryptography, the book makes other references to technology. For instance Archie appears to be a bicycle enthusiast and is happiest when he takes to his bicycle. He also expresses an unrivalled delight when he realizes that Marjory shares his penchant for bicycling. Archie also waxes euphoric when he equips himself and Marjory for their quest after the Spanish treasure as well as when he describes various ships. He describes some of the gadgets he has acquired (to dig for the buried Spanish treasure) in detail, “a bit and brace which one could lean on and work without stooping,” “diamond patent drills which could, compared to ordinary tools of the old pattern, eat their way into rock at an incredible rate” (167). He is also enthusiastic about firearms, buying two revolvers when he realizes that Marjory is in danger and is thrilled with this ability to purchase state-of-the-art equipment that will enable him and Marjory to explore the cave safely. Nowhere is he prouder than when he displays his own technological ingenuity: “First I rigged up a proper windlass over the hole into the cave…I hammered the edges smoother…and fixed candles and lanterns in various places” (188).

It is clear then that a confident ‘masculine’ rationality characterizes Archibald Hunter. He is young and has a “naturally vast strength” developed by “athletic training” (Mystery 35-6). Moreover he is aware, in the Darwinian mode of thought, that “men are dull beside women in the way of intuition” (85). And so he relies on Marjory’s intuition while coaching her in the more ‘manly’ ways of science and technology. As a straightforward adventure narrative, the manly
hero finds both the treasure and the woman of his dreams, and all is well that ends well.

Nevertheless the narrative reveals some uncertainties. The rather Gothic figure of the seer Gormala Macneil appears to constantly shake Archie’s stable masculine identity. His stable scientific assumptions are constantly challenged and appear to be taken over by Gormala’s spiritual worldview. In this context it must also be remembered that the monstrous potential of science and technology has itself been a persistent motif of the Gothic from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) up to the present day, and, as a number of critics have argued, the *fin de siècle* revival of the Gothic was intricately connected with the anxieties produced by the various new scientific discourses – including evolutionism, mental physiology, and sexology – that were beginning to question and dismantle conventional ideas of the human.24 In Stoker, as in many Gothic writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these anxieties are both managed and aggravated: science is not only a set of reassuring discourses (allowing Archie, for example, to establish his manly precedence over Gormala), but also a set of potentially disturbing discourses, in itself a transgressive force opening up shadowy arenas of being in which comforting categories and accepted truths begin to dissolve. Soon after his momentous meeting with Gormala, Archie begins to view the occult power she wielded as a “vital” power “asserting its masterdom” (25). Given the ideas he holds good about female intuition vs. male rationality, it appears as if his sudden realization of his own “dual consciousness” and his capacity to “see” is without narrative precedence.

If the meeting with Gormala leads Archie Hunter to a spiritual level of being, it also leads him to his finding the love of his life – the beautiful American heiress Marjory. The wild and violent seaside at Cruden Bay provides a fitting backdrop for the daring rescue he conducts to save Marjory and her elderly companion. And as the mysterious adventure of who Marjory is

24 See for example Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de siècle.*
unfolds to reveal danger and excitement, Archie and Marjory appear to form a deep and lasting attachment. Together they cycle, climb hills, and explore caves in search of treasure. Marjory is also a positive example of some of the characteristics associated with the New Woman of that period. Not only does she eagerly accompany Archie on bicycling trips, she also learns to swim, dresses in male clothing so she can join Archie in seeking buried treasure, and learns the bilateral cipher so quickly and so well that she can scratch out a message to Archie even while she is being kidnapped. As the story progresses the young lovers choose to marry in secret. But the young couple continues to be more interested in treasure hunting than they are in the consummation of their marriage. This supposedly lovelorn married couple spend their days cycling, climbing hills, searching for treasure, occasionally kissing, and parting at the end of the day.

The meeting with Gormala, her “haunting presence” (Mystery 46) and the “dual consciousness” it gives birth to in Archibald Hunter’s being renders him less masculine (if not emasculated). All that he “sees” becomes “plain and real” (318) and his vision is no more a “phantasm of the mind” and there is no more “a doubt…as to its accuracy” (321-22). But as his dual-being grows in power and strength, it appears as if the impending marital consumption recedes into a fantastic distance. He certainly strives to establish his strength and trust in modernity by scouring the countryside, climbing every hill, cycling across every inch of Cruden Bay, and exploring dark caves. And yet at the end of every day, the young couple part ways and go home alone.

25 Critics have explored some of the obvious sexual references in this book. The cycling for example is described in exhilarating and indeed, even orgasmic terms. Lisa Hopkins also reads the cave exploration the couple conducts in sexualized terms (much the same way as critics have read ‘the cave incident’ in E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India later on in the century).

26 Several critics including Hopkins and Andrew Maunder have pointed out the oddity of this couple’s marriage.
Clearly it would be farfetched to draw the supposition from Archie’s sexless marriage that he is a “(homo)sexual” to use Havelock Ellis’ term. But just as in many other works of the time period, Bram Stoker’s *The Mystery of the Sea* also reveals some of the underlying pressures masculinity faced as a stable social construct. As the century drew to an end, science as a masculine body of knowledge came to be shaken by intuitive (and thus feminine) occult spiritual forms of thought like mesmerism and hypnotism. Early on in the century, most occultists were women. As mediums they took upon themselves the responsibility for conducting an intercourse with the unseen world. And what is vital here is that spiritualists assumed that it was innate femininity, in particular, female passivity, which facilitated this cultivation of mediumistic powers. Towards the last half of the century, in an attempt perhaps to conquer the turf, men also earnestly sought to develop spiritual powers and a necessary passivity. In his extensive work on the gendered context of spirituality, *The Darkened Room*, Alex Owen notes that spiritualists of both sexes spoke of actively cultivating what they called ‘mind passivity,’ and for men this involved the concept of undermining the strength of mind (will-power) which was seen as essentially masculinist in nature (Owen 10). Owen describes how critics were quick to point out the implications. He continues to provide an example in a leading male medium, Daniel Douglas Home, who had to battle consistent rumors of a supposed effeminacy (10). In Owen’s words, much of the critics’ comments focused on Home’s “long hair, sensitive hands, and personal vanity” (10). These suggestions of ‘unnatural’ proclivities surface in various contemporary discussions of the science vs. spiritualism debate. Archibald Hunter’s struggle with and final surrender to Gormala’s esoteric mysticism leave him at odds with masculinity in its traditional form.

27 Daniel Day Home (1833-1886) was by far the most famous of Victorian mediums. He conducted séances for the British aristocracy and Continental royalty, for writers, artists, politicians, and scientists (Lamont 898).
Conclusion

Looking back and considering my earlier chapters, I notice that one figure that unites my work is the modern adventure hero. Such a hero clearly exists in a plurality of forms rather than as a singular, abstract figure. These forms are brought into being, not as expressions of an essential adventure quest, but as the outcome of reciprocal interactions between the structured forms of the adventure genre and the broader cultural imaginaries in which they participate. Hence the preceding chapters considered the manly man working from within the adventure scenario: the African wilds, the journey around the world, the open hills and plains of India, or the wild Scottish coastline. My analysis attempts, at the same time, to define the broad cultural necessities and implications behind such an adventure quest. In fact the very notion of a ‘quest’ encodes values and assumptions about the possibility, importance or necessity of journeying away from the familiar into the unknown in pursuit of a desired goal or state of being. Frederic Jameson’s notion of ‘sedimented content’ proves useful here in theorizing this relationship between the adventure quest and its cultural imaginaries. In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson suggests that any particular adventure story will incorporate within itself aspects of the prior generic tradition, which have become embedded into the structure of the genre. These inherited forms of adventure quest constitute a range of possibilities that define what “an adventure narrative is,” and the parameters beyond which a story ceases to be an adventure and becomes something else, at any particular historical moment. The sedimented content that defines this inherited tradition can be seen as the record of past connections with and between specific cultural imaginaries. Any adventure text therefore involves an encounter between the historically formed motifs and sedimented structure of the genre and new developments in the cultural imaginaries resonant at the moment of its production (Jameson 98-100).
Using Jameson’s ideas one can, of course, draw connections between the nineteenth-century adventure hero and his predecessors in works as far back as *Beowulf*. In the chapters that precede I devote much of my discussion to the gendering of adventure and its imaginative connection with empire. Martin Green, in *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* argues that the “adventure narrative is the generic counterpart in literature to empire in politics,” and points out that many writers have understood empire to be a “place where adventures took place, and men became heroes” (37). Green’s principal interest is in modern adventure, produced under the conditions of “the modern world system” established by mercantile and industrial capitalism, and epitomized by its founding text, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The hero of pre-capitalist adventure – the knight of chivalric romance – had relied on the chivalric code of honor to guide his actions, and on magical helpers to fight fantastical enemies like monsters and giants. By contrast, the paradigmatic modern hero is a figure born in a mercantile society: the rational Crusoe “defeats the challenges he meets by the tools and techniques of the modern system” (Green 23-4). On his island, Crusoe uses guns, compasses, keeps a diary, and even practices accountkeeping to create order and value out of the wilderness in which he finds himself. Green also emphasizes the reciprocal impact of these fictional imaginings upon the emerging reality of empire. In celebrating the opportunities that it offered for deeds of manly heroism, the adventure tales that began with Crusoe were, argues Green, “the energizing myth of English imperialism” (3).

Perhaps the most interesting of all imaginaries related to modern adventure (and one which add another layer to the already heavily ‘sedimented’ genre), bearing important implications for the masculinity of the adventure hero, is that of domesticity. Earlier critical debate, including that put forward by Martin Green, contends that adventure and domesticity
have little to do with each other. Green recognizes the existence of a domestically oriented mode of masculinity (separate from that of the adventurer), whose desirable and undesirable qualities were imagined in the gentleman-protagonists of the mainstream domestic novel from Richardson and Austen to George Eliot and E. M. Forster. Domestic manliness is presented as a totally separate alternative to that of the adventurer. But as my own discussion suggests, there is no linear narrative movement which separates the manly man or the adventuring hero from the domestic sphere. In fact, by the late nineteenth century these twin concerns could no longer be read as distinct and separate from each other. The appearance of a seemingly clear disjunction between the manly world of adventure and a domestic world reveals an intrinsic relationship between the two that the disjunction itself renders invisible. Interestingly enough, this disjunction takes on new forms and ‘sedimented’ layers at the turn of the century and beyond. The inexorable forces of modernity in conjunction with the Great War of 1914-18 gave rise to the modern military hero, who in turn appears to struggle with his heroic masculinity. As a paradigmatic example of how this social context informs post World War I constructions of heroic masculinity, I will now consider the real-life (but still discursively constructed) example of T.E. Lawrence, or the ‘Blond Bedouin’ as he was sometimes called.

The story of the British intelligence officer who lived among Bedouin Arabs, became a commander of their guerilla army, and led them to freedom from Ottoman tyranny during the latter part of the First World War, has proved to be one of the enduring myths of military manhood in twentieth-century Western culture. The enigma of Lawrence’s identity was foregrounded when in August 1919 Lowell Thomas brought to London his New York ‘travelogue,’ ‘With Allenby in Palestine.’ Thomas, an American journalist, had met Lawrence in Jerusalem in January 1918, and was allowed by General Allenby’s British Army Headquarters in
Cairo to visit him in his base camp, provided he published nothing until after the war. The slide show he created contained many photos of Lawrence in Arab dress. By November 1919, the public image that Thomas constructed for Lawrence made him a world figure: “the first media legend” and “the most celebrated soldier of the First World War” (Wilson 622). Although no text of Thomas’s 1919 commentary survives, his Lawrence narrative was published in serial form in *The Strand Magazine* (1920), under the title ‘The Uncrowned King of Arabia.’ The hook was a fascination with the “mysterious” hero of “The Greatest Romance of Real Life;” all the more ‘remarkable’ and ‘amazing’ because, claims Thomas, it is not merely a story but a history of real events, the romantic hero a real man (*Strand* 330, 338). In my conclusion I would like to posit that the Lawrence legend is an imperialist fantasy and its hero a figure of British imperial masculinity. As a masculine figure he embodies (like the earlier era) contradictions and enigmas that have remained potent and unresolved into late- and post-imperial Britain. And these contradictions are fueled by an inter- and post-war culture of the press and popular publications.

John Mackenzie has demonstrated the “striking continuity” between pre- and post-war boys’ fiction and heroic lives biographies, and the adaptation of these stories for the cinema, “which continued to rework the adventure, militarist, and imperial traditions of an earlier popular culture.” He argues that in the 1920’s, “warfare appears to have continued to be a popular subject for entertainment, particularly the aspects of it which could be placed in the context of a ‘series’ of semi-documentary films” that combined actuality footage with a boys’ adventure stories approach to war. (Mackenzie, “Propaganda” 9, 80). In constructing his adventure hero, Lowell Thomas clearly draws upon the traditional conventions of chivalric romance to narrate “the strange story of Colonel Lawrence” (*Strand* 330) and works to incorporate Lawrence’s evident differences form the tradition within this idealized image.
Lawrence was made into a hero at a time when the desired masculine qualities associated with the imperial tradition were palpably in contradiction with the actual social structures in which men were living and dying during and immediately after the Great War. Lawrence’s Arabian adventure can be seen to meet a widespread desire for the reassertion of a heroic British identity to set against the destruction not only of life, but of meaning, values and beliefs brought about by the war in Europe. Eric Leed has explained the European enthusiasm for war in August 1914 in terms of an imagined “liberation” from modern economic activity into “a field of freedom, uncertainty and risk, a field upon which a character and an identity would be realized – a character who was the antithesis of ‘economic man’” (Leed 60). This belief in war as a means to escape the “soul-killing mechanism of modern technological society” produced a profound disillusionment under Western Front conditions (30). While trench warfare could still be described in a 1919 boys manual as “a wonderful development…of interest and excitement,” several features of the Western Front campaign rendered it hostile to adventure (qtd. in Mackenzie, “Empire” 222). Trench warfare was mechanized, static, and bureaucratic. The war in the Middle East, by comparison was one of movement. Some scope existed for traditional, heroic military virtues such as enterprise, initiative, and bravery. The personal qualities of individuals in action counted for something. In this sense, the impulse towards the Lawrentian romance can be considered in terms of what Leed calls an “escape from modernity,” suggesting a flight into simplicity from the paradoxes and pressures of modern life (Leed 61).

The Lawrence story as told by Thomas foregrounds the wish-fulfilling feature of adventure to an extreme degree and goes to considerable lengths to mark Lawrence’s imaginative distance from the military culture associated with the Western Front. His Lawrence is no ordinary soldier, but a reluctant hero made ‘against the grain’ from the most unlikely
material. Further, Thomas’ repeated designation of Lawrence as a scholar and student – his
description of him as taciturn, shy, a loner, and a recluse, more at home with books, and in the
past, than in the political and military conflicts that are making the future – contrasts
contemplation and the inner life to the public world of conflict and action. Once, while trekking
across the desert together, Lawrence tells Thomas “that he thoroughly disliked war and
everything that savored of the military and that as soon as the war was over he intended to go
back to archaeology” (Strand 52). And this theme of Lawrence’s ‘unmilitary’ character is
continued through the commentary. He “hardly knew the difference between ‘right incline’ and
‘present arms,’” and he scorns the protocols of rank and military association and refuses to be
“correct” in uniform (Strand 52).

As well as intensifying the marvelous quality of Lawrence’s transformation into a soldier
hero, these details suggest a contrast in modes of masculinity between traditional images of the
military man of action and a more ‘passive,’ contemplative masculinity which may even be
inscribed as feminine or effeminate. Lawrence’s otherworldliness is linked by Thomas to his
aura of inscrutability, his perpetual faint smile as mysterious as the Mona Lisa. On first meeting
Lawrence, Thomas is impressed by his “serene, almost saintly” expression, like “one of the
apostles,” as if he were a Christian knight from the age of chivalry (Strand 52). The incongruity
of this contrast is developed at length by Thomas, in an extended play upon controversial
representations of military manhood. In Thomas’s Lawrence, youth and sexual ambivalence are
combined with more conventional associations of the soldier hero in an ideal integration of
‘active’ and ‘passive’ qualities, so elusive to modern masculinities. Their imagined integration
in Lawrence suggests not merely a distance from the traditional military, but an alternative and
superior mode of being a man. At the same time, by depicting his Lawrence as rejecting and
transgressing all signs and rituals of military authority, hierarchy, and discipline, Thomas cuts his hero free of the modern world, imagining as able to what he pleased out in the limitless deserts of Arabia.

‘Becoming an Arab’ is an essential component in Thomas’s narrative of Lawrence’s transformation into an adventure hero. For if romantic adventure in the colonial peripheries has now become the means to acquire idealized masculine qualities felt to be lacking from the modern world, these very qualities appear to be those that enable the inhabitants of the peripheral landscape. Thomas’s Arabs are thus characterized in terms of a traditional, pre-modern chivalric masculinity. Unlike the Turks they are the inheritors of a great civilization. ‘Becoming an Arab’ provides Thomas with the opportunity to prove Lawrence’s superiority as an Englishman. Thomas imagines that Lawrence “outdid them from camel riding to speaking their own language” (Strand 253). Apparently only “one Bedo among Lawrence’s followers…could stand the pace” on camel back (253). Becoming an Arab in Thomas’s narrative is the means whereby Lawrence’s knowledge of Arab customs can materialize as power. Significantly, the meeting of cultures is not reciprocal. Lawrence, the European can ‘go native’ but the natives are not enabled to ‘go civilized.’

Thomas’s adventure story ultimately imagines Lawrence resolving his military manhood and his intellectual acumen into a new kind of ideal unity and coherence: an omnipotently powerful masculinity for post 1918-Britain. The figure of the blond Bedouin rejuvenates the adventure hero as an ideal by removing it from the dominant conditions of modern warfare and exposing it to conditions in the colonial periphery where adventure opportunities still abound. This new hero offers an imaginary resolution to contradictions within modern British masculinities. The very qualities in Lawrence that mark his difference from conventional
military masculinity – his youth, his contemplative otherworldliness, and are recoded as essential British virtues through Lawrence’s encounter with the Arabs. By integrating these virtues with the epic qualities of the Arabs, Lawrence is equipped with an alternative form of martial valor that allows him to establish his superiority over military manhood. The final twist to his fantasy of the omnipotent Englishman concerns the question of effeminacy. Given the absence of women in Thomas’s Arabia, it is striking that many of Lawrence’s own qualities – his boyishness and lack of a beard, his small size, his modesty, and shyness – have feminine connotations. On more than one occasion Thomas explicitly describes Thomas as “shy,” and “blushing,” “red as a schoolgirl” (Strand 52, 50). At one point, Thomas even says that Lawrence in Arab costume looked like a “Circassian girl” (52).

During his brief visit to Arabia, Lowell Thomas concluded that in Lawrence he had discovered “the stuff of which great legends are made” (Strand 50). Although in Thomas’s narrative, Lawrence achieves recognition as a hero on his triumphant entry into Damascus, this recognition is actually dependent upon Thomas’s own narration of the Lawrence story to the British and Western public in the metropolitan centers. Although Thomas claims to be simply relaying the truth about Lawrence in his story, in narrating Lawrence’s deeds as an adventure romance his story is punctuated with specific forms of fantasy and actively imagines Lawrence as a British hero: “a man who will be blazoned on the romantic pages of history with Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, Lord Clive, Gordon, and Kitchener” (Strand 56).

While I have described Thomas’s narrative as a flight from modernity, this in itself implies (as Martin Green has argued) a distinctively modern form of adventure, the product of the modern world system. The attractiveness of the ‘primitive,’ in this case the Arab, arises at moments when confident belief in the progress and civilization brought about by modernity
gives way to doubt and discomposure, which the experience of the natural landscape and traditional modes of subjectivity found in the ‘backward’ zones can be felt to dispel.\textsuperscript{28} The selective treatment of these experiences can also be clearly identified in Thomas’s treatment of domesticity. His version of Lawrence’s story conforms to the ‘flight from domesticity’ that is characteristic of late-Victorian masculinity. We do not find in Thomas’s account any interest in the forms of traditional ‘domesticity’ lived by the Bedouin. What we do find instead is the suggestion, as in the novels I have previously considered, a troubling but fascinating transgression in traditional sexual boundaries, enabled by the encounter of modern with pre-modern. The popularity and cultural relevance of Thomas’s narrative cannot be understated. The exploits of Lawrence and his fellow Arab Bureau agents were rapidly transformed into fictional adventures. Some famous examples include F.S. Brereton’s \textit{With Allenby in Palestine} (1919), whose hero enters Turkish held Jerusalem disguised as an Arab, and John Buchan’s \textit{Greenmantle}. Like the swashbuckling popularity of heroes from \textit{Boys Own Paper} or the many tales of Henty, these and subsequent thrillers gained an immensely large following.

Martin Green suggests that “Lawrence’s vision of himself as a hero” was derived from medieval chivalric romance, and quotes Lawrence’s own claims that as a youth, he had harbored “chivalric” fantasies of leading the great but fallen Arab people in a “crusade” for freedom (326,327,328). In other words, Lawrence’s own self-imagining clearly contributes to the ‘reality’ which Thomas claims to record. Here I would also like to add that the rising complexity of modern mass media also contributed to the creation of this twentieth century masculine hero. As Richard Dyer has shown, any “star image” is a complex construction by a variety of agencies,

\textsuperscript{28} This is strongly reminiscent of the treatment of Africa and the body of ‘She’ in Rider Haggard’s \textit{She}. The discomposure Holly feels when he has to deal with the intelligent Ayesha is certainly a moment of doubt and discomposure. This doubt and discomposure is certainly foregrounded if Ayesha is prefigured as a New Woman who represents a potential emasculation.
from the entertainment industry, to reviews and commentators, and to fans themselves (8).

Thomas’s Lawrence depended upon the popular technology of slide projection to display his many photographs of Lawrence. The popular newspapers also seized upon Thomas’s image and it can be said that Lawrence himself had no “control” over his own heroic status. Such a modern projection of the masculine adventuring hero, coupled with a flight from that very modernity is in many ways a development which has its roots in the fin de siècle Victorian ‘manly man.’

Quoting Arthur Conan Doyle, John Tosh notes that Treasure Island (1883) marked the beginning of “the modern masculine novel.” Tosh continues by asserting that the publication of the book also marks the growth of a “sharp distinction” between the masculine and feminine narrative (77). Thirty years later T.E. Lawrence, the ‘blond bedouin’ can be seen as continuing in the footsteps of fin de siècle heroes whilst escaping from the throes of modernity.


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