THE UNBEARABLE GREATNESS OF ADVENTURE:
NARRATIVE VISIONS OF EMPIRE FOR VICTORIAN BOYS AND MEN

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses Scouting, Adventure, and Rogue Adventure/Undercover fiction to show how imperial narratives intersected with and reflected a historical imperial moment. This dissertation argues that although these genres seemed to radically challenge the status quo, they ultimately championed and endorsed obedience and conformity. But their attempts to contain potential social, racial, and economic threats to the Empire only exposed the contradictions inherent in the proposed solutions. And after the devastation of World War I, much of the support for Empire that these narratives had built was destroyed.

The first chapter points out that while Scouts were presented as a corrective to the deficiencies of the upper and lower classes, and championed as model Britons and steadfast defenders of the nation and its interests, they were never imagined as the successors to the nation’s hereditary leaders. While overviews of Scouting’s history and social importance have been presented elsewhere, my dissertation stresses the discrepancies in the program’s message and in the literature that promoted it.

The second chapter argues that Adventure narratives offered incentive to those traditionally disenfranchised from the Empire. Because Adventure narratives seemed to present an alternative lifestyle and offered a way to achieve financial and social success denied those without connection and influence, they
appealed to a wide range of readers. But as this chapter concludes, counter-jumping was ultimately discouraged, and adventuring heroes were as patriotic and self-denying as any traditional imperial role model.

The final chapter on Undercover Rogues discusses how information gathered by disguised Englishmen helped to sustain stereotypes about the colonized and affected how the Empire saw and treated them. The chapter shows how these narratives were designed to appeal to a rebellious “rogue” mentality, yet destroyed any agent who publicly went rogue and defied his imperial orders or the Empire. In this genre, obedience equaled survival. Ultimately, the chapter argues that the Empire was willing to destroy anyone—World War I gives ample proof of this. And while adventure literature continues to be written, after World War I, it is impossible to read such stories with the same innocence or suspension of disbelief.
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Introduction

Still Wavering;

Or

'Tis Hundred Years Since

Not too long ago, the humanities and social sciences departments of many Western universities instituted a wide ranging critique of colonial and imperial assumptions often lying at the heart of canonical texts. Post-colonial anthologies, conferences, and courses increasingly shaped intellectual discussion in humanities departments. And rightly so. Implicit and overt colonial perspectives had called the historical and cultural shots for long enough; it was time for the Empire to write and talk back.

But colonial and imperial attitudes were far from dead, and by the end of 2001, it was all too clear that at least in the U.S. these hardy stereotypes and expectations were ready to break forth in a more vigorous and virulent incarnation. After the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, reporters hoping to get inside information on the Taliban disguised themselves and entered Afghanistan. Several immediately found themselves prisoners of the Taliban, which had easily penetrated their “disguises.” These twenty-first century reporters-cum-undercover operatives soon learned their smug assumption that they could blend seamlessly with native populations was entirely wrong. Michel Peyrard, for instance, a reporter for *Paris Match*, was seized by the Taliban after “entering the country clad in a burka veil, which foreigners mistakenly think can disguise them” (*Guardian*, 10 Oct. 2001). Obviously ignorant of their counterparts of a century and a half prior, these reporters clearly did not learn that Western infiltration has never gone unnoticed. Earlier real and fictional Oriental specialists such as
Mahbub Ali, Lieutenant Henry Pottinger, and Richard Burton knew far better the cultural lay of the land. As Mahbub Ali anxiously reminds Creighton in Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, to avoid detection, an undercover operative had to seem to be a native. It is much the same advice that Pottinger and Burton followed (more or less). While their preparations may seem naive by twenty-first century standards—Burton (typically) fretted about being up to code on urinating habits while Pottinger immersed himself in language and customs—their familiarity with the obvious and the esoteric was based on the most detailed cultural information they had to work with. Although the disguises of Pottinger, Burton, and even Kim were imperfect, their hosts recognized their concern for verisimilitude and (usually) rewarded it. And in any case, these westerners were playing their games of disguise at a time when their affiliation with an imperial power was a formidable shield against harm and injury.

In the twenty-first century, such native restraint no longer holds. The prying gaze and the knowing smile will be rejected, and the person behind the disguise will be outed. As the ill-prepared reporters sneaking in to Afghanistan discovered, “Afghans can usually tell by body language such as a person’s walk whether a non-Afghan is hiding beneath the burka’s folds” (*Guardian*, 10 Oct. 2001). What is significant, though, is that these twenty-first century cultural spies still had the hubris to believe that they could pull it off, suggesting that Western stereotypes and cultural expectations of the East are intact. More than simply undermining the native population and government, the customary disregard for native desires—that journalists leave and stay out, that foreign occupying forces do the same—signals a continued imperial mentality towards both former colonial possessions and other non-colonized eastern spaces.

While Britain exerted its greatest imperial pressure in Asia, Arabia, and Africa from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, the attitudes of the
western reporters entering Afghanistan in 2001 still reflect the British Empire’s assumptions about colonial rights and privileges. Furthermore, while the United States is playing the leading role in the invasions, occupation, and “restructuring” of both Afghanistan and Iraq, its attitudes clearly continue that tradition of western imperial thought which the British Empire exemplified. And yet, while daily events vividly inform the world that native governments no longer wish to placate Western powers or forestall threatened reprisals—in fact, some former colonies (India, most notably) have become economic rivals—western imperial traditions die hard. As a result, First World countries have consistently failed to re-align to new shifts in political balance. The ideological east remains a fantasy space for possessing and controlling—a desire that manifests itself not only in the wish to intimately “know” what eastern cultures desire to keep hidden—the face beneath the “dark and confined space” of the burqa for example—but also to physically trespass and own. Western climbers, kayakers, and trekkers persist in asserting their right to travel unfettered regardless of the political climate of a region. Former colonial spaces also continue to be seen as offering opportunities for financial gain, and providing liminal spaces for individuals to re-invent themselves. “The Empire had been a gigantic employment exchange for the adventurous,” James Morris writes—and it remains so.

The belief that new and former colonial spaces receive benefits that only imperial powers can bestow continues to grip the West’s conscious. In an April 12, 2004 interview on NPR’s All Things Considered, Stephen Heering, a Texas truck driver contracted by Halliburton to drive fuel trucks in Iraq, expressed shock that people would attack Americans. Lured to work in Iraq because of the pay, Heering repeatedly said that America only wants to help the residents, and that it was therefore unfathomable that Americans should be attacked. Such statements echo those of the Victorian middle classes, who prided themselves “on the
philanthropy of the English who were prepared to extend their civilizing influence to the more ‘backward nations’” (Thomas 207). Such attitudes explain why the Game is to this day seen as a lark, and that making fortunes off the natives is still seen as ethical and right. Western journalists, travelers, and adventurers have amply demonstrated in the past few months that they still do not take the concerns of former colonies seriously.

In many ways, the beginning-of-the-millennium crisis now faced by the West is a descendant of the identity crisis England underwent between the mid-1800s and the first two decades of the twentieth century. While my thesis does not trace the shift in world colonial power from England to America, it does consider the ways in which British colonial assumptions directly influenced writers who in turn informed and reified class expectations, altered the administration of the colonies, and shaped competing forms of masculinity. While there is no longer a virtual monoglossic monopoly on representing the east, since formerly colonized and native narratives contribute to our cultural understanding of their own countries and ethnic groups, stereotypes have proven remarkably hardy. Twenty-first century readers continue naively to assume that their own cultural shapers of empire—writers, artists, and sociologists among them—more accurately represent others than they do themselves, which explains how western representations maintain their dominance as guides to understanding non-western identities. Just as the authenticity of Victorian imperial authors went virtually uncontested, so too are twenty-first century western narratives consumed as authoritative definitions and representations of people and events. In turn, western political policies continue to reflect these cultural fantasies.

But as always, it is at least arguable that to understand the present requires some knowledge of the past. This dissertation considers the role that popular literature and culture played in creating a certain image of the British Empire, and
discusses how they endorsed imperial ends by providing positive representations of colonial heroes, projects, occupations, and history. It also examines how various ideas of empire in the metropole and in the imaginations of Englishmen and women flourished. Although the imperial experience shifted somewhat, depending upon the class standing of the reader, both serious and pulp artists managed to create a multifaceted but unified fantastic vision of what the Empire was, could be, and could do for those who chose to sign up, to invest, or simply to support. Regardless of audience, then, these reproductions confirmed the centrality of Empire to an English citizen’s identity.

When I began writing this dissertation I had planned to write chapters on literature representative of individual social groups. It was an organization based on the assumption—incorrect as it turns out—that the literary genres of the late Victorian British Empire contained themes distinct to social groups and that the individual reading groups these narratives singled out would consume only those stories which featured themes important to or reflective of their social community. My initial organizational strategy considered literature merely as a supporting player in imperial expansion—that it was written to support and maintain already existing structures within the Empire. Neither an expanded nor a close reading, however, will support such a position. The reading audience for imperial narratives was not brand exclusive, and routinely crossed what seemed to be specific, identifiable ideological boundaries. And while there are clear social demarcations between different youth groups—Scouts, Public Schoolboys, Missionary Lads—in reality, for readers such borders (cultural, economic, social, even racial to a degree) did not exist in the fantasy land of imperial literature. The thrilling nature of fantastic adventure tales appealed regardless of the reader’s disinterest in the author’s ultimate edifying goal.
Although some of the imperial literature clearly represented the interests of a distinct genre—most notably those books aimed at the young British Christian or the public schoolboy and featuring heroes from these groups—many could not be easily aligned with any one particular social group. Narratives often overlapped in theme; consequently, many of the issues represented in the most widely read narratives (such as Kipling’s *Kim*) reflected the concerns of more than one social group, and they appealed to a broad spectrum of readers and interests. While imperial literature could be split into an infinite number of genres—sailing adventures, shipwrecked adventures, shipwrecked on an island with cannibals adventures—three primary categories, Scouting, Adventure fiction, and Rogue Adventure/Undercover fiction, most comprehensively addressed the issues that were of particular concern to social observers of the day: racial decay, physical decline, mental degeneration, class disobedience. Sensitive to and reflective of the ideological impulses and rationales of popular social reform movements, these three genres guaranteed a literary space in which cultural certainty and stability prevailed. What I found in my reading of popular imperial literature was that the narratives routinely—and successfully—presented obedience and conformity as radical ideology and action. Although the narrative’s (and its hero’s) shape changed according to the story’s assumed primary audience, its identification of what needed to be done—and how it needed to be done—never changed. With the exception of fiction aimed at the missionary lad and the public schoolboy—both of which assumed different goals and lives for their members—popular imperial narratives were conservative documents, differing only in how they appealed to their readers.

Ultimately, the dissertation became organized as a series of thematic essays, rather than divided into chapters on individual texts as they related to discrete social groups. I chose to do so not only because my primary texts
overlapped into each genre discussion, but also because, as noted before, the readership for each genre overlapped. Chapters are devoted to exploring how a particular imperial genre worked to support Britain’s imperial program in the national consciousness. The chronological parameters of my dissertation reflect what can be seen as the initial and the penultimate steps towards the Empire’s end: the first Indian rebellion of 1857 and the close of World War I in 1918. These two dates serve as points of awakening for the British reading public. The 1857 Indian Rebellion proved that the Kabul Pass massacre in 1839 was not the aberrant act of a ruthless Afghani warlord. Rather, it accurately reflected not only native dislike for British imperial presence, but also that native compliance with colonialism would not be infinite. And while the 1857 date anticipates the turn of the century by forty-three years, its repercussions informed many of the colonial anxieties (and the anxious policies) at the close of the Victorian era. In 1918, it was the English people themselves, and their colonial cousins in the white dominions, who knew after four years of war just how cheap their lives were to their Empire. The comments of Haig’s staff regarding the death or wounding of 710 of the 810 men Newfoundland battalion reflect the Empire’s callow attitude: “It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour . . . and its assault only failed of success because dead men can advance no further” (Gilbert 410). Though meant as praise for these colonial soldiers, such comments only reinforced feelings that England had sent men to die for no good reason,¹ and that it saw them as an endless supply of fodder.

While the amount of imperial fiction produced between 1857 and 1918 is enormous, the primary texts that I have used in my dissertation—fiction and non-

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¹ Soldiers from non-white colonies also had their complaints, although many of these grievances also reflect the empire’s continued dismissal of the contributions of native forces. Niall Ferguson in Empire notes that men from the British West Indies Regiment “resented the fact that they were used primarily for the hazardous but inglorious task of ammunition carrying” (304).
fiction travel memoirs and biographical writings— are highly representative of how codes of masculinity and masculine behavior were formed and how imperial ideologies were transmitted to a willing reading audience. Further, these texts were widely read and recognized by both the reading public and by social reformers. In fact, some of the adventuring texts such as *Kim* or Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* detective series were cross-referenced by the other genres. Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* recommends both as instructive and useful auxiliary reading for Scouts.

While Scouting, Adventure fiction, and Undercover Adventure have all been separately discussed by other writers, my dissertation considers not only how these narratives intersected with and reflected a historical imperial moment, but also shows how they sought to resolve the problems identified by social critics of the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods. In my discussion of the act of seeing in Chapter Three, I use the image of two mirrors endlessly reflecting an image between them to discuss the act of a native and a disguised Englishman viewing each other. The metaphor also helps to describe the relationship between the reading public of the *fin de siecle* and its popular literature. Looking at imperial literature, it is impossible to ignore the fact that even as narratives attempted to contain the anxieties of the time, they also betrayed their ambivalence not only to their own proposed solutions but also to the infallibility of the imperial project itself. There was no way that they could not—particularly if the authors of these narratives had first hand experience with how the Empire ran its business in the colonies. To that end, we have clear-eyed Maugham’s appraisal of colonial power relations in Malaysia, and even the romantically inclined Kipling cannot ignore the omnipresence of colonial death and more death in India.

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2 My use of non-fiction adventure writing reflects the fact that in the adventure genre, all tales are to a certain degree fabrications.
Popular representation of imperial ideology was not seamless; it regularly betrayed massive insecurities and paranoia. Though the start of the twentieth century saw the English Empire in possession of vast overseas colonies, this was an Empire plagued by doubt, and this insecurity crept into any close consideration of England's imperial program. It was also hard to ignore the continued warnings of contemporary social critics who saw evidence everywhere of an English civilization in decline. They variously warned of racial and social degeneration, gender inversion, colonial revolutions, European aggression and competition, and class breakdown. And as I detail in my chapters, these fears were not entirely without merit, for although racial, social, gender, and colonial boundaries and identities were still firmly in place, for the turn-of-the-century Englishman, the boundaries separating them were fragile—and dissolving. My dissertation shows how attempts to dispel these fears through imperial narratives only further exposed the contradictions inherent in the proposed solutions. Thus, while overviews of Scouting's history and social importance have been presented elsewhere, my dissertation stresses the discrepancies in its message. Although Scouting was presented by Baden-Powell as being a corrective to the deficiencies of the upper and lower classes, and its boys as model Britons, it was an endorsement with limits. Scouts were told that they were the future, yet at the same time, they were reminded that they were not the nation's future leaders. It was much the same for the Adventure and Undercover genres. The latter two genres appeared to snub Victorian social conventions, but still championed replication of the period's values, and in the Undercover narrative, the message was particularly brutal. Individualism was a glamorous, but ultimately Thanatostic path. The Empire destroyed whoever failed to recognize and obey it. Of course, in the end, the Empire was willing to destroy any who enlisted. World War I gives ample proof of that, and my dissertation briefly examines the literature of the period—the
poetry of the war poets and Strachey's non-fiction narratives—to show how the reading public, and in particular, the young boys who had grown up reading about adventure, now had a literature arguing that imperial narratives had all lied. There was nothing at all grand about being gassed, blown or shot apart, or buried alive, and while literature celebrating Scouting, Adventuring, and Undercover Adventuring continued to be produced and widely enjoyed after World War I, audiences would never again read such stories with the same kind of innocence or willing suspension of disbelief.

My dissertation uses Albert Memmi's and Edward Said's critiques of the colonizer in the colony as a starting point for discussing the intersection of literature and history, but is also informed by art critics James Elkins and Beth Tobin (who counts here because of her extensive writing on portraiture) and cultural critics Mrinalini Sinha, Marianna Torgovnick, Ann Laura Stoler, James Eli Adams, and Martin Green. The art theorists were particularly influential. Elkins provided me with a theoretical base from which to consider the physical and psychological act of seeing an object, and Tobin's discussion on English portraits featuring Englishmen in native costume helped to support my argument of dragging as an appropriation of native experience and life, and as a solely English prerogative. Of the cultural critics, Sinha provides an overview of important historical moments in colonial India's political history, as well a framework through which to understand the significance of these events. Torgovnick's discussion of the place that the primitive has in western imagination helped to support my argument that literature supported legislation that started from the assumption that natives were unfortunately and irredeemably primitive. Stoler's discussion of the politics of racial/blood purity informed my discussion of cross-dressing, fears of miscegenation, and racial decline. My discussion of Victorian and early Edwardian masculinity (that is, all of my arguments) were
informed by James Eli Adams’ description and definitions of masculinity. Finally, Martin Green’s writings on the nature of adventure and the place that adventure writing held in England supported my assertions that the genre served to support “proper,” authorized responses to the colonies.

Though some writers explicitly extolled the virtues of colonial immigration, the colonial civil service, or general adventure in the colonies, popular Empire literature’s most important function was to enlist support for the imperial endeavor, and to create a sense of the British people as united by Empire. The boy target audiences for the ideological appeals I will discuss—Scouting, Adventuring, and Espionage—responded brilliantly. Introduced to Empire through organized projects such as the Boy Scouts, and inspired by boys’ magazines, adventure novels, newspapers, and travel journals and memoirs, young British readers were unavoidably enthusiastic about England’s imperial projects. Moreover, this attitude was designed to accompany them into adulthood. Though most readers remained at home, imperial narratives powerfully sustained belief in the primacy of the English way of life and the “rightness” of English causes. Middle class employees in the colonial and domestic civil service could find in representations of adventuring civil servants evidence of some connection to a grander lifestyle. Office work had not emasculated them; they made a difference. Colonial civil servants monotonously serving out their terms of exile in isolated stations in the colonies could find in such narratives proof that they were (or could be) actually on the cusp of something exciting. Though filing reports and pushing paper may not have seemed fabulous, the job could turn thrilling at any second. The mild-mannered government worker just might be a superhero waiting for his moment.

When the situation arose, Scouts knew they would be that superhero; they would never be caught unprepared for any crisis. Priming Scouts to “be prepared,” Baden-Powell and his ubiquitous training manual constantly reminded
young boys that danger lurked everywhere. And though danger was not to be courted, Scouting expected it; indeed, the movement owed its start to such a crisis—racial degeneration. Alarmed by reports of declining British physical and mental health, and worried by the build-up of manufacturing and military might of other countries (Germany in particular), Baden-Powell saw Scouting as a curative. Since the unfit (the lower working class) were already lost, Scouting aimed at those who still had potential, and a stake in maintaining the status quo of the Empire and all that had been good in Victorian society—the middle class and upper-working class lads. Scouting presented the most organized and the most orthodox ideological horizon. Celebrating such iconic British symbols as St. George and King Arthur, chivalry and knighthood, Scouting appealed both to parents and to the middle class as a whole by using these traditionally masculine and heroic figures to encourage responsible behavior. And while its mock weapons, survival training, and tough talk about “being men” gave Scouts the self-image of an Edwardian special forces operative—clean-cut, polite, and dangerous—its effect on the boys was quite soporific.

Scouting taught obedience and deference. It promoted hierarchy as the natural order of society, and taught that diversion from traditional social structures would mean cultural destruction. The uniforms meant to distinguish Scouts as members of an elite youth force also sent the message that individuality was overrated and that conformity was the ideal. Or as Revathi Krishnaswamy puts it, “The Boy Scout code of character aimed at instant denial of individualism, thought, and emotion, in favor of corporate loyalty and group identity” (294). The literature that Scouting produced or recommended reinforced right behavior and right thinking. Its heroes were healthy, capable, masculine, and happy to sacrifice themselves for their country. However naive this attitude might seem from twenty-first century hindsight, boys were proud to be in such a well-regarded
organization. The sight of masses of uniformed boys reassured the middle class and the government that there were willing servants of Empire to keep England's future secure. In short, Scouting in time "fed the recruiting campaigns for imperial projects in the late nineteenth century" (Krishnaswamy 294).

But literature for those already inclined towards working for imperial Britain was preaching to the choir. Although Revathi Krishnaswamy argues that Scouting's construction of "boy nature" was "a class construct designed for the lower classes in order to refashion them to conform to middle-class interests" (294), Scouting was not really an option for the lower classes. The cost of uniforms and the luxury of unpaid time for "scouting" were often beyond the boys, and the required deference to "authority" and social "betters" grated. After almost seven decades of fighting for more equitable wages and worker rights, willingly giving obedience to the traditional economic enemy would hardly be an attractive lower working class aspiration. Adventure and Undercover Agent narratives aimed at the industrial/lower-working classes and below offered a panacea to disaffected English youth by celebrating an alternative life to one lived in impoverished, crowded cities. Scouting promised training that would not only teach boys valuable job skills, but would assure future employers of their trustworthiness. Adventuring offered a chance to "jump the counter"—not into a marginally better social or economic situation, but into an exotic and extreme one. Even if an adventurer failed, would not it be better to die chasing diamonds in foreign lands than to waste away through "grueling toil, often for wages barely sufficient to keep alive, [in] constant fear of unemployment" (Houghton 60)? Adventure narratives offered evidence of a life beyond factory employment and tenement living, and while few boys would emulate the lives of such heroes—immigration was perhaps the closest most came—adventuring was presented as a possible choice.
In actuality, Adventure fiction did not endorse a radically different ideology, presenting its own role models who were as patriotic and healthy as Scout heroes. No adventuring hero forgot his English roots, or his fellow countrymen, and he followed the code of chivalry and self-sacrifice that Scouting had endorsed. The massive output of adventure narratives produced for and consumed by young English boys—and men—was therefore reassuring to middle class social commentators. Appearances of rebellion and class-busting were deceiving; adventure heroes were upright, and stolidly patriotic. Such heroes were incapable of thinking of anything that conservative middle class readers would oppose. While any argument that adventure fiction actually delayed revolution by providing the dissatisfied industrial poor with entertaining, diverting reading would be naive, it is true that adventure narratives did suggest to "masses of dark, impenetrable, subterranean blackguardism' in the slums of every city" (Houghton 58) possible ways for seeing themselves as part of the Empire. Although the lands and situations represented would never be seen first hand, a sense of greatness remained. Readers were offered a larger vision of themselves as Britons and as heirs to the greatest empire. These narratives included rather than excluded.

But even adventuring required some concessions to British manners and society. Until someone in England paid money for King Solomon's diamonds, they were rocks; however alluring adventure fiction might be, it did not ultimately seem to promise complete self-determination. Those wishing this fantasy thrilled instead to the imperial Undercover Game. More hubristic than their Scouting or Adventuring brothers, these heroes were beyond the petty concerns of the obedient civil servant, and the confining manners of the conventional hero. Scouting and Adventuring had rules—both endorsed a "rugby" mentality. Undercover agents did not feel the need to follow consistently any organization's rules. Flexibility and innovation were all. Suspicious of traditional training or organized
expeditions, these lone wolves of Empire followed their own professional code as they chased after their own version of excitement.

And yet, while the undercover genre displayed the clothes of rebellion, it ultimately worked in the tradition of the conventional Adventuring tale. The primary difference was in the utopist vision presented as a panacea for discontent. By offering a vision of a level economic and cultural playing field, the Adventure genre appealed to the man looking for success as defined by the middle classes. The Undercover narrative seemed to offer an alternative career, by presenting the lure of power. Undercovers could gain real, though often invisible, influence.

This genre presented evidence that characters barred from education or specialized training still could build or destroy empires, or change the course of history. The Undercover genre assured disaffected readers that people like them could become players, even if no one knew. The irony, of course, was that while the Undercover brotherhood appealed most to the imagination of the industrial poor—think James Bond—the operatives themselves came from the middle and upper-working classes. There are many reasons for this. Despite an Undercover operative’s disdain for traditional education, many of his skills, language acquisition and geographical knowledge among them, were actually developed most easily through school. And there was still the problem of how the man established a cover in the colonies. Without the benefit of connections, gained only through some vague “official” reason for his being there, there was little chance of being effective. Nevertheless, undercover narratives stressed instinct and natural inclination over formal schooling or affiliation. Kipling’s Kim may learn math (the important multiplication tables!), writing, and geography at St. Xavier’s, but his important training occurs on the road, and at Lurgan Sahib’s. Further, at least in the imperial narratives, the Undercover world was egalitarian. Irish native son of India and street urchin, Kim is almost a template for this fantasy. Yet of all the
imperial genres, the Undercover narrative was probably the most misleading. While seeming to reject overt patriotism, conventional behavior, manners, and middle class ideology, it still affirmed colonial service and Empire. Richard Burton and General Gordon might publicly denounce their superiors, but in the end, they directed their rage and rebellion against timidity and conformity—not the Empire.

This dynamic neatly inverts the commonplace observations made about the Victorian and early Edwardian eras. The period was often intensely self-congratulatory, regularly producing effusions like John Davidson's "Song for the Twenty-fourth of May":

Sea-room, land-room, ours, my masters, ours,
Hand in hand with destiny, and first among the Powers!
Our boasted Ocean Empire, sirs, we boast of it again,
Our Monarch, and our Rulers, and our Women, and
our Men! (Thomas 213)

But as Jane Thomas notes, "Even though Victoria’s poets, novelists and social commentators [were] quick to defend the status quo—preferring modification to revolution—anarchy persistently haunts the margins of their texts, disrupting the stasis implied by the ubiquitous ‘happy ending’" (210). Sometimes the anarchy burst in. In the last fifty years of the nineteenth century, England had to deal with the Sepoy Rebellion (or The First War of Independence, as it is known in India) and the Boer War. There were also problems at home. Ireland always presented difficulties, and there were threats of class revolution. Disraeli's famous "Two Nations," the rich and the poor, seemed to be moving toward war, as "an increasingly militant proletariat" used mob violence to publicize their complaints. This instability was not lost on social critics who took warning from France, which
"seemed to dramatize in violent and shocking form the shifts in the balance of power that had been apparent in their own country for some time" (Thomas 210).

Many narratives reflected the anxieties of the times. Imperial narratives deployed threats, perceived and real, anticipated and past, at home and in the colonies, only to have masculine heroes always overcome them. Yet, this obsession with representing the competent, perfect Englishman betrayed fears about another bogey of Victorian England—racial decline. Faced with reports of physical degeneration, social commentators warned that a waning of wits and a dissolution of morals would follow if the causes were not detected immediately. The problems created by city living and industrialization had of course been apparent for at least a century. But the spectre of a possible "English Revolution," such as the one predicted by Carlyle, Marx, and others, increasingly haunted the Victorian imagination. It was a time for scapegoating, and as David Cannadine observes in his study of the decline of the British Aristocracy, the industrial poor—fertile beyond their means, sickly, and morally suspect—were initially singled out for blame. By the turn of the century, however, the aristocracy's physical and moral dissolution and profligacy had become subjects for public discussion. Aristocratic men and women gave in to the "urge to 'enjoy' themselves because there was nothing else to do" (Cannadine 406-07), and having wasted what wealth and property they had, found they had no skills for surviving in the new world. Their morals also attracted middle class condemnation. Even though he was not an aristocrat, the sickly, monstrously proportioned, and openly homosexual Lytton Strachey came to be for many observers of the day the epitome of effete degeneration. At the apogee of her world power and influence, then, England seemed in decline to many writers, artists, and social commentators. In response, they tried to devise means for preventing or delaying the coming fall and loss.
The first chapter of my thesis examines the forces that led to Baden-Powell’s founding of the Scouting movement and considers the effect that Scouting had on defining the organized worker of Empire—the civil servant. Alarmed by women, natives, foreign economic competition, the potential for another war in the colonies (World War I, as it turned out), physical decline, and homosexual behavior, Baden-Powell saw Scout training as an antidote for a degenerating race. In a reverse gender liberation, he saw his task as freeing men from the crippling influence of mothers and wives. Like clubs, Scout meetings allowed men to be with other men, without heading to the pubs or athletic matches. There were two compelling reasons for separating the sexes. First there was simply no place for women in the rough world of the Empire that Baden-Powell envisioned. Worrying about women’s safety only endangered missions and wasted time. (Consider Jane’s abduction in *Tarzan of the Apes*, and how many men had to troop out after her.) Femininity was also infectious. Men who could not cut ties with their mothers denied their responsibility to the nation and risked becoming weak. (If Peter Pan had not come upon the scene, the pirates would have slaughtered the sleeping Lost Boys because Wendy insisted on coddling them.) Second, being around other boys allowed Scouts to establish those homosocial bonds that they would have developed had they gone to public schools. Though on a lower economic plane, Scouts formed economic and social ties that benefited them later in their careers, whether at home in the trades or in foreign lands. This chapter also examines Scouting’s avowed aim of ensuring that Darwinian attrition took place. Since the weak could not better themselves without help, and reproduced in unfortunately large numbers (untrue, as statistics reveal), Scouting slowed the degenerative slide with a regime of character and bodybuilding. In a brilliant bit of manipulation, Baden-Powell positioned Scouting as a hip, technologically savvy organization that also stressed self-
reliance. Scouting’s criminal investigation training was hard to resist, offering techniques for solving the “whodunit” before everyone else, including adult professionals. But by teaching basic survival skills, Scouting also encouraged boys to learn how to survive without modern tools. The eventual human product was paranoid, fit, homosocially inclined, yet morally upright—the ideal English boy, and the country’s best hope for staying the Empire’s end.

But for others, Scouting failed to impress. The rules, the manual, the outfits, the mandatory meetings—Scouting’s ideal English boy seemed a bit too programmed. Adventurers, in contrast, seemed more like real men. In the second chapter, “Knocking off the Bastard,” I will examine Adventure fiction’s role in the imperial canon. This genre’s popularity is easy to understand. As J. A. Hobson has observed, “for the masses there was a ‘cruder appeal to hero-worship falsified in coarse glaring colours, for the direct stimulation of the combative instincts’” (MacDonald 5). Imperial adventurers behaved in conventionally heroic ways that all but the most pacifist and evangelical recognized as masculine courage and derring-do, and the myths they perpetuated about Englishmen and colonized natives fed the hopes and egos of English readers while sustaining the Empire’s primacy in their imaginations.

Unlike Hobson’s “cultured” and “semi-cultured” classes, secure (foolishly or not) in their social and financial futures, one reading audience of Adventuring was the disaffected, industrial working classes and below. A population that received little formal education or training found it gratifying to know that a living could be earned through its fists. In Adventure’s fantasyland, the playing field was leveled, and men were judged and rewarded according to merit rather than social rank. This obviously appealed to a readership whose educational background was likely to be spotty and whose chances for receiving preferential treatment were nil. And unlike the Scout, an adventurer was his own man. The
narratives sustained the illusion that a man did not have to be good (although he inevitably chose to be so), or have to serve the nation or Empire. Free to make his own choices, unlike the Scout, the adventurer could choose for himself what to wear, what to eat, or whether he would smoke.

But middle class readers also embraced Adventuring. The colonial “frontier” fascinated those at home, and while initial “reports were merely exotic entertainment for the London publishing trade, they soon began to provide their subjects with the makings of a cult” (MacDonald 12). Middle and lower-middle members romanticized emigration as a sub-genre of adventuring, hiding “under their security and prosperity an ‘elemental unrest’” which Robert H. MacDonald describes as a “journey far beyond the skyline, to become the ‘frontiersmen’ of all the world” (13). Adventuring, like Scouting, also affirmed English masculinity by rejecting domestication in any form—by females or by the social expectations of civilization, among others—and stressed the need for physical prowess on heroic and dangerous missions. Adventuring narratives confirmed that the essential nature of English masculinity had not been diluted—cruelty and brutality were still essential parts. Noble sentiments tempered violent reactions, but through Adventure’s lens, English men were still virile and viable. Such books assured readers regardless of class that the great masculine rite of passage was experienced in adventure, and adventure had exploration and conquest as its defining symbols (MacDonald 209-10).

And yet, Adventuring heroes often seemed to move between the polar ends of Scout and Rogue. Scouts were prepared—predictable—and trained extensively. Rogues were schemers—random—and untrustworthy. In contrast to either, Adventurers were impromptu operatives who understood that in the “real world,” improvisation was often more useful than a full pack. They understood that sometimes the best use of training manuals was as fuel. They understood that
overtraining often led to a meltdown if any variable changed. But adventurers were not crazy. They too had learned to read the land and construct weapons and tools of opportunity, and also identified with the mores of English society. Though familiar with native ways, they always pulled back from the brink of becoming a “white nigger,” disowning the Empire, or both. In many ways, Adventure narratives therefore were the most bifurcated of all the Empire’s literature. On the one hand, the stories reaffirmed the reader’s impulse to anarchy. These were “tell the establishment where to go” tales: adventurers did not need any stinking handouts from the Empire. Yet these narratives also reinforced the indissoluble ties binding adventurer to Empire. While a man might romp freely through the jungles of Africa or the hills of India, his English (imperial) instincts always followed him, informing his behavior and decisions.

Inevitably, adventure narratives of all cultures celebrate the “berserker” hero. This early 20th century Wolverine fascinated readers who, through his exploits, could imagine themselves as gifted fighters, strategists, and empire makers and breakers. The heroes of my third chapter, “Gone Native, Back Later,” are the extreme adventurers of Empire—not necessarily the most successful, but definitely presented as the most original, and rebellious. They were undercover operatives who attempted to infiltrate native populations by passing as natives, or the hero-who-would-be-a-hero, or civil servants who told the Empire to stuff itself. What set these men apart was their willingness to distance themselves from their communities, and to forgo the Empire’s approval, following their own inclinations. Undercover fiction celebrated imperial hubris. Take for instance those cross-dressing operatives who were invariably represented as successfully fooling the native populace—better natives in the imperial imagination than the natives themselves. The implications of this masquerading are significant. On one level, the belief that undercover operatives could be better natives than the
colonized can be read literally. Natives could not hope to be as successful as an English undercover operative in any way, once he set his mind to it. In fact, a talented native should be watched carefully—chances are he is really an Englishman. If a native does perform well, it must be because he has completely effaced his native identity and adopted to the best of his abilities English ideals and teachings. But he will remain "black" on the inside. However white a facade he might use to disguise his language, body, and manners, something will give him away. This was a relief to English on-lookers. That the native could never pass as a "real" Englishman insured that native competition in the Public Service Commission in India or in colonial service would never succeed. This confidence in knowing that a native would never slip undetected into the colonizers’ midst was similar to the belief that lower class individuals could never infiltrate into a class better than their own either. The hostile derision with which the Anglophile native is represented is only a mildly disguised variant of the loathing that the upper-working, middle, and aristocratic classes felt for Englishmen who tried to break into social castes other than their own.

Finally, the Undercover genre performed some amazing literary feats by suggesting that deeply traumatic experiences could be radical, anarchic, and fun. For all their badass attitude, real-life renegades like General Gordon were experiencing breakdowns in sanity and faith. Personal doubt was one thing, but doubt publicly aired was another, as England cut loose those who refused to toe the party line. Those who publicly questioned imperial policies, for instance, exposed the fact that the Empire no longer rolled on as a unified behemoth, and the fact that England hesitated at times to disperse troops to "avenge" and "defend" its agents signaled to natives that the Empire was drawing inwards, and its servants were losing support. The Empire was vulnerable. Though still convinced that natives could never fill the shoes of Englishmen, it could not help
but see that natives were taking advantage of this disintegration of imperial faith. World War I delayed and hastened the Empire’s end. The immediate inclusion of the colonies in the war meant that native nationalist movements were put off, but in the end, the War made it all too clear that British men were no longer willing to do the job they were trained and primed to do.

Reactive, fantastic, self-aggrandizing, and morbidly obsessed with the Empire’s continued greatness, in the end, imperial narratives were fraught with anxiety. While it is valid to attribute responsibility to them for extending and supporting imperial attitudes and racial stereotypes, these narratives were more than just “defences and explanations of imperialism . . . stories which work to justify conquest and colonisation” (MacDonald 5). For while narratives justifying the imperial process may have legitimized the mission and perhaps even lent a sense of “rightness” to the very existence of colonies, they ultimately could not convince a man to serve. What the narratives of Empire did was give Englishmen at home and abroad a concrete sense of who they were in the world. They supplied a reason for getting behind the imperial program. They made the Empire and the imperial experience the readers’, no matter what their social position was. The jingoistic, hyperbolic, and naïve representations of heroes, villains, and events reassured readers that although the world was changing, the Empire was a constant. Antidotes to the social and cultural earthquakes shaking the English world, the narratives of Scouting, Adventuring, and Roguing reassured audiences that the Empire’s vitality and viability would endure.
Chapter One

Why Can’t A Boy Be More Like a Man?
Scouting and the Rejuvenation of National Character

For an entire class of young men, the Scouting movement that William Baden-Powell, Daniel Beard, and the other “uncles” created became a club that was in many ways as exclusive as any old boys’ or old bloods’ society. Deliberately distinguishing himself from the immaculate public school boy, the scout emulated the frontiersman, the Zulu warrior, the American Indian, the Japanese ninja. This distancing was significant, for although both Dr. Thomas Arnold and Baden-Powell were preparing boys to serve the Empire, the public school system and its old boys’ structure sought to preserve an almost aristocratic, increasingly anachronistic ideal of noblesse oblige, while Baden-Powell was convinced at the fin de siècle that the race had to be restored through a rebuilding of national character. For Baden-Powell, masculinity was a goal that all but the most degenerate could reach. Scouting therefore did not set out to create an officer and/or a gentleman. Its emphasis on patriotism, heroic ambition, physical fitness, and preparedness for the call to arms was part of its mission to make warriors, adventurers, explorers, and conquerors. Rejecting the feminine, scouting set out to make men.

Baden-Powell was responding to a late-Victorian conviction that its males were becoming degenerate and effeminate. The heroes of adventure fiction, and the private adventurers and soldiers in history texts, might seem to be grown up versions of the robust English lad, ready for the challenge of conquering new lands and defending the Empire. Army statistics at the onset of the Second Anglo-Boer
War (1899-1902) and those after its end, however, provided a brutal shock. Almost one-third of the volunteers were unfit for duty, thanks to damaged lungs, poor eyesight, or a simple inability to perform the basic functions required of a soldier. That Britain’s youth seemed to be degenerating at the moment of the country’s greatest economic and political influence exacerbated fears that a national decline was imminent. Physiological studies repeatedly found British males to be physically deficient, while “invasion specialists” like Lord Roberts, who had served as Commander-in-Chief of the army from 1901-04, and who had been field marshal in South Africa in 1900, and novelists William LeQueux and Erskine Childers warned of spies infiltrating and preying on an enfeebled England. As early as 1899, Headon Hill’s *The Spies of Wight* warned that “the Germans had a malevolent plan to invade England or otherwise overthrow the British Empire. The fear spread down even as far as the readership of the Boys’ Own Paper” (Ferguson 287). Newspaper editorials, Parliamentary speeches, and the plots of popular spy fiction all agreed that a lack of virile young Englishmen had put the country on the verge of collapse.

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3 See Hynes (22-27), Rutherford (54), and Jeal (358). Hynes notes that “sixty percent of Englishmen were physically unfit for service. The figure was first cited by General Sir Frederick Maurice in an article in the *Contemporary Review* (vol. 81, 78-86) in January 1902... The sixty-percent figure was quoted again in the following year, in a memorandum on the causes of rejection of recruits, written by Sir William Taylor, Director-General of the Army Medical Service. General Taylor reported that in fact only thirty-seven percent of applicants examined were rejected as unfit, but he concluded that if the number of men too obviously unfit even to be considered was added, the total would be close to Maurice’s estimate” (22). In response to these findings, the government set up the “Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration.” Although the committee’s findings were inconclusive, “public men were drawing doom-laden conclusions” (Jeal 358). Deficiencies included being “too small... having weak lungs, bad hearts and rheumatic complaints... flat feet and bad teeth” (Rutherford 54).

4 Lord Roberts wrote the introductory letter to Le Queux’s *The Invasion of 1910* facsimile and also helped write the book.

5 See Richmond and Baden-Powell’s writings. Also, see Ferguson (287) for a list of other titles of other books featuring invasion scare themes. Erskine Childer’s *The Riddle of the Sands* (1899), Headon Hill’s *The Spies of Wight*, L. James’ *The Boy Galloper*, Phillips Oppenheim’s *A Maker of History* are among them as is H. G. Wells’ *The War in the Air*. Hynes’ chapter “The Decline and Fall of Tory England” also discusses the causes of “invasion” fears and considers the effects of dystopic literature which envisioned German occupation of England on the reading public.
At least initially, the middle class calmed its fears by blaming an always-convenient bogey: the lower classes. And yet, while various social "experts," including Baden-Powell, agreed on the source, responding to the problem was another matter entirely. If the primary threats to England's supremacy were not its rebellious colonies and Ireland, or the growing military and manufacturing power of other European nations, but its own citizens, then the danger that this degeneracy might climb out of the east end slums of London and up into the middle and upper classes was an immediate one. In general, the late Victorian era was an anxious time for the middle classes, since their own success did not seem to improve Britain. Social commentators were frightened by "the failure of the labouring classes to respond to legislative and charitable initiatives to raise their moral and social well-being." England's prosperity "had not alleviated mass poverty nor the prospect of social unrest"; in fact, the nation's social problems were apparently "not symptoms of too little civilization," but "the consequences of too much" (Rutherford 53-54). The middle classes and their "betters," therefore, were more worried about implosion than decline. Baden-Powell offered up Scouting as a vaccine against this impending threat. While the extreme poles of the social structure declined to participate in, or were excluded from Scouting, the upper working classes and the middle classes answered his call, providing the bodies for an army of servants fit, willing, and ready to sustain Imperial Britain.

The Scouting movement confidently identified the primary threats to young British virility as female and foreign. Women were a danger not only because their (s)mothering nature stunted the latent heroism of the English lad, but also because those unnatural, aggressive suffragettes and overseas missionaries threatened to emasculate him. Scouting sought to stamp out divergence from conventional male gender and sexual roles. Furthermore, Scouting's emphasis on mental and physical hardiness sought to prevent what those Army results foretold:
the “decline of race” (Rutherford 54). And one final note: since manufacturing technology had contributed so much to the growth of the British Empire, Scouting’s emphasis on elementary science—astronomy, navigation, crafts—showed that developing resourceful and handy individuals was also part of the plan.

Though initially considered an innovative, even radical response to British social degeneracy, Scouting proceeded on social assumptions that were conservative, and highly predictable. In *The Scapegoat*, Rene Girard identifies the moment of social crisis as not the period of catastrophe itself, but the point at which the culture realizes it has lost those “rules and ‘differences’ that define cultural divisions” (12). To rejuvenate and reinvigorate itself, the community must expel the contaminating element(s) that induced this “plague” in the first place. As Girard points out, whether the identified element is “really” the problem is inconsequential for the community; removing the perceived contaminant is the first step towards health. For the conservative late-Victorian observer, women reformers and counter-jumping men were indisputably blurring carefully maintained lines. Whether in newspaper caricatures lampooning the “he-woman,” or in medical reports suggesting “scientific” reasons for such gross behavior, the “unnatural” woman, or “hyena in petticoats” fascinated the popular imagination. Any casual onlooker could supposedly recognize homosexuals’ “effeminate” characteristics; if not, the spectre of Oscar Wilde stood ready as a striking example of what the “aesthetic” male looked and behaved like. The middle class man on the make, while not so “unnatural,” was no less unsettling. His desire, and sometimes his ability, to pass as, or even beyond, his “betters” erased those external markers which supposedly identified his class. Such a social jumper was perhaps even more dangerous than women or homosexuals, since the very act of erasing class difference was itself undetectable. Women, homosexuals, and the
boy with ambitions were therefore the three terrible Victorian social bogeys, and Scouting kept a close eye on all of them.

The first two sections of this chapter, “Mothers, Hyenas, and Other Drags” and “We’ll Ask, We’ll Tell,” examine Scouting’s reaction to these overt threats. A third section, “The Hero Emerges,” traces how Scouting seeks to improve the nation’s stock by creating future colonial servants out of boys whose major characteristic remains self-denial. The chapter ends with a section on “Building a Better Future through Science,” which shows not only how Scouting’s focus on technology ultimately supports militarism, but also creates the Scout’s willingness to be erased from the playing fields of the Game—whether the Game of business, colonialism, or war. My primary concern in this chapter is not with Scouting’s own history, which began in 1908. Rather, by considering Scouting to be a comprehensive, corrective response to the state of the English boy, I am using it to identify those social, economic, political, and literary events of the preceding decades which foreground the creation of the potential civil servant as a challenge, an opportunity, or a problem.
The adventure fiction that Scouting endorsed celebrated a homosocial bond. By removing its male heroes to foreign lands, such fiction ensured that any female characters were non-English, non-white, and therefore non-threatening as potential spouses who might end the fun. One absent female did however bind the adventuring heroes together, through the secret handshake of maternal veneration. As both Mother and Motherland, the English woman represented to those maintaining the racial bonds of Empire all that made England glorious and worth dying for. And yet, her actual arrival in a narrative almost inevitably brought it to a close. Although the mechanics of Empire eventually required the presence of women to populate and domesticate all claimed spaces for England, in adventure fiction her appearance is delayed indefinitely, or occurs offstage, as it does for Rider Haggard’s hero, Allan Quatermain, or takes place in the gaps between sequels—Jane’s place in the later installments of the *Tarzan* series.

This was because women were dangerous, and for the masculine, patriotic Scout-to-be, the greatest female enemy, Mother, was also his reason for being. “Motherhood was the ideological center of the Victorian bourgeois ideal of the family,” according to Jonathan Rutherford, and this created a crisis of control: “women commanded domestic power, and their control in the home was seen as a potential threat to male dominance” (7). The solution Scouting offered for the mother problem reflects its chosen role as the liberating male force that finally weans a boy from his mum. Scouting sought to invert this relationship by making mothers dependent on their sons. This strategy often involved replacing the Scout’s flesh-and-blood mother with the figure of Queen Victoria, as the “Mother of the Empire,” who was then in turn identified as being Britannia herself. In a chapter entitled “Mrs. Britannia’s Youngest Line of Defence,” Robert MacDonald
investigates the role of the Scout as protector of England and Empire by studying Bernard Patridge’s 1909 *Punch* cartoon of a Scout leading the stout Britannia forward, saying “Fear not, Gran’ma, no danger can befall you now. Remember *I* am with you!” MacDonald points out several telling role reversals here. First, the cartoon represents the archetypal good deed of Scouting: assisting an elderly lady across the street. Second, the title, “Our Youngest Line of Defence,” plays “on the irony of the young Scout taking care of the adult—a not uncommon upper middle-class conceit” (*Sons* 198), and one in keeping with Baden-Powell’s claim that Scouts could do a man’s job, if only they were shown how, and were then allowed to do it.

Yet MacDonald also notes that this Britannia is not the “warrior maiden or the defiant matron,” used as an emblem during times of national conquest and suppression, but an old woman, whose “figure, if not her face is somewhat reminiscent of the late Queen Victoria.” “Is the Empire in decline?” MacDonald asks, and his remarks that this cartoon serves as a “visual shorthand, an iconography that incorporates words of power,” and that “Loyalty, courage, duty, good citizenship are embodied in these symbols,” still sidestep the original question (*Sons* 197-98). I would argue that the figure is so matronly because the image also represents the Scout’s emancipation from his social, if not legal, identity as a dependent child. Just as the enfeebled woman *needs* the child’s support, any mother who would keep a boy from entering the grand game of Life as soon as possible is selfish at best, and at worst, unpatriotic. England *needs* the support of all her sons.

Five years later, World War I recruiting pamphlets directly addressed the danger that middle class masculine patriotism could be stifled by domesticity, asking women “When the war is over and your husband or your son is asked, ‘What did you do in the Great War?’ is he to hang his head because you would not
let him go?” (Exhibit, Imperial War Museum). The message was obvious: England’s sons were men whose first duty to a female was to the nation. Scouting also valued protective chivalry, but as a sign of men’s necessary primacy in unstable times. In fact, as Victoria’s death receded further into the past, the protector increasingly replaced the protected as an icon for England, and “With the coming of the war the Boy Scout was pictured, again and again, as the image of Britain” (Sons, 198).

As a Scout, the English boy could imitate the life of the “fictitious imperial hero” found in popular literature: “a series of opportunities to exercise his prowess and demonstrate his supremacy over foreigners and the working classes” (Rutherford 12). Baden-Powell’s description of Scouts makes this clear: “They give up everything, their personal comforts and desires, in order to get their work done. They do not do all this for their own amusement, but because it is their duty to their King, fellow-countrymen, or employers” (6). This contempt for self-indulgence or passivity was also found in the imperial hero, whose “refusal to contemplate, to think, or to pause, suggests his adventures involved a compulsion to escape the idleness and comfort of domesticity” (Rutherford 12). Take for example T. E. Lawrence. Shunning the “frivolity” of childhood, he “seemed instead to be hardening his body and spirit for some future ordeal.” Lunch was “bread and water, nearly every day;” and in general, young Lawrence “slept little, ate little, and experimented with self-imposed tests of physical endurance” (Belt 45). While Scouting never demanded anything close to Lawrence’s self-imposed asceticism, the boys were ordered to eat simply, to eschew alcohol and tobacco, and to avoid conspicuous consumption of modern society’s conveniences.

The Victorian mother, even if a fervent supporter of the Empire, was seen as the dangerous source of luxury and effeminacy. And at a time when the need
for boys was becoming greater, Scouting represented one means of fighting off this threat. "How could young boys be saved?" MacDonald asks:

The public school solution, separating boys from their mothers before too much damage was done and subjecting them to a Spartan regime in a world without women could hardly be attempted for the whole country. Yet the influence of the home had to be resisted, and boys had to be trained to be hard and self-disciplined. (Sons 17)

Adventure writers solved the problem by orphaning their heroes, or by giving them mothers who were eager to have them answer the call of adventure and Empire. In "From Powder Monkey to Admiral; or, the Stirring Days of the British Navy," published in Boys' Own Press, W. H. G. Kingston does both. Young Jake’s mother conveniently died when he was almost an infant, while young John’s mother bravely stifles any tendencies to spoil or restrain her son. This pattern runs through much adventure fiction. Boys with dead mothers must fend for themselves, their only patrimony being those invaluable manners learned at their mothers’ side, and their own quick wits and splendid attitudes. Boys with living mothers tend to live in inverted relationships like the one pictured in Patridge’s Punch cartoon. These boys support their families, and/or lessen the financial burden by leaving.

Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Tarzan depends on willing and dead mothers for its very plot. Family objections to the Greystokes’ journey to British West Africa can be imagined, but are not given the dignity of print: “There were mothers and brothers and sisters, and aunts and cousins to express various opinions on the subject, but as to what they severally advised history is silent.” The heroic servant of Empire would of course have done what his young bride had wished, but the good woman saves him the trouble: “For her sake he would have refused the
appointment; but she would not have it so. Instead, she insisted that he accept, and indeed, take her with him" (3). The reader can only marvel at Alice Clayton’s patriotism and pluck—but quickly, because by the end of Chapter Three she has gone mad, and within two pages she passes quietly and conveniently away. Lady Alice is the ideal Scouting mother. Not only does she enthusiastically support her husband’s career in colonial Africa, but once she has set her son’s life in motion, she retreats from the plot so that young Lord Greystoke can grow into the Uber-Scout Tarzan. Alice leaves behind her only a heroic and unchanging vision of maternity to inspire her son. In fact, for Tarzan, both his parents are literary figures, existing exclusively in John Clayton’s diary, “in which he recorded the details of his strange life”—“the story of adventure, hardships, and sorrow” (28, 238).

But Tarzan actually has two perfect mothers whose deaths make his adventures possible. A true dutiful son, he can only achieve his destiny after his adoptive ape mother dies as well:

Had Kala lived, Tarzan would have sacrificed all else to remain near her, but now that she was dead, and the playful friends of his childhood grown into fierce and surly brutes he felt that he much preferred the peace and solitude of his cabin to the irksome duties of leadership amongst a hoarde of wild beasts. (102)

The late Victorian masculine bildungsroman had a straightforward code of conduct. Initiative was bully; inertia, despicable. As for self-interest or caution, both were cowardly, contemptible, shortsighted, and unpatriotic. Staying at home with a needy mother would be a plausible excuse for inaction, but that would put an end to the fun before it began. Furthermore, in political terms, staying safely put would mean that one less able-bodied man was available for extending the
Empire. So these heroes must of course love and honor their mothers, but never let them affect their active lives in the slightest. Small wonder, then, that most mums die young, or stay silent.

In addition, only certain women had the necessary qualities to become a hero’s or a Scout’s ideal mother. Although the population was literally declining, thanks to falling birth rates (Hynes notes a thirty percent decrease between the 1870s and 1910), for Empire enthusiasts the problem was a decline in quality. A “high birth rate meant men for the armed forces, men for the Empire, and men to swell the industrial labor force at home,” but as Hynes also notes, at Army recruiting centers, “thirty-seven percent of applicants examined were rejected” (22). The country required healthy, vigorous men. Where were they? Given this state of affairs, for middle-class reformers like Baden-Powell, mothers were therefore both the country’s hope, and the source of its problems:

What causes mental defectiveness? Virtually all the witnesses answered “Heredity”; as one witness put it, “The thing can only be bred out.” . . . [The] conservative view carried the day, and stimulated Tory reformers to wage war, not against poverty, but against fertile poverty. The mentally defective were poor because they lacked the moral fiber that goes with intelligence . . . and they were prolific for the same reason: there was, said Baden-Powell, “much pauper over population due to the want of self-restraint on the part of men and women.” If the feebleminded could be segregated by sex, feeble-mindedness would inevitably diminish, and radical social reforms would be unnecessary. (Hynes 32-33)

Compounding this situation, however, was the possibility that heredity was already breeding a different, and highly undesirable, Englishman. Hynes notes
that some feared this “physical deterioration” of the population “was in fact a biological adjustment of the species to new and degrading conditions of urban life” (25). Of particular concern were the cramped and squalid urban living quarters, perceived rampant reproductive rates, sedentary lifestyles (there was little access to “healthy” outdoor pursuits), smoking and drinking habits acquired early, and gambling (on organized sports). For Baden-Powell, this “deterioration of our race,” if left unchallenged, threatened England’s world pre-eminence. “One cause which contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire was the fact that the soldiers fell away from the standard of their forefathers in bodily strength” (208). And while a systematic method of breeding was the long-term solution—the National Social Purity Crusade proposed “genetic isolation” for “defective groups”—such a policy would be difficult to implement, and take generations to bear healthy fruit. Scouting was therefore a stopgap solution—immediate, and more practical. Though many mothers had failed due to biology, and others cuddled their children into weakness, Scouting would do what it could to repair the more promising male prospects.

Baden-Powell’s belief that boys could not only survive, but also thrive apart from their mothers, found a surprising analog in popular literature. According to J. M. Barrie, Peter Pan and his band of lost boys “knew in what they called their heart that one can get on quite well without a mother, and that it is only the mothers who think you can’t” (120). In Peter Pan, mothers are cherished for the heroic emotions they evoke, or for the dangerous cuddling they seem to provide, rather than for any specific talent or influence. In fact, Barrie deflates the claims of motherhood by gently mocking Wendy’s bustling attempts to introduce middle class child rearing into the foreign, often dangerous geography and social climate of Neverland. Here she is, fearful of approaching danger, but unwavering in her duty to the afternoon nap:
Of course she should have roused the children at once; not merely because of the unknown that was stalking toward them, but because it was no longer good for them to sleep on a rock grown chilly. But she was a young mother and she did not know this; she thought that you simply must stick to your rule about half an hour after the mid-day meal. So, though fear was upon her, and she longed to hear male voices, she would not waken them. Even when she heard the sound of muffled oars, though her heart was in her mouth, she did not waken them. She stood over them to let them have their sleep out. Was it not brave of Wendy? (88-89)

If all the Lost or English boys had to fear was the possibility of a chill, perhaps readers could excuse a lapse in judgment like this. But to be caught napping while the enemy was afoot? Before Wendy came to Neverland, the Lost Boys had managed to survive in an adult male world of warring and killing. Her actions here therefore highlight the danger of being a mama’s boy, especially in the landscape of adventure. In fact, one of the main reasons that the Pirates in Peter Pan are ultimately harmless is because they too harbor within themselves the fatal flaw of Mother Envy:

“Captain,” said Smee, “could we not kidnap these boys’ mother and make her our mother?”

“It is a princely scheme,” cried Hook. . . . “We will seize the children . . . the boys we will make them walk the plank, and Wendy will be our mother.” (94)
Maternal mollycoddling was one of the ills that Scouting sought to cure. Were Scouts men or babies? "Men were strong, women were weak, 'real' men were vigorous, other men were 'half men, half old women'"—so was Baden-Powell's opinion (Sons p. 17). As the "wolf who never slept," he never would have let down his guard, for this Victorian hero "had two characters: in the daytime he was the perfect administrator, when darkness fell, he became the daring scout" (Sons p. 97). For vigilance was a cardinal virtue, and as the clouds of war started forming, Baden-Powell knew that none of his Scouts could afford to be caught resting unawares. Whether in the veldt, the colony, enemy territory, or London, reconnoitering, bivouacking, and tracking required a hardiness that did not come from taking nap breaks with a mother on guard. "Whatever his task, the Scout must be on the lookout for every imaginable danger," Bristow explains, and "This program of study proceeds on the assumption that unless the boy learns how to master the land . . . he will be unable to make the transition into manhood" (p. 174). Creating men meant training them in self-reliance and personal responsibility. While mothers had an important place in the young Scout's heart, she could not be allowed to cloud his head.

And yet, Scouting was heavily invested in one form of the mother cult: that misogynistic and romantic idealization known as "chivalry." Camp Fire Yarn 20 of Scouting for Boys described the chivalric tradition, exhorting the boys to follow the example of St. George, England's patron saint. While Scouts were charged to treat women courteously, however, the knightly behavior advocated was a chaste one. A woman's love was no longer a young knight's raison d'être; his worshipped mistress was the beloved nation. This transfer was part of an ongoing stout defense of male dominance. While the "world of action, of the military, the Empire, and commerce, was male, the world of home and childhood was female," MacDonald explains, and "the influence of the feminine seemed to pervade
society, eroding masculine character, gendering civilization itself. How could young boys be saved?" As I’ve already noted, “the influence of the home had to be resisted, and boys had to be trained to be hard and self-disciplined” (Sons 17).

But by resurrecting a medieval knightly code of honor that supposedly maintained very clear, set divisions between the genders, Baden-Powell was also setting a courtly past against what he felt was a dangerous tendency in modern women to renounce their weakness and unworldliness—to become, in short, “masculine.”

Although white womanhood served as a domestic totem for the young men in adventure fiction, the reality of women at home and in the colonies was becoming another thing entirely. Even Baden-Powell seemed at times to acknowledge this. In their prospectus for the Girl Guides, he and his sister Agnes wrote that girls “could help the nation and the empire” by preparing “themselves for a Colonial life in case their destiny should lead them to such” (Hynes 29). But Scouting never really cleared a space where women could perform actual functions. Women could neither participate in the adventures of imperialism, nor have a say in shaping the Grand Plan for which they were evidently to labor. Though her presence might eventually be necessary, her opinion was not.

As they were for many other observers during the nineteenth century, changes in England’s social climate made Baden-Powell’s comments on women increasingly elaborate as they became more and more anachronistic. By identifying itself as a modern return to knightly virtue, Scouting was not only celebrating the martial prowess and chivalric manners of its medieval ancestors, but also staving off incursions by the forces of gender upheaval threatening to destroy the country. It is a historical commonplace that many late Victorians and early Edwardians felt that the increasing prominence of “women’s issues” was one of the causes of a supposed increase in the number of effeminate and “unnatural” men. Like Carlyle, Baden-Powell felt that the values of the past could provide the
blueprint for rejuvenating England's present. But his romanticized version of medieval English women was antithetical to what many Victorian wives and daughters were actually experiencing—at home, and in the world.

One of the major transforming forces was middle class expansion after 1850. "As the British economy became gradually as much commercial as industrial," Kenneth O. Morgan explains, "it created a vast army of white-collar workers to manage and serve in the retailing, banking, accounting, advertising, and trading sectors." Other public sectors required such workers as well: "The management of factories passed from a paternal family tradition to a new class of professional managers, and the bureaucracies of manufacturing grew swiftly. The civil service, both local and central, began to expand rapidly as government spent more on new responsibilities, especially on the education system created by the Act of 1870." This growing professional class not only exerted a huge economic influence, but also literally changed England's landscape. "London was particularly affected by the changes," Morgan explains, "as "suburbanization," which he calls "the characteristic innovation of city life in the second half of the century," multiplied "rows of neat houses," all of which "testified to the successful propertied aspirations of this new society" (Morgan 487-88). Whereas earlier in the century, the new affluent and aspiring industrial class aped their aristocratic betters, in the later Victorian period the tastes and opinions of this new middle class came to define the country's moral and social values. Take for example the Darlings in Peter Pan, who embody the middle class mania for respectable, anonymous similarity: "Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours" (4).

In London, however, maintaining a public face of being just like one's neighbors required means. And by the end of the nineteenth century, there were options other than earning or inheriting great personal fortunes that could allow a
middle class family to prosper. One method was practicing birth control. “Respectability, the need to maintain the house, and to pay the servants and school and university fees, encouraged restriction in the size of middle-class families,” and advances in technology—especially in the development of rubber—granted more affluent Victorians greater access to birth control than ever before (“Victorian Effeminacies” 492-93). Restricting the size of a family, however, was controversial, for “a high birth rate meant men for the armed forces, men for the empire, and men to swell the industrial labor force at home” (Hynes 197). If however, the middle classes curbed their own reproduction, the “defective” would produce an even greater percentage of the population. Whether reproducing or not, then, women were again the problem. The fertility of working class women, combined with the selfish unproductivity of middle class women, were debasing the English gene pool.

Birth control was not, however, the only perceived crisis. Though more equitable divorce laws were still years away, women were beginning to imagine other possibilities than being wives. Urbanization was part of the reason, as “shops, offices, and telephone exchanges offered new opportunities for the employment of women” (“Victorian Effeminacies” 487-88). But many other paths began to open as well, and “Once reasonable alternatives to marriage as a career existed, the institution of marriage itself became the object of examination and criticism,” as the “idea of a divinely sanctioned life time of subjection and inferiority began to be questioned and discussed, by men as well as women” (Hynes 171-72). A marginally freer sexual atmosphere for a greater number of male and female middle class citizens greatly alarmed individuals like Baden-Powell, for if men and women ceased to recognize (in St. Loe Strachey’s words) that “one man and one woman is the law of fecundity,” then the laws, both legal and social, governing marriage, divorce, and sexuality outside of a male/female
married union would be similarly questioned (Hynes 198). If Britain needed a population of *quality*, though, how could it be realized if those who should be reproducing were refusing to behave responsibly and patriotically by playing established and defined gender roles?

Even more frustrating and ironic was the increasing incidence of women who dodged their material duties for the sake of society and Empire. The last decades of the nineteenth century saw a great middle class increase in concern for the welfare of previously ignored sectors of the population in all parts of the Empire. As a result, women in increasingly large numbers entered public service by volunteering for social reform organizations, and even for missions in the colonies. This impulse was not always entirely altruistic. Especially when practiced in the colonies, charity and self-sacrifice actually became the means for gaining a degree of freedom and agency. "In the 1830s, missionary work was beginning to offer women a liberty and employment often denied them at home," Diedre David notes:

> It is possible to imagine that a woman with Jane Eyre’s intelligence and energy might well have gone to Calcutta at the end of the Victorian period—and that she would have gone alone, perhaps as a medical missionary. When unmarried female medical missionaries started going out to India in the 1870s, they were often recruited by the promise of employment unavailable to them in the British androcentric medical establishment. (David 88)

At home or in the colonies, such actions became a new source of anxiety for conservative British, as indisputably productive work proved to be another cause for "an alienation of men from women" (Smiles 173). Even doing good was apparently a male prerogative, for as Sinha notes, "There was considerable
masculinist anxiety in Britain following the gradual reconstitution of the traditional male public sphere in response to such feminist challenges as the activities of Josephine Butler and the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1880s and the feminist and purity crusades for the passage of the British Criminal Amendment Act of 1885" (153). When the social cause women devoted themselves to was their own, the line had definitely been crossed, as P.L. Travers' oddly conflicted 1930 books, and the 1960s film about *Mary Poppins* suggest. Originally Australian, Travers, who was born in 1899, represents in her children's fiction the dangers encountered by moderately privileged women who neglect their wifely and motherly duties. Although portrayed as lively and cheerful, Mrs. Banks is devoted to political reform, and specifically, to obtaining the vote for women. More concerned with this cause, and with throwing fruit at the Prime Minister's door, than with her domestic obligations, she leaves her middle class children at home to mope, and to play vicious pranks on the servants. (Father, of course, is at work at the bank.) The remedy is the ultra feminine, socially unambitious, but magically powerful nanny Mary Poppins. Not only is her endless energy in entertaining and educating her charges admirable, but her willingness to remove herself once the family has redomesticated itself betrays a nostalgic wish for Victorian notions of class and female deference. Fully the match of her increasingly aggressive female counterparts, Mary Poppins is a perfect example of a woman who exercises an awesome power by knowing her place, and smilingly supporting the traditional gender hierarchies.

But the fact that women behaving unnaturally could only be balanced by a domestic with the powers of a witch suggests that the specter of a new woman who was evolving into the "he-woman" was looming large in the imaginations of men concerned with the order and vitality of the Empire. For the conservative
observer, masculinity had a finite quantity. If, by participating in policy reform and voicing demands for suffrage, women were exhibiting maleness, then English men were being drained, and the solution was obvious: enervated English youth needed to reclaim their heritage as men. And what better way than by locating Scouting ethics in a past time, when war and martial skills supposedly set policy?

By casting Scouts as young knights of the Empire, bound to a code of chivalry, Baden-Powell countered the threat of feminism by casting women as witnesses to masculine prowess—cheerleaders for the rejuvenated heroic English boy. Scouting only rewarded physical participation in Imperial-related pursuits. Boys alone could be heroes. As James Eli Adams points out, such attitudes foreground, as Carlyle did, the “image of the hero as spectacle,” with all the resulting problems of “audience and authority” (22). Although Baden-Powell often praised the virtue of unrecognized self-sacrifice, Scouts were very visible in the British landscape by the First World War, only six years after the movement’s founding. Their heroic national identity, even though young boys, was firmly established in 1912, when nine Scouts died in a sailing accident. “The ‘Sheppey disaster’ was given widespread coverage in the national press, and soon began to assume a symbolic importance,” Robert H. MacDonald writes: “Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, ordered the destroyer HMS Fervent to carry the dead boys back,” with “their coffins draped with Union Jacks on the open deck” (Sons 176). The Sheppey disaster was the event that marked the equation of the Scouting program with patriotism and heroism. Prior to the tragedy, Scouts had been identified with social service, but they were not yet synonymous with heroism. The Sheppey disaster, according to MacDonald, was “a step in the legitimation of Scouting as a national institution”:

The flag-draped coffins, the naval warship, the “military” funeral, all these trappings transformed the deaths of nine
Scouts into a symbol of patriotism and sacrifice for the nation. 

HMS *Fervent* was the naval Valkyrie carrying the fallen heroes to an English Valhalla. (*Sons* 178)

The press also made sure that England “recognized the tribute,” reporting extensively on the accident and the national mourning that followed. “A week later several newspapers brought out memorial numbers”; some “included photographs of the dead boys and their scoutmaster,” as well as “a picture of their cutter, and a series of pictures of the funeral procession” (177).

In a sense, it was a dress rehearsal for what was to come. But just as the Army endures despite individual losses, plenty of living Scouts could be found to admire. They were readily identifiable because of their distinctive shorts and kerchiefs, and it is important to note that this uniform served multiple ideological functions. First, it created a definite identity. The Scout was a breed apart, and he looked it—just a glance could confirm his membership in the brotherhood. The uniform also gave Scouts that sense of group affiliation that public school boys established with their colors and jackets, but without the sense of exclusion, since all Scouts wore the same uniform across the country. The Scouting outfit also linked the boys to Baden-Powell himself—a hero who was passing on his virtues to the nation’s deserving male youth. Finally, although the short shorts were initially scandalous, they eventually came to be associated with Britain’s traditional values—a healthy alternative to the ragged, unkempt clothes of the lowlife hooligan loafing on the street corners and in free houses.

Aligned with a heroic image, then, Scouting was emblematic of patriotic virtue in Britain even before the War. Furthermore, since self-promotion is not a heroic attribute, it also made women serve as both the justification for manly actions, and as the enthusiastic audience of those actions. Invoking the chivalric image necessarily invokes the image of the woman who waits for the returning
champion, and who will applaud and reward his endeavors when he does return, thus confirming his identity as a heroic male. Although any number of saints and knightly heroes are remembered for performing great actions, it is significant that Scouting’s chosen patron saint is also England’s, and that St. George’s most memorable action is the slaying of a dragon in foreign lands to rescue a woman, and to claim her as his reward. In fact, within this narrative, women serve as those in need of rescue, those left behind, and those who witness and reward the heroic service all at once. A similar dynamic had been at work in chivalric self-representations of the American South. “White women were indispensable to the creation of the Lost Cause, both literally and metaphorically,” Young writes, because “allegorization of unnamed feminine figures” came to stand for “the nobility of the wartime South as a whole” (199). In England, women also served as icons for hearth and home, for all that was worth defending, even as the Empire’s servants went on the attack.

As Hannah Arendt has famously pointed out, the reasons an official organization gives for undertaking an action may have to be invented after the event (207). In the case of masculine heroics, the rescue, defense, and rehabilitation of women have often been as good reasons as any for justifying aggression. Scouting’s elimination of women from its working environment even as it canonized them as the reason for vigilance was in keeping with other social impulses of the day. Even as the number of women in the colonies and the public sphere increased, the cultural landscape of Britain kept casting women as spectators and objects of rescue. Late-Victorian and early-Edwardian pictorial art notoriously backed away from Turner, returning to safer, more settled times.

6 “The British Empire had actually been acquired in a ‘fit of absentmindedness.’ Those . . . who were confronted with the accomplished fact and the job of keeping what had become theirs through an accident, had to find an interpretation that could change the accident into a kind of willed act.”
Genre paintings representing literary or historical scenes were common, with the “rebels” often devoted to painting individuals in romanticized settings or situations. Often shown in moments of repose, reflection, or lazy indolence, the Pre-Raphaelite women were passive, even catatonic creatures incapable of a strong response. While beautiful, they were objects to be gazed at—no internal life or conflict arrests the viewer’s attention, unless like Ophelia or Marianna, the women appear as victims. These women were a far cry from the physically strong, even masculine women in paintings by artists like Delacroix—women represented as patriots, heroes, and even warriors themselves.

Efforts to regulate women’s behavior, or even to control their participation in colonial activities, however, proved unsuccessful, as the projects of motherhood and the sharply defined roles in the expansion of Empire could not contain the progressive impulses and plans women acted upon. Certainly, women who went to help colonize the red areas of the map were very much subject to masculine judgment, and especially of their sexuality. The dangerous allure of those women who were at home was bad enough, because it could possibly tempt the Scout, or any potential servant of Empire, to ignore the call of adventure. But what if women actually were not trying to seduce the young man into domesticity; were in fact planning themselves to avoid such a union. As Smiles explains, changing divorce laws made it possible that the family “might cease to be the stable social unit that conservatives thought it had to be.” And birth control was even worse: “A woman who could choose not to bear children was liberated from one of the strongest bonds that held her subordinate to men; she became at once both independent and mobile” (200). If the independent woman decided to move to the colonies, gender confusion would reach its apex. One of the social facts that Scouting fought against was that for those in the metropole, the colonies, especially the “dark” ones, were a site of transgressive fantasy. A colonist,
soldier, or Scout venturing out could have great adventures, but he also ran the
danger of losing himself in what was often imagined as an inverse landscape,
wherein what was understood at home as immoral and depraved was instead
treated as moral and respectable. Sexually free “native” women excited cultural
fears of potential miscegenation in a nation already anxious over race dilution and
male degeneration. In fact, critics of suffrage and divorce reform often pointed to
the colonies as evidence of what would happen if women strayed from their
defining family roles. As a result, a “masculine” Englishwoman who not only
claimed autonomy over her body and life, but also headed out to the colonies
herself moved closer to the unthinkable: miscegenation involving white females.

Deirdre David’s discussion of William Hastie’s charge of indecent conduct
against Mary Pigot in 1883 shows how British males reacted to imagined English
female and native male alliances. The charge was very straightforward: that Pigot
had entered into improper relations with an Indian male. The specific
circumstances, however, made the case especially provocative. First, as head of
the Church of Scotland’s orphanage and zenana mission, Pigot held a position of
authority. Second, Kalicharan Banerjee, the Indian with whom she was accused of
having indecent relations, was a teacher at the mission, and therefore not merely
an Indian civilian working for an English institution, but an educated man, and
therefore more suspect in the minds of Englishmen, as someone with a more
“theatrically intense identity than that possessed by the undifferentiated,
uneducated, ordinary middle-class native,” because he was “less politically
manageable than before and more sexually dangerous to the governing British
Raj” (149). Third, instead of retreating from Hastie’s charge of misconduct and
remaining modestly and silently disciplined, Mary Pigot instead filed a counter
suit in 1884 on the grounds of defamation of character. Although Pigot was
eventually cleared of the charges, Hastie’s accusations certainly reflect the
widespread fear of "patriarchal imperialism" that women at home and in the colonies were transgressing female boundaries. Or as David puts it, "The responses of the legal, social, and church authorities to Pigot's startling refusal to remain quietly chastised by her male superior in the Church of Scotland hierarchy show white male fear of losing control of hitherto docile women to a dangerous ideal of fraternization" (154, 148-49).

Equally troubling to the Victorian male was of course the figure of the educated, sexual, native male (to be discussed later in the chapter) who excited fears not because he threatened miscegenation, but also because he represented the possibility of replacing the colonial male. Deirdre David notes that the charges against Mary Pigot took place after the uprising: prior to 1857, "the native male Indian was regarded as barely threatening in sexual terms" (151). Post-rebellion, however, the colonial community began to fixate on the sexual danger posed to women. Citing Kenneth Ballhatchet, David reports "The British often suspected that Indians were more lascivious than they were themselves. Child marriage and polygamy seemed to prove it" (149). Whatever the actual details, the Pigot case was significant because it simultaneously found reasons for denying autonomy and suffrage for women, and autonomy and independence to the colonial native. Obviously incapable of conducting themselves properly without vigilant male guidance and correction, women and natives needed discipline.

Scouting's anxious responses to masculine females therefore would see in a case like Mary Pigot's a warning to all boys and potential English colonial servants that attention must be constant, at home and abroad. But at the center of this supposed readiness was a mixture of escapism and denial that makes no sense as anything other than a masculinist dream. The Scout looked to an idealized, lost past for modern guidelines. He believed that in the colonies, all of the fantastic monsters and foes were waiting to be conquered by a new, chivalrous Saint
George. Furthermore, the Scout assumed that what was threatening abroad was somehow linked to degeneracy back home. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, published in 1901, and a book highly recommended to Scouts, shows how this fantasy of recognition and denial relates to the upstart native. The educated Indian Hurree Babu's mannerisms and speech emasculate him completely, even though they are the product of learning well the supposed cultural heritage of the English schoolboy. The irony here is that his frequent quotations from British authors seem to be a kind of theft—a possession of things not intended for him that is resented by those who claim them by right, even though they themselves often never bothered to pick them up. At best, then, Hurree is a very clever man, but only because colonial powers permit him to be.

Intelligent women posed the same problem, and men like Baden-Powell would recognize in men like Hurree Babu and women like Mary Pigot the potential for a social breakdown. Looking abroad, the conservative Englishman saw a place of license, where English women and native men would behave outside acceptable parameters. But looking homeward, though he would not see the Indian, he would see the woman behaving the same way. By the turn of the century, it was clear that English men and boys were threatened everywhere—and perhaps most endangered when no women seemed to be there at all.
We'll Ask, We'll Tell: Scouting, Homophobia, and Class Panic

If the prospect of women becoming like, or even taking the place of men frightened the conservative English observer, the possibility of men becoming like women caused even greater concern. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's brilliant study on male homosocial bonding to link the “crisis” of the pseudo man to the changing nature of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian gentleman⁷, I will argue that although Baden-Powell sought to change the nature of the English boy, he wanted to do so without disturbing any existing class lines or privileges. Scouting must be independent and masculine, but they must still obey the orders of their superiors. Much of Scouting's almost paranoiac fear of the un-manly was informed by a response to those who claimed, but did not have, the right to wield power and influence. These pretenders included both those too debauched to assume their inherited responsibilities, and those born into the wrong class. Scouting was in part designed to shore up traditional power bases and lines by creating an auxiliary masculine force that would support the social, economic, and political infrastructure already in place, while at the same time seeming to be something innovative and even iconoclastic. It was a youth movement, in short, that would shame aristocrats back into heroism, while at the same time acknowledging the superiority of its class betters, and sharply opposing ambitious lower class upstarts.

In the twentieth century, obeisance needed some selling, and especially since deference itself could so easily look like female weakness. The threat to masculinity posed by the effeminate, pseudo male was in some ways the easier

⁷ See Rutherford's Forever England. In it the author notes that “A homosexual identity, as distinct from the Victorian tradition of male friendship, became a new object of regulation, its deviant nature signified by feminine traits and characteristics” (27).
one to answer. This non-male was either actually homosexual, or displayed an “aesthete” sensibility. In either case, his dominant trait was an inability to exercise power. The more pressing male crisis played itself out in the more subtle arena of class distinctions. What to do about the middle class—or worse, working class—man, with both ambition and ability, who sought to enter the ranks of true gentlemen? Supposedly easily identified by his contrarian politics and sensibilities, the effeminate pseudo male could be dealt with. The aspiring gentleman, however, not only fueled the economy that ultimately supported aristocratic privileges, but could even move with some measure of success into the world of his betters. As David Castronovo’s quotation from Thackeray’s mid-1840s *Book of Snobs* suggests, the process was familiar, generational, and even evolutionary:

> Old Pump sweeps a shop, runs on messages, becomes a confidential clerk and partner. Pump the Second becomes a chief of the house, spends more and more money, marries his son to an Earl’s daughter. Pump Tertius goes on with the bank; but his chief business in life is to become the father of Pump Quartus, who comes out a full-blown aristocrat, and takes his seat as Baron Pumpington, and his race rules hereditarily over this nation of snobs. (100)

Though addressed in different ways, both threatening kinds of new men could be “fixed.” The transgressor either fully repressed his effeminate or low life tendencies, and behaved like a “real” man, or he would be annihilated—socially and economically.

The disastrous Boer War, the possibility of more colonial insurrections, and the looming threat of conflict with Germany put the England of 1908 into
something resembling an identity crisis. But advocacy for the manly male had
been growing since the 1870s, when the eighteenth century adorned male as the
epitome of masculinity fully gave way to the muscular Christian gentleman—
although for the upper classes, religion was often incidental. This Victorian male
body was a powerful one—physically, and in its access to power. James Eli
Adams notes that by this time the body was “a central locus of masculine
authority” (151), and whatever speculations might be made about Baden-Powell’s
own sexuality, he shared with his generation and class the belief that homosocial
bonds between strong men would shore up English society, and ensure its survival.

The trick was to channel the homosocial impulse correctly, so that sexual
energy was turned eventually toward the legitimate enterprise of the family, but
for the moment, was transformed into patriotic fervor for the Empire. At any rate,
it must not find any outlet in socially de-stabilizing practices. As Girard once
more tells us, a social crisis occurs when a community realizes its defining
boundaries are dissolving. By 1908, this dissolution could be seen at home—in
literature, in the halls of institutions, in the general behavior of Englishmen and
women—and in the colonies, where it was worried that degeneration, if left
unchecked, could lead to loss of control. Though Scouting did not explicitly
address the issue of homosexual behavior, Baden-Powell certainly instructed his
Scouts about sexual behavior. Basically, he told them not to play with others, or
themselves. Chastity was the goal, even when alone, “for in line with most of his
contemporaries he believed that masturbation led to degeneracy” (Sons 166).
Baden-Powell held up as models those adventurers who disdained sexual relations
with women (though he himself did marry late in life), and who therefore
practiced erotic abstinence. “Saving semen, like saving pennies, was another good
habit to be practiced on the road to manhood,” Robert MacDonald remarks, when
discussing Scouting’s masculine yet chaste ideal. But advocating celibacy was not
simply a way of frustrating boys. Young men preparing for service abroad as soldiers, settlers, or civil servants would almost certainly be tempted, once there, to engage in inter-racial sex, especially with relatively few Englishwomen as an alternative. If, however, the colonial servant had been a Scout, he could prevent miscegenation and racial dilution simply by restraining himself—or even better, by having an adventure. An unlikely candidate, Maugham’s Warburton in “The Outstation” nevertheless serves as a model for this kind of sidestepping. Though fond of the Malay, Warburton “did not imitate so many of the white men in taking a native woman to wife” (911). Instead, he “chastises [head-hunters] with a thrill of pride in his own behaviour” (910). Under the guidance of Baden-Powell, a Scout could be trained to subsume sexual energy under the pursuit of Empire.

Affection, if not eroticism, was appropriate here, for good, clean, manly love for one’s nation and fellow patriots was decidedly healthy, even necessary. Scouting fully endorsed boys forming homosocial bonds with one another, and while it could not forge links as strong as those established in public school—the constant togetherness and social hierarchy was lacking—it certainly did seek to create the same kind of shared British belief about male society that Sedgwick calls “a bond of mentorship”: “the boys were apprentices in the ways and virtues of Athenian citizenship, whose privileges they inherited. These privileges included the power to command the labor of slaves of both sexes, and of women of any class including their own . . . . The system of sharp class and gender subordination was a necessary part of what the male culture valued most in itself” (4). The mentoring process socialized the young Scouts into behaving responsibly in their troops, in society, and towards the Empire. Scouts learned to do the job required of them quietly and efficiently, effacing themselves to keep their own wheel of privilege endlessly turning. Individualism was the sin linking all the bad sorts together: the irresponsible, dissolute aristocrat, the unpatriotic and depraved
intellectual, the self-serving, greedy professional, or the unnatural, effeminate male. Inappropriate individuality and self-gratification—social, economic, sexual—always threatened the soul, the race, and ultimately, the Empire.

The logic of dominion treated the man who refused, or was no longer able to participate as a non-entity, by withholding from him access to the masculine signs of power. Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*, for instance, has been unmasked by those "in the know" as this kind of unpatriotic non-entity. Despite his participation in the war, before his suicide he seems adrift, incapable of setting a course, or following one. Homosexuals experienced similar sanctions. The individual who continued such activities past school age seemed to be deliberately choosing self-gratification above the good of the state, and turning his back on his heterosexual duty to Empire. The lines were sharply drawn: "The distinction between normality and abnormality," Stoler explains, "between bourgeois respectability and sexual deviance, and between moral degeneracy and eugenic cleansing were the elements of a discourse that made unconventional sex a national threat and thus put a premium on managed sexuality for the health of a state" (34).

If the pseudo man provoked fears of instability, the pseudo *gentleman* threatened a complete breakdown. Unlike the supposed homosexual, the ambitious upstart was by definition difficult to suppress. Social distinctions have always created obligations and duties, but in the nineteenth century, "the ideal of the gentleman," according to Robert Castronovo, "was always central when questions of who shall rule, who shall serve, and who shall be emulated arose" (3). As a result, from the mid-Victorian period onward, social commentators including Pater and Kingsley increasingly voiced concerns about the ease with which a man could potentially pass as one of his betters. Although such scholars as Adams, Castronovo, and Karen Volland Waters have hotly debated exactly who the late-
Victorian and early-Edwardian gentleman was, for the purposes of this discussion, I will identify the English gentleman as one who does not aspire to achieve the religious perfection of Christ, but to operate comfortably in the upper social and economic levels. (Prince Edward is a closer fit.) Yet even this clarification is a slippery one, since gentility was above all an attitude displayed by the gentleman, and recognized by all. Like pornography, then, this quality was difficult to define, yet instantly recognizable. As Karen Volland Waters makes clear in *The Perfect Gentleman*, when one was in his presence, one was certain of it; and conversely, if a gentleman seemed confused or uncertain, this was almost certainly a sign of hidden class fears and insecurities.

These doubts arose in part from recent changes in social possibilities. Throughout the nineteenth century, the upper middle classes had struggled to become gentlemen, and by the late Victorian period, they had certainly acquired the economic means, and were entering polite society. Uneasy with this "success," however, such gentlemen rejected those hereditary models of the gentleman which equated him with the aristocracy. They succeeded here as well. Although not "legitimate" inheritors of the title of "gentleman," the affluent middle classes had gained control over the meaning of the term by mid-century. Under their influence, the gentlemanly ideal was "turned into a norm that could be realized by deliberate moral striving" (Adams 152).

But since external markers no longer identified a true gentleman from one who had put on the skin of one, the conservative upper middle classes—a group which (just) included Baden-Powell—became uneasy. The very attempt to turn gentility into an attainable ideal was itself middle class, and social conservatives feared that "the gentlemanly ideal had become a mere status-marker, and as such accessible to aggressive, self-interested social climbers" (Adams 152). The response, as always, was to make the requirements for being a gentleman
increasingly esoteric and obscure. Although Ann Laura Stoler is discussing the politics of race in Java, her account of how populations discipline themselves along class lines, even when great opportunity is the supposed result, is instructive:

Nationalist discourse drew on and gave force to a wider politics of exclusion. This version was not concerned solely with the visible markers of difference, but with the relationship between visible characteristics and invisible properties, outer form and inner essence. Assessment of these untraceable identity markers could seal economic, political and social fates. Imperial discourses that divided colonizer from colonized, metropolitan observers from colonial agents, and the bourgeois colonizers from their subaltern compatriots designated certain cultural competencies, sexual proclivities, psychological dispositions, and cultivated habits. (8)

Often lower middle class himself, the heroic, chivalric, aspiring Scout paradoxically became one of the most devoted proponents of a gentleman being someone who knew himself, and his place.

Of all the hidden enemies Scouting hoped to defeat, the class crasher proved to be one of the easiest to counter. Scouting’s emphasis on a strict adherence to authority, and a respect for existing institutions, took on a whole generation of potential upstarts. In fact, Scouting’s egalitarian ideal—all boys the world over were welcome—never sought to level playing fields, or erase class distinctions. Nor did it even present itself as a vehicle for passing from one class to another. Scout law and Baden-Powell’s own yarns in Scouting for Boys assumed that a boy would report to, and be evaluated by, a superior—whether
scoutmaster, employer, or field commander. And while Scouts were trained to perform their duties without supervision, this had more to do with being dependable than being an independent agent.

This state of affairs largely reflected the concerns of the upper middle class. Having crashed the gate themselves within uncomfortable living memory, the citizens "were set off from other people by [their] very self-conscious desire to reject the coarse and corrupting influences of an increasingly money-dominated society" (Castronovo 96). Even though these classes rested upon a cash, rather than a land base, this new "gentleman" tried to be obscure about the connection between his affluence and his father's or grandfather's factory, office, or shop. And yet, maintaining the distance could not be a matter of conspicuous or lavish consumption. In *The English Gentleman*, David Castronovo points to George Brummell as the precursor of the gentleman as a substantial, but not flashy, individual. The grandson of a butcher, and a self-made man, "Beau" Brummell has become synonymous with the affected dandy. As Castronovo writes, however, Brummell's actual achievement was more complex, suggesting that his social superiors and class enemies were responsible for his peacock reputation. Apparently, "bejeweled splendor was alien to Brummell's sensibility." He "wore no jewels and dressed in a manner that was—for all its excellence—imitable." Taste and style, not wealth, were on display, anticipating the time when "clothes would no longer set men of birth apart from men of substance; everyone would be respectable and proper in dress who considered himself a gentleman" (95). Just as the public school uniform no longer assured hereditary privilege—if it ever had—a man's dress no longer provided a reliable guide to his wealth or property. Although dress by and large still delineated class, at the *fin de siecle* it was possible to pass as one's betters, if only because any bathed, clean shaven young man could be a prince. But conversely, any healthy working class man, colonial
subaltern, or white “native,” could pass as a gentleman; in fact, passing itself was a growing concern, because as Elaine K. Ginsberg explains, even the possibility “forces reconsideration of the cultural logic that the physical body is the site of identic intelligibility,” and “exposes the anxieties about status and hierarchy created by the potential of boundary trespassing” (4).

If a Brummell could not only assume a gentleman’s identity, but even affect how society understood that identity, what would ensure a proper separation between classes? Throughout the nineteenth century the middle classes came to equate gentility with superiority, even as they bought their way into the elevated social positions traditionally held by birth. The literature of this period often cast the aristocracy into the roles of ethical monsters, sexual predators, or blustering cowards, and J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan draws on all of these stereotypes in one of the broadest displays of middle class attitudes toward social station and worth. Captain Hook is foppish, and his behavior is likened to that of an Oriental despot—a figure the reader knows to be depraved, corrupt, and inefficient. Hook’s animosity toward Peter is rooted in jealousy. Peter’s innate understanding of the bold and the right thing to do drives Hook insane, for although he knows the rules, and can follow the dictates and style, his lack of gentlemanly instincts constantly betrays him. The forms of gentility continually clash with his meanness, as in this account of Wendy’s capture: “With ironical politeness Hook raised his hat to her, and, offering her his arm, escorted her to the spot where the others were being gagged.” This gallantry still has the power to hypnotize social inferiors—“He did it with such an air, he was so frightfully distingue, that she was too fascinated to cry out”—but as Barrie the narrator notes, Wendy “was only a little girl,” and he assumes his readers will see through the veneer instantly (133).

What is truly remarkable, however, is the degree to which Barrie explicitly identifies the pirate’s evil as the product of the English class system. “Hook was
not his true name,” Barrie explains, and to “reveal who he really was would even at this date set the country in a blaze; but as those who read between the lines must already have guessed, he had been at a famous public school; and its traditions still clung to him like garments, with which indeed they are largely concerned” (145). Traditions are literally outward apparel; clothes make the man. Barrie continues this satire of a fixation with appearances when he reports that even as a pirate, the ex-schoolboy Hook “retained the passion for good form”: Good form! However much he may have degenerated, he still knew that this is all that really matters. . . . From far within him he heard a creaking as of rusty portals, and through them came a stern tap-tap-tap. . . . ‘Have you been in good form to-day?’ was their eternal question” (146). Even Hook has his nagging doubts about the truth value of surface over substance—“Most disquieting reflection of all, was it not bad form to think about good form?”—and if this is so, should not those who now embody Britain’s spirit also lead it? Should not the healthiest, the most active, the most productive, protect and revitalize it?

For all his evasions of adult responsibility, Peter Pan himself, however, is clearly of this striving and achieving class. Though a boy of supposedly mysterious parentage, Peter represents the very best kind of masculinity and pluck, and as such, stands in sharp contrast to Hook’s effete and nasty upper class piratical ways. The reader has ample clues about Peter’s class pedigree. As a baby, he ran away from home because he “heard father and mother . . . talking about what I was to be when I became a man,” and while it is possible they were thinking of an apprenticeship, the fact that there’s even a question means that he is not from the aristocracy. The most telling evidence about the social station Peter escapes from, however, is found in Barrie’s list of what happened to the other lost boys: “You may see the twins and Nibs and Curly any day going to an office, each carrying a little bag and an umbrella. Michael is an engine driver. Slightly
married a lady of title, and so he became a lord. You see that judge in a wig coming out at the iron door? That used to be Tootles” (184). With the exception of Michael, the boys all end up solid professional types—and even *nouveau* aristocratic types. Barrie of course pokes gentle fun at these achievements—most obviously at Peter’s continued resistance—but he never dismisses the boys in the way he does Hook. In *Peter Pan*, the middle class produced the best things that the English stock has to offer. It is hard to believe that these future bureaucrats, judges, and lords would be led by a social inferior. From an Edwardian perspective, then, Peter would have to be from what Robinson Crusoe’s father called “the middle state.”

Though not a recommended book for Scouts, *Peter Pan* in many ways embodies the idealized notion of Scouting. Peter’s plucky and cheerful attitude in meeting adversity goes hand-in-hand with the know-how and take-charge attitude that Scouting highly prized. Even more importantly, for all his arrogance and egotism, Peter ultimately does not care about social advancement or public acclaim. The recognition that Tiger Lily would bestow upon him as a reward for saving her life means nothing, and his early flight from the “real” world shows a lack of concern for publicity. He and everyone else playing the game in Neverland know he is the best—this is enough for him. Peter therefore possesses the perfect attitude for the Scout, and for the future colonial servant abroad. Supremely able, and confident that he “does the right thing,” he has no need for public applause.

For the middle, and even working class parents of boys participating in the Scouting program, such a prosaic image reinforced the idea that their sons were not only the epitome of the patriotic Englishman, but the backbone of the Empire. Though lacking public recognition, these boys could claim moral superiority over their “betters,” since people like the Scouts were actually maintaining the nation’s
interests at home and overseas. At least if the Scouting manual was to be believed, even more than those with titles, the middle class or industrious lower class Scout was the true heir of the noble Saxon heritage. Scouts could therefore believe that they deserved a place within gentlemanly society, and at the same time, that they were superior to it. The aristocracy’s residual claims to influence by right only intensified this feeling. The colonies had of course served for many years as places where extra or disgraced noble sons could make a place for themselves in the changing economy. But the nobility still exercised their voting rights as hereditary members of Parliament in fairly predictable ways. Even more infuriating, however, was what this class often did not do. Leisure was still a class marker, for as Castronovo explains, “productive work” was equated in some circles with “a sense of vulgarity,” and the “unproductive use of time was evidence of the ability to afford a life of idleness” (102). Or as Bristow puts it, “The last thing proper gentlemen would have wished to associate themselves with was labour” (563).  

For those who had embraced the work ethic of self-help saints like Smiles, and who identified themselves as a class this way, the culture of leisure only heightened their distrust of aristocratic stewardship. While Scouting tended to equate idleness with the unmotivated lower classes, Baden-Powell’s obsession with unproductiveness could not help but implicitly criticize the leisure classes as well. Scouting reflected the middle class obsession with making a discernible difference. What was a man if he produced no useful work, or did not apply himself to the completion of his duties? Baden-Powell of course subscribed to the work ethic advocated by Samuel Smiles, Thomas Carlyle, and a host of others, but he added to it a validation of service as the highest good. “A SCOUT’S DUTY IS

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8 For a more in-depth discussion on aristocratic reactions to work, see also chapter nine, “From Leisured Class to Labouring Aristocracy” in David Cannadine’s The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy.
TO BE USEFUL AND TO HELP OTHERS”—so said Scout’s Law. Idleness could not be a part of Scouting, for if people did not complete their tasks, what would this augur for the fate and health of England? As Scouting reminded its boys, by not seeing to their community health themselves, the citizens of Rome had lost their Empire. Similarly, by remaining idle, or worse, the aristocracy and the undeserving poor were contributing to the deterioration of England. Only the enterprise and patriotism of those like the middle and working class Scout could avert the crisis of indolence.

And yet, Baden-Powell saw Scouting as a means for revitalizing the nation without disrupting the various hierarchies of power. For example, though the activities detailed in the first edition of Scouting for Boys may now seem quaint, they were actually designed to give boys skills of purported and appropriate use. As Michael Rosenthal explains, the British urban labor system depended on “blind alley” workers—“messengers, clerks, newsboys”—who would be recruited “at twelve or fourteen” and paid “small salaries for several years.” Then, “they would be turned out, so that the process of cheap employment of the young could begin all over again.” Baden-Powell marketed “Scouting to the public by stressing its capacity to alleviate the problem [of unemployment] through the skills acquired in earning various proficiency badges,” which served as “vocational preparation, so that the Scout who earns his carpenter’s or mason’s or textile worker’s badge will at the same time have opened up a career possibility for himself” (184). That Scouts obviously did not receive enough in-depth training to pursue these skills as a profession was beside the point. At least three other supposed social benefits came with the badge system. First, by making Scouts aware that such vocations were future possibilities, it directed the boys toward gainful employment. Second, by strongly insisting that the poor themselves possessed the key to their own financial situation, it made unnecessary “any radical social action”—welfare,
regulation of business, government intervention into job creation. And third, since these badges were earned within the Scouting disciplinary environment, potential employers knew they were getting workers with extensive experience in accepting the authority of superiors without question. Scout law “is above all a protracted call for obedience on a grand scale,” notes Michael Rosenthal: “Of the original nine laws, six have as their essential thrust the Scout’s unquestioning loyalty and his absolute willingness to carry out any orders given him” (113).

Thus, when Baden-Powell was evoking a chivalric heritage that preceded even the ethos of the public schools, the hero was still subservient and obedient. The narratives themselves do not stray far from those heroic Arthurian men in armor, roaming the countryside in search of injustice so that proper order might be restored. “In days of old, when knights were bold,” Baden-Powell begins, “it must have been a fine sight to see one of these steel-clad horsemen come riding through the dark green woods in his shining armour, with shield and lance and waving plumes” (189). Rosenthal calls this “the total child’s vision, complete with all the standard paraphernalia of shining armor, damsels in distress, and good deeds” (174). And yet, while Chapter Seven of Scouting for Boys, “Chivalry of the Knights,” might seem to provide British boys with a direct link to a noble past, Baden-Powell deftly evades suggesting that Scouts will ever assume the authority embodied in the knightly role. The knight is not the Scout’s historical forebear. Perhaps even more significantly, neither is the squire, riding alongside as an “assistant and companion, who would some day become a knight.” Instead, Scouts should take as their model the knight’s posse: that patrol of men-at-arms “ready to follow their knight to the gates of death if need be.” The “tough yeomen” won many fights “through their pluck and loyal devotion to their knights.” Like their yeoman heirs, then, Scouts performed great deeds because of their “loyal devotion”—a dynamic that of course mirrors the British military of
Baden-Powell’s day. The upper classes led; the lower classes followed—and just in case the Scout missed the double analogy, Baden-Powell makes it explicit: “the knights of old were the patrol leaders of the nation, and the men-at-arms were the scouts” (189).

In addition to indicating moral failure and a lack of patriotism, however, idleness was identified with the feminine, and by extension, the unproductive, effeminate male, regardless of class. The art of the late-Victorian and early-Edwardian period often commented on the gendered nature of the work ethic. Even if the models came from the working classes, paintings often portrayed them as idle creatures—figures of repose and indolence. (Frederic Leighton’s paintings, Flaming June and Garden of the Hesperides, are famous instances.) My point is that women here join lower-class men or colonized natives as figures whose lack of power is transformed into a lack of energy—that quality middle-class parents and Scoutmasters valued so highly. In her study of the Victorian gentleman, Karen Volland Waters notes Anna Garlin Spencer’s argument that “idleness was inflicted on women by gentlemen to assert their power, so leisure had connotations of femininity” (39). After all, the middle-class notion of wealth that emerged in the late seventeenth century, and which still has its proponents today, rests upon a diligent man’s ability to support a family of idle women. A woman’s proper “occupation” was therefore to avoid exerting herself.

This state of affairs led to an awareness that the lord who inherited his wealth led a very similar life to that of a kept woman. The idle aristocrat also spent, rather than earned, and since his traditional social identity depended on having no discernible occupation, the activities that filled his hours had to be leisurely rather than productive ones. For example, David Castronovo points to Thackeray’s social upstart Barry Lyndon, among others, to show that for the aristocrat, “gaming” could serve as a suitable “major activity” (105). Barry of
course can make "a genteel income from his efforts" precisely because this is not
the goal for his aristocratic fellow players. Charles James Fox, who "gambled
away 140,000 pounds before he was twenty-five" (106), paradoxically proved his
status as a man of leisure by continuing to lose, for only a fabulously wealthy man
could sustain such losses. That a gentleman like Fox could cover his debts did
not, however, absolve the aristocracy of that absorbing self-interest so completely
at odds with the ethics of Scouting. Though the middle classes might admire the
manners and social position of the aristocrat, their cult of work was at odds with
anyone's rejection of it. And work might mean the difference between winning or
losing a war. Even after the end of the Boer War, uprisings in the colonies
threatened, and so did invasion by Continental powers. Irresponsible at the best of
times, to be self-interested and idle in the first decade of the twentieth century was
dangerous as well. To the ambitious Scout, such behavior seemed antithetical to
commerce, nation, and Empire. As Scouting fought to conquer indolence in boys,
it could not ignore, or rationalize away, the idleness of their betters. In fact, the
creation of Scouting results in part from an unsettling hunch that the aristocracy
was becoming less manly and responsible—weak, even depraved. Although the
aristocracy's social and economic supremacy would survive up to the start of
World War I, Scouting's mission, though explicitly to improve the character of the
lower classes, also sought to compensate for aristocratic indolence.

But not to attack it. For all its anxieties about aristocratic degeneration, and
for all its encouragement of boys to enjoy the vanities of self-righteousness and
patriotism, Scouting also stamped out any notion that the boys could ever replace
their upper-class counterparts in the running of the nation or Empire. Designed to
halt degeneracy and to reinvigorate the British race, Scouting was never meant to
promote social reform, or to encourage boys to challenge established orthodoxy.
A conservative member of the upper-middle class who had fully internalized
public school ideology, "old boy" Baden-Powell's Scouting program preserved traditional class deference. Though expected to behave like young gentlemen, Scouts were not to be confused with young gentlemen. While a program of improvement, Scouting knew that better manners, improved hygiene, and usefulness to the state could not elevate an individual in class. Such a program could, however, help quash the supposed increased femininity of the English by promoting healthy aggression while preserving submissiveness to authority. Baden-Powell clearly wanted to "put some of the wild man back" into Scouts, without affecting "courtesy and deference to the weak and helpless" (Sons 146). Or to their betters: Scouting championed independence, yet demanded obedience. The obvious tensions here are flatly denied. The young Scout must be able to function alone in potentially hostile environments, and in general, the "frontier" could not be a place "for class distinction or rigid separation between officers and men" (Sons 146). Nevertheless, scouting mirrored its founder's own brand of military heritage. Even in a guerrilla army, order and obedience were vital. As MacDonald explains, "by training and by personal inclination, Baden-Powell had a horror of disobedience, and in his lessons of citizenship for Boy Scouts he came close to making a fetish of discipline":

He told Scouts the story of an officer . . . who though
"a brave and active scout," was not good at obeying orders, and this cost him his life and did harm our plans . . .
"if my scout had only learnt, when a boy, how to obey orders, it might have made a great difference that day
to him, to us—and to the enemy. (Sons 147)

And to his superiors. "As a rule, imperial officers were not comfortable with the idea of an independent solider," MacDonald writes, "nor were they at ease with that other colonial infection, democracy" (Sons 146). While a soldier's
disobedience could lead to defeat, the more dangerous outcome seems to have been rebellion. As already noted, military units were led by officers whose qualification for leadership were often little more than family connections and attendance at a public school. With the possible exception of old boys from Sandhurst, these officers were terminally unsuited for their commands. And yet, even though Scout training virtually insured the soldier was better prepared than his officer, the soldier must let the virtue of obedience override their knowledge.

Scouting's emphasis on deference to authority therefore stemmed as much from its military origins as it did from social anxiety over the loss of traditional English class identities, and middle class desire to hold a distinct and valued social position. In fact, these shaping forces reinforce each other. As Scouts increasingly came from the lower-middle-class and upper-working classes, the need to obey superiors, whether in the military, in the colonies, or in the homeland, became increasingly stressed. And since the upper classes did not deign to participate in the meritocracy of Scouting—could a public school boy permit himself to take orders from a shop boy?—Scouting provided its own hierarchy. "The Chief Scout stood in loco parentis," MacDonald explains, "and believed in an ordered hierarchy of command, for in Scouting, as in other tribes, the wisdom of the elders passed down the line to the youngest boy, and the most junior scout was expected to look up to his patrol leader, just as the patrol leader looked up to the scoutmaster. At the top of the pyramid was the "Old Scout" (Sons 149). Scouting's structure inevitably impressed the lesson of obedience upon the boys. Further, the pyramid model becomes the guide for the Scout's life outside the troop. Given the situation, "those above" him could be his parents, his employers, his commanders, or his class and social betters.

Once again, the bifurcated nature of both Scout and middle class identity is on display in this insistence upon obedience to a class considered their moral and
practical inferiors. It was easy to argue for the superiority of a Scout’s training over the hustling but amoral school of street smarts, or even the class ossification of public school. The result was an ethic marked by the suppression of a known superiority—an ideal citizenship clearly informed by the class assumptions of Scouting’s leaders. As MacDonald writes, “the administration of the movement took for granted that its instructors had to come from the gentlemanly, moneyed classes.” But even here, the kind of gentleman was highly specific: “The movement was run by middle-class volunteers; ex-military officers and parsons, both in Britain and in the Empire, seem to have provided most of the scoutmasters” (Sons 153). Though the world outside of Scouting was unstable, within its boundaries, order (hereditary, racial, gender) could be maintained under the guidance of former or current shepherds—ministers and army officers—of the status quo. This perfectly rigid, and gratifyingly unchangeable, identity—in what other organization would ten year olds and seventy year olds wear the same uniforms?—reinforced that filial obedience which by the early twentieth century the middle class had assumed as the patriotic servants of Empire, whose behavior stood as a reproach to degenerates without criticizing the authority of its betters. As the moral center of the nation, the middle class, or the Scout, could enjoy the egotism of the just, confident that their ways would be the country’s salvation—or at the very least, the delay of its destruction. Their thrift and sober demeanor compensated for self-centered aristocratic behavior, and for the short-sighted, unmotivated mindset of the lower-class hooligan.

Furthermore, Scouts were promised the ultimate satisfaction of knowing that the Empire would prosper because of their necessarily unrecognized efforts. Though history books celebrate the exploits of the individual adventurer or military hero, Scouts knew it was the everyday exertions of the colonial settler or civil servant which kept the engine of Imperialism running. Georg Lukacs has
pointed out a “sudden blaze of great yet simple heroism among the artless, seemingly average children of the people” (51) in the literature of the early part of the nineteenth century, and while he is speaking specifically about characters in Goethe and Scott, within fifty years, faceless, nameless colonial agents would, like Scott’s Jeanie Deans, retreat to silence after performing their heroic task. By the time of Kipling, characters like Kim, Hurree Babu, or Mahbub Ali firmly believe that real joy comes from playing the game, bearing the secrets of state, and receiving the recognition of a job well done from one’s immediate superiors. But from no one else. Known only by their official numerical identifications, these figures’ feats are never to be widely circulated. When for example Kim manages to obtain the papers of the Russians, Hurree Babu says “I shall embody your name in my verbal report,” but laments that “It is a pity we are not allowed written reports” (209). Kim, however, feels differently. Though his efforts will go unnoticed by the general public, and unmentioned in reports to the Royal Geographic Society or the popular press, like the middle class Englishman, and like his young Scouting counterpart, Kim has the satisfaction of being useful, and in the know: “For the first time in his life, Kim thrilled to the clean pride of Departmental praise—ensnaring praise from an equal of work appreciated by fellow workers. Earth has nothing on the same plane to compare to it” (165).

Here, like Scouts, the soldiers in the trenches, the civil servants working in the colonies, or the middle classes in general, Kim allows himself the luxury of believing that by refusing to demand public recognition of his achievements, he is actually more patriotic, more heroic, more English. Like the ultimate icon of selfless sacrifice, the Unknown Soldier, this kind of patriotism celebrates quiet, self-effacing heroism. Scouting instilled in boys the same kind of negating exclusivity. Though recognition for their deeds on behalf of the Empire was essential, Scouts came to value the praise of a select audience, who understood the
nature of their deeds, over the ignorant applause of the masses. The selfless hero’s actions might never be generally known. As the agent known as E-23 reminds Kim, “We of the Game are beyond protection. If we die, we die. Our names are blotted from the book. That is all” (150). Duty, then, could be its own reward, and no more or less was expected. This embrace of obscurity and unrecognized sacrifice was exactly the attitude that the Scout, as the future servant of the Empire, needed to assume.

Ironically enough, the values of sobriety, industry, modesty, duty, and self-effacement, which became synonymous with the middle classes, found both their model and their antithesis in the aristocracy. In the 1840s and 1850s, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in some ways saved the aristocracy by famously becoming the pre-eminent Victorian middle class family. By the 1870s, however, the behavior of the Crown Prince was repellent to the sober-minded Englishman. Though the epitome of social excellence, Bertie “led the Victorians toward an era of more free and relaxed moral standards, in that ‘he preferred cigar-smoking, club-going, marked attention to the ladies, sports of all varieties, gambling above all’” (Waters 36). Such a person was the Anti-Scout. Baden-Powell denounced smoking and drinking, because they ruined the physical and moral health of the boys, and also endangered their general safety. He urged celibacy—he himself only married late in life—saw organized sports as lacking a utilitarian end, and abhorred wasteful behavior of any kind. Gambling, for instance: Scout Law 10 states that “A SCOUT IS THRIFTY.” As for personal pleasures, anything that weakened the Scout in any way was selfish—a point Scouting repeatedly made by telling the Scout to strengthen himself for the Empire.

By encouraging submission to the nation, and to its supposed leaders, Scouting therefore displayed its contradictory mission of compensating for the aristocracy without in any way suggesting that the upper classes must reform, or
more importantly, that Scouts should ultimately replace these titled drones. The goal was pro-active damage control rather than a revamping of the system, for although the aristocrat’s nature and reputation were distressing when seen in stereotype, there is ample evidence that excepting socialists, utopianists, and other marginal groups, the people of England retained at this time a respect for the aristocracy. Scouting was therefore a program of self, not social improvement. The young Scout was exhorted to be all that he could be—a personal goal within the set bounds of his station. If all went according to Baden-Powell’s vision, Scouts would be worrying about keeping their skins intact in some colonial territory, rather than about such frivolous things as social standing or upward mobility. For a Scout, nobility and honor lay in protecting, not usurping, the traditional lines of authority.

Through such obedience, Scouting also advanced the upper middle class agenda of its founder. It is commonplace to find in traditional British historical studies that after rising in power and prestige during the eighteenth century, and consolidating its position in the nineteenth, the upper middle class saw itself as the true moral and economic center of the nation. But having jumped over a number of class obstacles itself, this group did not exactly encourage others to follow its example. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, leading up to Scouting’s founding, this class added to its own constant worry about social prestige and exclusivity the fear of being infiltrated—or worse, supplanted—by waves of ambitious up-and-coming lower middle class and working class men, and of go-getters from the colonies. Preserving the privileges of the new gentlemen led the arrived middle class to construct ceilings beneath their feet to halt the upward progress of the undeserving. Loyal to the interests of its class origins, even as the boys increasingly came from classes beneath the ceiling, Scouting stressed the necessity of obedience, and of the danger of overstepping bounds. This sense of
proper place was explicitly extended beyond the troops, the military, and the foreign service, and into the domestic workplace. Scouting not only assumed caste—to use Martin Green’s definition⁹—but also denied class mobility. A Scout’s duty included remaining a member of the lower-middle and working classes. Or as Law 2 puts it: “A SCOUT IS LOYAL to the king, and to his officers, and to his country, and to his employers” (Sons 152; italics mine).

One of the most interesting responses to the aristocracy’s supposed disinclination to stewardship was the creation of parallel institutions to the ones traditionally associated with the upper class. Though Baden-Powell for instance took components of the public school system as models for Scouting, he was very selective, since remarks by the “Wolf” himself suggested that the public school boy, unlike the Scout, had the luxury of living as a degenerate, effete British youth. The traditional breeding ground of the English gentleman and leader, in short, could no longer be trusted to provide quality stock. Two related concerns during the final decades of the nineteenth century were especially distressing to the middle class: the perceived homosocial atmosphere of the public schools, and the apparent conspiracy between amoral aristocrats and effeminate dandies which culminated in the very public trial of Oscar Wilde.

Although the public school system had never been an exclusive enclave for the aristocracy, and this was even less the case by the late nineteenth century, it retained its status as the training ground for the young gentleman-to-be. It was of course the presence of aristocrats’ sons that often lured the middle classes into sending their own children, but tales of earnest young sons of prosperous merchants being drawn into gambling, debauchery, and eventual ruin were the staple of school narratives. In the 1830s, Thomas Arnold had famously redirected

⁹ See also David Cannadine’s *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* for a expanded discussion on British understanding of the caste system in the colonies.
Rugby toward the manufacture of Christian gentlemen, and at least in their public statements, “the schools became ‘character factories’” (Waters 18). Yet the middle-classes were still uneasy about the schools’ aristocratic connections, and more specifically, the dangers of an introduction into “unnatural” behavior that would stunt these middle class boys’ development into mature and productive adults. Baden-Powell was himself an old boy, and an enthusiast of the public schools, and he based some of Scouting’s principles and procedures on this system to make them accessible to that huge majority of England’s youths barred from attending. But Baden-Powell was also alert to dangers, and in particular, the opportunity in public schools for immoral and unnatural behavior between boys.

As Karl Beckson points out in his cultural overview of the late nineteenth century, while isolating boys from any social interaction with women, and then placing the older boys in charge of the younger ones, might prepare students for careers in the military, or the colonial service, it also practically mandated homosexual relationships as the outgrowth of power inequities. “Cultural historians have traditionally blamed the initiation into (or perhaps the reinforcement of) homosexual practices at the English public schools on the rigid separation of the sexes and the system of ‘fagging,’” Beckson writes, “which allowed the older boys to prey on the younger ones.” The result was that “such privileged institutions as Eton and Harrow were described as hotbeds of ‘vice,’ and scandals periodically required the hasty departure of a master or a student or both” (195). Beckson quotes Robert Graves on this point, whose own experience at Charterhouse led him to declare that “romance is necessarily homosocial”: “The opposite sex is despised and treated as something obscene. Many boys never recover from this perversion. For every one born homosexual at least ten permanent pseudo-homosexuals are made by the public school system” (196). Familiar with the most accessible writings of Freud, the middle class believed that
homosexuality was not “a genetic but a psychological condition brought about by a disturbed sexual development involving the Oedipus complex” which led parents to believe that their children had been “taught” inversion at the public schools.

What the boys were actually taught increased suspicions that the institution was encouraging homoerotic, if not outright homosexual, inclinations. Although the schools sanitized the language and content of the readings, “To many, the public school curriculum . . . contributed significantly to homosexuality” (Beckson 196).10 The philosophers were the problem, with Plato’s teachings considered to be especially dangerous. As Helen Michie notes, “in their attempts to construct a meaningful notion of masculinity, [Victorians] often looked to the past, to what they considered more heroic ages, for their models” (416). Platonic or Spartan ideals were however problematic for later Victorians such as Baden-Powell to adopt as models of civic virtue. The Greeks did have their appeal, for as Beckson explains, “Whereas earlier in the century Plato seemed an inappropriate subject for study in an age of materialistic progress and utilitarian morality, his philosophical idealism was admired by late Victorians.” The problem was, therefore, not with “Plato’s paganism.” Instead, the “churchmen, who were often headmasters of public schools,” worried about “the possible effect of the Symposium and Phaedrus on impressionable young minds that might be drawn to ‘unnatural vice’” (196). Though hardly to the exclusion of other subjects, the fact that these dialogues both discussed “the ideal love between men and between men and boys” frightened the Victorian middle class population. Publicity about relations between boys, and affairs between boys and masters only heightened this audience’s anxieties. Attitudes toward homosexuality were destroying school careers long before Wilde’s trial. Beckson describes how the father of (ironically enough) John

10 See A. N. Wilson’s chapter, “The World of School” in The Victorians and Rutherford’s chapter “Our Dead Bodies” for further discussion of homosocialization in the public school.
Addington Symonds harassed and blackmailed Dr. Charles John Vaughn, headmaster at Harrow, after the younger Symonds reported Vaughn’s overtures to home. The elder Symonds, a prominent physician, was largely successful in preventing Vaughn from accepting subsequent promotions. These concerns over this “increasing vice” were great enough to lead to public discussion—from articles in newspapers, to working class attacks, such as Jerome K. Jerome’s damning of the “unnatural cravings” that the public schools fostered.

The public schools also became increasingly suspect as spiritual institutions. Although the chapel sermons might emphasize a distinct and heterosexual Christian masculinity, the Pauline cast of Protestant theology almost in spite of itself created a homosocial ethical environment. In *Taking It Like a Man*, Adrian Caesar notes that Paul’s inherently sexist, and even misogynistic teachings linked spiritual power to masculinity, and the apex of that power to chastity. When integrated into the code of conduct of public schools, however, it necessarily created tensions and conflicts. Take for instance the demonizing of females: “Here, where young men were actively segregated from women, and discouraged from associating with them, they were also paradoxically taught religious and moral strictures against “effeminacy” and homosexuality” (6). Saint Paul’s anticipation of the [Muscular] Christian gentleman did not include homosexuality, and the public schools vigilantly purged homoerotic elements from its classroom texts and its chapel sermons whenever they emerged—which was constantly. But the school’s social structure could not help but encourage homosocial, if not homoerotic, bonds between young men. On a spiritual level, the model of sacrifice and service was Christ himself, and his team of apostles serves as the prime example for divinely-sanctioned male bonding and friendship. Caesar quotes Peter Parker’s claim, however, that “Whilst promoting a situation which encouraged romantic friendship between boys, it simultaneously denounced
the sexual expression of such feelings” (20), and however “innocent” or brief, “Such relationships between a younger and older boy at a public school are ‘too frequent a phenomenon to be considered other than normal’” (Caesar, quoting Lehmann 22). A letter from Rupert Brooke to Geoffrey Keynes that refers to a current involvement as being a “‘romantic comedy’ of the ‘usual’ kind” testifies to the seeming nonchalance of at least some boys toward homosexual relationships (Caesar 18).

For a variety of reasons, such relationships became matters of public debate. By the end of the century, acceptance of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called the “homosocial continuum” had diminished, as “the legal system was becoming increasingly adept at naming and punishing” transgressors (Michie 418). Although “men had been engaging in sexual acts with other men since the beginning of recorded history,” prior to Laubouchere’s Amendment to the 1865 Criminal Law, “sex between men was seen as a behavior, a series of acts, rather than as a defining identity-conferring practice” (417). As the new, earnest, and moral arrivals on the social and educational scene, middle class Victorians saw “aberrant” or “immoral” behavior of all kinds as inherent to the higher levels of fin de siecle English society. While homosexual behavior was neither confined in time or location, during the century’s last two decades, it stood as evidence that Britain’s upper classes were corrupted and corrupting. Such “evidence” appeared in the public schools, in arts and letters, in the political realm, and even within the sphere of the royal family. Many Victorians saw “confusion of sexual characteristics or sexual roles” as a sure sign of England’s decline (Thornton 10). And yet, even the most conservative response to such “degeneracy,” which emerged out of fears for the nation’s health, did not question the need for exclusively male institutions, and for pervasive male social dominance. As Richard Dellamora explains, “masculine privilege was sustained by male
friendships within institutions like the public schools, the older universities, the clubs, and the professions”; in fact, since “the continuing dominance of bourgeois males also required that they marry and produce offspring, the intensity and sufficiency of male bonding needed to be strictly controlled by homophobic mechanisms” (195).

Homosocial bonding, in short, was the “natural” condition for exercising power—which made homosexuality all the more dangerous, since it threatened the foundation of male privilege. By the 1890s the social requirements for a homophobic witch hunt were in place, as the threat of the New Woman, and of the native agitating for increased self-determination, joined “a sensationalizing, populist press” in creating a widespread championing of “traditional” masculinity (205). A series of aristocratic scandals provided the focal points for ruthless attacks on homosexuality. Take for example the Cleveland Street scandal. In Richard Dellamora’s account, this event began with arrest of a fifteen-year-old messenger boy named Charles Swinscow, who “was noticed to have an unusual amount of spending money.” The police ultimately concluded that “the money came not from thefts of small sums at the Post Office but from earnings that Swinscow made selling sexual services to gentlemen in a house at 19 Cleveland Street” (206). That the upper-class clientele for homosexual prostitutes was large enough to support such a house was bad enough. That this clientele turned out to include aristocrats with the highest level of political ties made things worse. As Dellamora notes, “the Prince of Wales and the prime minister, Lord Salisbury, intervened so as to enable one of the clients, an equerry to the prince named Lord Arthur Somerset, to escape prior to issue of an arrest warrant” (206).

Though the fop or dandy had of course been a figure of aristocratic effeminacy for centuries, in the literature of the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods, the ostentatiously dressed aristocrat not only became a recognizable
villain, but a barely concealed homosexual predator. Captain Hook from Peter Pan is the perhaps the most famous example. "He lay at ease in a rough chariot drawn and propelled by his men," J. M. Barrie writes: "In person he was cadaverous and blackavized, and his hair was dressed in long curls, which at a little distance looked like black candles, and gave a singularly threatening expression to his handsome countenance." Hook in dress "somewhat aped the attire associated with the name of Charles II," placing him in the tradition of the dandy or fop (55-56), while the chariot also raises troubling late Roman, or equally sinister Oriental, associations. (True masculinity would require the male to walk robustly, ride skillfully, or drive the chariot himself.) At the time, this despot in drag served to shore up middle-class claims that the ruling class was failing to rule, and must therefore give way to middle class claims for an increased role in governing the nation. As Eve Sedgwick explains, the "expropriation of the aristocracy" is part of that "Bourgeoisie" project of "constructing a view of the social world in which the English class system was shaped like an Oedipal family, with the aristocracy acting the role of parents whose fate it was to be both overthrown and subsumed." A major part of this process "was the feminization of the aristocracy as a whole, by which not only aristocratic women . . . but the abstract image of the entire class, came to be seen as ethereal, decorative, and otiose in relation to the vigorous and productive values of the middle class" (93).

What is crucial here is that this feminization coincided historically with the reification of stereotypic qualities for homosexuality. By the late nineteenth century, homosexual "traits" in the eyes of the bourgeoisie could hardly be distinguished from "a more broadly applicable aristocratic stereotype" (Sedgwick 93). The passage of the Labouchere Amendment therefore served to legitimize the fears of a middle class public who were becoming increasingly nervous about the men born to rule over them and the Empire. By making what had previously been
understood as private relationships publicly illegal, the Amendment created and
criminalized a population in the same moment. Although the trials of Oscar Wilde
were the most visible Victorian debate over masculinity/sexual identity during the
panicked decade following the passage of Labouchere’s Amendment, a number of
individuals and incidents emerged to frighten the conservative Victorian public.
Part of this fear arose from a heightened sense of the link between public and
private virtue. As Adams notes, for the middle classes, “domestic virtues were
charged with public significance” (“Victorian Sexualities” 128). If a man’s value
was identical to his ability to control himself, then unbridled behavior was
evidence of inferiority. The Cleveland Street scandal was horrifying not merely
because it revealed deviant sexual activity to the public, but because it revealed the
moral laxity of men in charge. What could the country expect, if the men leading
it could not control their own desires for illegal and immoral liaisons? And even if
the Victorian observer could convince himself that the Cleveland Street incidents
were isolated events, the public exposure and discussion of “inverts” still profiled
upper class activities as titillating and deviant, reinforcing and intensifying the
identification between homosexuality and the upper classes.

This scrutiny of official behavior, or the actions of anyone in a position of
leadership, was the important new factor. Romantic attachments between men,
including powerful men, were nothing new, but prior to the Labouchere
Amendment, such relationships were for the most part invisible to the general
public—molly houses, and the pogroms of the seventeenth century
notwithstanding. By the time of the Oscar Wilde trial, though, homosexuality had
become a matter of national importance, because sexuality—and particularly
deviant strains of sexual activity—had been increasingly identified as a sinister
threat to the future of the nation and the Empire. The shock of the Crimean War,
the Indian Mutiny, the New Woman, and the various reform movements all
contributed to a growing late-Victorian unease and paranoia which read all of these events and reforms as attempts to undermine all forms of stability, including sexual.

In terms of the sheer threat of sexual degeneracy, the arrest of Ernest Boulton and Frederick William Park in 1870 on charges of indecent behavior, and their 1871 trial for conspiring to commit sodomy, provided solid “evidence” that deviant impulses existed in the very heart of England. And as reported in the popular press, from the public schools to Cleveland Street, the common denominator in the homosexual “problem” was the upper class, whether in a rumor linking Prime Minister Rosebery with Viscount Drumlanrig, or in “romantic pederasty” stories in undergraduate publications at Oxford. This identification of deviance and status did not, however, generally lead to punishment for the upper-class themselves. The reasons for this are obvious: power has its privileges. “Real” aristocrats largely escaped because of their positions, as Lord Arthur Somerset was able to do, or because of their connections. Maurice Schwabe, whose uncle, Sir Frank Lockwood, the Solicitor-General, prosecuted Wilde at his second trial, benefited from such powerful friends. Perhaps most tellingly, Wilde’s aristocratic lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, was never in danger of prosecution, even though his father, the Marquis of Queensbury, not only knew of “the most loathsome and disgusting relationship as expressed by your manner and your horrible features,” but relentlessly pursued Wilde to ruin (Beckson 214). That the lucky aristocrats were spared the horrors of a trial and imprisonment paradoxically left their middle class companions to stand in as

11 Even if they were not themselves homosexuals, the aristocracy was, to a certain degree, tolerant of homosexual activity. Typical of the Edwardian period is Edward VII’s attitude which “exemplified the practical morality of his class: ‘It doesn’t matter what you do, so long as you don’t frighten the horses’” (Hynes 186).
12 See Wilson’s The Victorians (561-62) and Dellamora (211-12) for a more in-depth discussion of the Rosebery-Drumlanrig scandal.
13 See Rutherford (27-9) and Chapter Two, “A Sort of Masonry,” in Adams’ Dandies.
evidence of upper-class affinities with homosexuality. As Michie notes, it was middle-class “Wilde and his friends” whom the public press “repeatedly represented as aristocrats whose criminal acts were part of a spectrum of ‘decadent’ behaviors associated with a decaying aristocracy” (418). Middle class ambition and aspiration had ironically succeeded. As Adams explains, Wilde “had appropriated a traditionally aristocratic ‘effeminacy’ of demeanor as a means of underscoring his cultural pretensions,” but “with his arrest and conviction, that attribute became the distinguishing mark of the homosexual” (“Victorian Sexualities” 136).

This effeminate figure is a curious blend of impotence and power—one that accounts for the figure’s ability to take advantage of his social inferiors. The scandals of the 1890s were especially disturbing to the late Victorian because they involved transgressions of sexual and class boundaries. While Victorians were familiar with the stereotypic tale of the nobleman seducing vulnerable working class females, the Cleveland Street scandal revealed upper-class males preying sexually on vulnerable lower-class males. According to Beckson, for well-off young men like John Addington Symonds, relationships with social inferiors (or native men in the colonies as was the case with Hector MacDonald) were often the seen as the only option:

... Symonds’ own Uranian attachments had included schoolboys, young soldiers, Swiss peasants, and Venetian gondoliers. Such choices were characteristic of middle and upper-class Uranians who often felt that “sex could not be spontaneous or ‘natural’ within the framework of one’s own class.” Thus, typical partners besides the usual telegraph boys, were stable boys and clerks. (194)
Although Symonds' experiences cannot represent all homosexual relationships of the late Victorian years, his belief that "he was a pariah, a creature unlike other men" (195), shows how tortured even a product of the public school's homosocial environment could still be. The upper class boy knew that he was destined to marry and reproduce. Yet as Niall Ferguson notes, "a remarkably high proportion of [ideal Englishmen] made only the most half-hearted, if any, contribution to the reproduction of the race they exemplified" (263). And aristocratic younger sons and the sons of the upper middle class knew that lifestyles that diverged from the expected could impede, or even end career advancement. As a result, despite Ferguson's assertion that a significant number of "old boys" were homosexuals (263), "Most graduates of the public schools did the expected thing, grew up, married, and entered the professions or civil service" (Dellamora 209). So while visits to male lower class prostitutes may have been the only viable option for many late-Victorian homosexuals of a certain class, when discovered, such visits reinforced the stereotype that aristocrats had "unrestrained and coarse appetites for common profligate life"—or so Wilde after his conviction expressed it, when describing Lord Alfred Douglas (Beckson 214).

Newspaper accounts of aristocratic homosexual men engaging lower class male prostitutes also stressed the damage being done to society as a whole. As something a boy might engage in, but that a man did not, homosexuality in general had strong links to childhood. As a result, adults who frequented male prostitutes were guilty of child abuse. But further, because the aristocracy was supposed to function in a parental role vis-à-vis the lower classes, such exploitation was also a violation of a class trust. When Augustus Stephenson, Solicitor to the Treasury, wrote on the events of the Cleveland Street scandal, he stressed the importance of the "intervention of those whose duty it is to enforce the law and protect the children of responsible parents taken into the service of the public, as these
unfortunate boys have been, from being made the victims of the unnatural lusts of full-grown men” (Dellamora, 204). Note the emphasis on the “unfortunate boys.” By making the lower class figure into a child, and a victim, the middle class observer can see even more strongly the need to intervene.

By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the public press habitually pilloried the aristocracy as decadent, socially disruptive, and degenerate. The indictment was political: stories that exposed such perversions undermined the public’s belief in the aristocracy’s right or ability to provide leadership for nation and Empire. And square at the heart of the problem was the aristocrat, for his claiming of “tribute” came at the time not only of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, but also of legislation being enacted in the colonies to define and regulate sexual deviancy. No observer of the Victorian period can fail to recognize the similarities between the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Bill in England and the 1891 Age of Consent Bill proposed for India. Both were designed to protect women from the sexual depredations of men—and in particular, those upper class British and Indian men who acted as dangerous sexual predators. Articles like “The Maiden’s Tribute” presented corrupting children as a favorite British upper class pastime. As for the Indian sub-continent, ethnological reports of child marriage, suttee (incorrectly used to refer to anumarana or sahamarana), and zenana (also incorrectly considered by many as a Hindu custom) identified the Hindu aristocrat as an equally fervid devotee of such abhorrent sexual acts. Virtually no English author of Indian history failed to linger over the rites of suttee, or what the private world of the zenana was like. Artists found the image of widow suicide (especially young widows) irresistible.

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14 As noted in a footnote in Niall Ferguson’s Empire, “The Hindu practice of anumarana (‘dying after’) or sahamarana (‘dying along with’) was incorrectly called ‘suttee’ by the British. In fact the word sati refers to the widow who incinerates herself, and could be translated as ‘saint’ (141).
These practices were not, however, simply food for prurient minds; in fact, they established Indians as habitually degenerate, and therefore in need of British colonial government. Or as Mrinalini Sinha explains in *Colonial Masculinity*, British colonial officials wielded “women’s subordination in India as a handy stick with which to beat back Indian demands for political equality” (45). What we find, then, is the same upper class combination of predatory, class-inflected sexuality and effeminacy that the general public read as disqualifying the aristocrat from political power. This conviction leads to some interesting, if contrary, assumptions. In India, for instance, the colonial imagination considered the Bengali man to be, like Kipling’s Babu, effeminate, yet at the same time, over-sexed. “The British demonstrated the Bengali’s lack of ‘manly self-control’ in arguments about the excessive sexual indulgence of the Bengali male,” Mrinalini Sinha explains, “represented by the premature consummation of marriage as well as by the overtly sexual atmosphere of the Bengali home that allegedly led to such practices as masturbation” (18-19). This argument took on the same pseudo-scientific trappings of similar “studies” in England. The Hindu, for instance, was effeminate not because he exhibited feminine traits, but because he overindulged in heterosexual sex—a crime in the eyes of these class-based assumptions about “self-control” as the defining characteristic of the English gentleman, and the measuring standard for determining who was, and who was not, “worthy.” And yet, Sinha notes that at the same time, “The elaboration of the debilitating sexuality of the Bengali male intersected in complex ways with the elaboration of a distinct homosexual personality in contemporary medical and scientific discourses in Britain.” In fact, although “in the popular colonial imagination homosexual practices were associated with the favoured ‘manly’ and ‘virile’ native races rather than with the effeminate Bengali” (19), the Hindu male remained the figure held to be identifiably homosexual. Like the supposedly
effeminate aristocrat, the Bengali male served as a convenient scapegoat which the English colonial government could point to when denying positions for increased native participation in governing, or any other unwelcome request.

And although Richard Burton may have titillated Victorian readers with his translations and reports on Karachi (non-Hindu) pederasty, the acts themselves were considered indicators of an undeveloped society. Again, those participating in such acts could not be trusted with the governance of any community—at home, or in the colonies. And given the prominence of such stories at the end of the nineteenth century, it would have been impossible not to find similarities between the English aristocrat and his Bengali counterpart. For the imaginative middle class observer, the aristocratic Englishman and the depraved Bengali were sexually tainted, therefore justifying the removal of their privileges, and passing them on to the truly deserving. As Ann Laura Stoler points out, a state-sanctioned sexuality increasingly became identified with the maintenance of social order and stability:

Discourses of sexuality do more than define the distinctions of the bourgeois self; in identifying marginal members of the body politic, they have mapped the moral parameters of European nations. These deeply sedimented discourses on sexual morality could redraw the “interior frontiers of national communities, frontiers that were secured through—and sometimes in collision with—boundaries of race. These nationalist discourses were predicated on exclusionary cultural principles that did more than divide the middle class from the poor. They marked out those whose claims to property rights,
citizenship, and public relief were worthy of recognition and whose were not. (7-8)
Like the college drinking game, “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon,” these discourses trace one charge of misconduct outward to more and more involved and depraved behavior. For the Victorian public, homosexuality was not simply transgressing the acceptable boundary regarding sexual partners. Such practices came to be seen as existing with a host of other depraved behaviors and attitudes. That these were often conflicting, illogical, and flagrantly insupportable were (and still unfortunately are) beside the point.

And the Empire hastened the process. While pederasty and child-marriages were illegal in England, they had for years fascinated armchair Victorian anthropologists, in part because these customs were assumed to be safely foreign. But by the last decades of the nineteenth century, England had to acknowledge that variants not only were practiced at home, but also that its hereditary leaders were becoming horrifyingly like natives. Rene Girard’s account of scapegoating suggests how the crisis of decadence was interpreted and resolved. Identifying the “culprits” responsible for the epydimie as having particular traits in common relieved the masses of responsibility. “Since cultural eclipse is above all, a social crisis, there is a strong tendency to explain it by social and especially, moral causes,” Girard argues: “But, rather than blame themselves, people inevitably blame either society as a whole, which costs them nothing, or other people who seem particularly harmful for easily identifiable reasons. The suspects are accused of a particular category of crimes” (Girard 14). In this case, the common factor was “effeminacy” in the homosexual, the aristocratic, and the colored populations. In identifying these communities, and conflating them so that one was indistinguishable from the other, the Victorian reaction was typical. By the time Wilde went to trial, Labouchere’s Amendment had made homosexuality a crime,
and as Girard notes, with regard to such “persecution” of the upper classes, the “marginal insider, the rich and powerful” at times becomes attacked for the degeneration of society:

The further one is from normal social status of whatever kind, the greater the risk of persecution. . . . Extreme characteristics ultimately attract collective destruction at some time or other, extremes not just of wealth or poverty, but also of success and failure, beauty and ugliness, vice and virtue, the ability to please and to displease. . . .

Crowds commonly turn on those who originally held exceptional power over them. (Girard 18-19)

During the fin de siècle, the “half-man” or “she-man” crisis created violent social and political reactions in late-Victorian observers. R. W. Connell identifies challenges to hereditary, power hierarchies as being one of the reasons for gender anxieties: “Gentry masculinity involved a much more brutal relationship with the agricultural workforce, still the bulk of the population” and sees “Control . . . exerted by evictions, imprisonment, the lash, transportation and hangings. Applying this violent discipline was . . . an ordinary part of local administration” (249). The same power assumption that the English held with regard to the upper and lower working classes in the metropole paralleled the one that British imperial representatives (whether they were civil servants, military, or even adventurers) had with the natives in the colonies. And power was indissolubly tied to traditional, hegemonic forms of masculinity, “The cult of masculinity rationalized imperial rule by equating an aggressive, muscular, chivalric model of manliness with racial, national, cultural, and moral superiority” (Krishnaswamy 292).15

15 Although Krishnaswamy is specifically writing about how British models of masculinity supported an “ideology of moral imperialism that prevailed in British India” (292), the argument also supports British beliefs
Imperialism required the same kinds of economic, political, social submission from one group to another. The possibility that men, women, and even natives might escape their established position vis-à-vis the middle class (and above) Englishman and British colonial was a threat to the comfortable order set by the past flexing of English economic and military might. Thus, the seeming erasure of rigid boundaries between classes and sexual identities in the late Victorian age reflected the larger anxieties of the nation at large, and was seen as a cause for great concern not only because it represented a loss of the hereditary British patriarchal power structure within the nation, but in terms of England's relations to its colonies as well. Created in reaction to the threat of social disintegration (as Baden-Powell would have seen a leveling of class, political, and economic fields), Scouting's reaction to these threats was immediate and harsh.

Furthermore, the fear of being duped into accepting an unequal as an equal set late-Victorians on edge. To this end, Victorians—and it must be remembered that Scouting was a Victorian invention—looked for signs of differentiation. What they could notably identify—a certain, effete appearance, race, class, gender—became the marks by which they could comfortably exclude any potential applicants to the middle-class (white) English club. Scouting used these easy stereotypes (after all, it was an organization created for children) to identify good and bad behavior, which were to be emulated and shunned accordingly. Created as a corrective to defective behavior, Scouting reacted to the gender and class crisis of the late 1890s by exhorting its adherents to reject "abnormal" and "degenerate" behavior in themselves and others. A conservative social organization, Scouting shunned deviation from the mainline norm, and the moral code of Scouts was determinedly, hegemonically heterosexual and imperialist.

about all "inferior" peoples—which included the poor as well as natives.
The unnatural man and woman provided a convenient rally point for Scouts. They were a tangible enemy and served both as models for what not to be and as well as specific opponents to fight.
"Physically Strong, Mentally Awake, and Morally Straight": The Scouting Hero Emerges

When we look back at the final decades of the nineteenth century, it is clear why social reformers like Baden-Powell felt they had to find a cure for the nation. Sexually transmitted diseases were on the rise in the 1880s and 1890s. The number of prostitutes in London alone was skyrocketing (estimates range from 30,000 to 80,000). Both women and men were publicly flouting conventional gender and sexual roles—even the Prince of Wales felt free to conduct a public affair with the actress Lillie Langtry. To save the Empire from the dangers of the effeminate and the deviant was a daunting task, but one that Scouting felt itself primed to take on. One way Scouting dealt with the danger of the she-man in the public schools and in society at large was to ignore him entirely. Another strategy for nullifying dangerous forms of masculinity was to resurrect the chivalric code of behavior for young boys—encouraging duty, chastity, self-control, and self-will for the cause of nation and Empire. Both approaches not only reflected the nature and blind spots of the founder, but also were amenable to the period’s masculinist ideology, reflected in the supposedly “scientific” nature of studies and theories. Ultimately, though, while it never directly acknowledged the threat of sexual deviancy, Scouting definitely sought to neutralize any disruptive sexual impulses—either mainline or alternative—completely.

Like many institutions directly shaping the Victorian and Edwardian state of mind. Scouting resolutely denied the possibility of any deviation from conventional practices of masculinity. The Scout’s future was carefully scripted, and alternatives to a positive nation and Empire building destiny were simply not considered—by Baden-Powell, his leaders, or the young Scout himself. And if the lure of self-betterment was not strong enough to dissuade the Scout-who-would-
improve personally from deviant or undesirable behavior, then the Scouting program itself had built-in safeguards to keep boys from participating in any kind of sexual activities until specific and regulated conditions were met. Scouting could largely ignore sexual tendencies in its boys (even as it promoted homosocial bonds) because Scouts did not live together for extended periods of time. In fact, Scouting was not only not responsible for what the boys did after meetings, but also did not encourage extended fraternization. Baden-Powell’s vision of the Scout’s duties in the Empire had something to do with this, but Scouting also organized a particular kind of socialization for its boys. While there were the weekly meetings, camping trips and jamborees, when compared to schoolboys confined to boarding schools, boys involved in Scouting forged looser, more occasional homosocial bonds. Nor did Scouts tend to adore or idolize another male—be it a beloved teacher, headmaster, or school hero. Rather, they were encouraged to emulate the actions and behavior of the men whom Scouting considered heroes—usually long dead or equally unapproachable males. Scouts also did not sleep in the same house with each other every night, so they did not develop the same intimacies or emotional ties that public schoolboys, who lived, connived, fought against upper form bullies and other houses in athletics, did. In Scouting, boys came together for a shared purpose. A meeting was a carefully regulated form of bonding which did not cause any kind of extraneous, intermediary loyalties to distract the Scout. Most important, Scouting discouraged boys from depending on one another (or on anyone else, for that matter) for help or support. Boys came together, learned and worked together, and then went home to their families. As it was on the frontier and in the colonies, so it was in the microcosm of Scouting.

These differences in the structure and the social atmosphere between the public schools and Scouting are significant in two ways. While I am not claiming
that Scouting consciously constructed a system for suppressing homosexual behavior or inclinations in young boys, the strategies for correcting the supposed defects in the public school system and in aristocratic behavior are telling. First, the Scout generally was not isolated from either female relationships or affection. One of Baden-Powell contemporaries, Sigmund Freud, argued that women were a necessary part of a young boy’s life as he developed into a (heterosexual) man fit for the duties of an adult. Michael Kimmel’s summary of the Oedipal project provides a useful if familiar summary of how hetero/masculine development was assumed to take place:

This entire process, Freud argues, is set in motion by the boy’s sexual desire for his mother. But the father stands in the son’s path and will not yield his sexual property to his puny son. The boy’s first emotional experience, then, the one that inevitably follows his experience of desire, is fear—fear of the bigger, stronger, more sexually powerful father. It is this fear, experienced symbolically as the fear of castration, Freud argues, that forces the young boy to renounce his identification with mother and seek to identify with the being who is the actual source of his fear, his father. In doing so, the boy is now symbolically capable of sexual union with a mother-like substitute, that is, a woman. The boy becomes gendered (masculine) and heterosexual at the same time (113).

Within the setting of the public schools, the symbolic father was of course the school’s Headmaster, and while the boys may very well have feared him, they were also encouraged to identify with and adore him. (Think of Tom Brown and Dr. Arnold.) While many headmasters did not enjoy this frightened devotion, this
paradigm was seen as the ideal, placing this figure within the paradigm as the male both beloved and feared.

For contemporaries who considered homosexuality as learned, willful behavior, the public school system could still be seen as a potential site for undermining heterosexual development in a young boy. Unlike Scouts, who went home each day to mother, public schoolboys did not have to learn how to include women into their life scheme, or how to incorporate them into their social life. While Scouting certainly did not consciously shape itself to Freudian theory, nor deliberately provide an alternate “hetero-izing” program, it can nevertheless be seen to address the sexual anxieties of the parent class. Scouts were explicitly encouraged to consider their behavior toward females, for as mentioned earlier, chivalry and its attendant codes were presented for the young Scout to emulate. Gawain, Arthur, and Lancelot were examples of martial prowess and chivalric behavior, and while infidelity—Lancelot to the contrary—was conduct antithetical to the Scout’s Law, the examples of Arthur and company did teach boys what the proper channels for homosocial bonding were. Should the Scout decline the role of active heterosexual, there was always the ideal of Galahad—chaste and spiritually pure—to emulate. Scouting also assumed in its operations the conventional family unit. Boys were children in households where the male, be he the knight or the potential colonial abroad, fulfilled his responsibilities as the head of a household by gainfully working and providing for his family.

This properly male behavior was also understood to be antithetical to the feminine. As Michael Kimmel puts it, “being a man mean[t] ‘not being like women’” (112). In Scouting, however, such differentiation led to responsibility, and not simply dismissal. Representations of public school rarely show the boys interacting with a female who is not in a submissive (servant or shop help) position. Boy Scouts were encouraged to consider their duties as men towards
women. (Hence the defining *Punch* cartoon of the young Scout helping the elderly woman across the street.) Living with women daily also made Boy Scouts more inclined to consider women's role in their daily life—which included a possible life in the colonial Empire. For while part of Scouting’s message may have been that women spoiled the fun and got in the way of adventure, women were a main reason for the existence of the Empire. Scouting encouraged boys to be self-sufficient, but it also recognized that expanding the Empire would eventually require women to populate and domesticate the colonial landscape. Furthermore, the image of the women at home was a powerful force for patriotism—for instance, the “brainless but most beautiful girl” in Forster’s *A Passage to India*: “With her abundant figure and masses of corn-gold hair, she symbolized all that is worth fighting and dying for” (200). The English hysteria in Chandrapore after Adela Quested’s accusation of Aziz displays both the chivalric dimensions of colonialism, and the role of women as icons:

[The men] had started speaking of “women and children”—that phrase that exempts the male from sanity when it has been repeated a few times. Each felt that all he loved best in the world was at stake, demanded revenge, and was filled with a not unpleasing glow, in which the chilly and half-known features of Miss Quested vanished, and were replaced by all that is sweetest and warmest in the private life. (203)

Here, home and outpost become the same. Instead of a clique or house becoming the emotional center of a boy’s life, Scouts learned that home and family were the essence of what the Empire preserved and protected. Scouting told English boys they would be part of the larger, more modestly situated community of Englishmen abroad working towards the goal of expansion. And unless the Scout
abroad contented himself with the life of the bachelor civil servant, or with toiling on a settlement and then letting it pass away, with no one to leave it to, a domestic scene, even in the distant future, provided the incentive for duty.

This, however, was a long-term goal. Channeling and regulating male sexuality in the immediate present so that it served the nation required other measures. Faced with the supposed rampant sexuality of the lower classes, and the deviant sexuality of the upper classes, Baden-Powell urged Scouts to practice restraint. Through self-control, a young boy could help to defeat the threat of degeneration, for even if, as Havelock Ellis argued, one’s sexual preference was deformed by nature, will power could overcome biology. In fact, Scouting taught its boys that the will could overcome everything, including involuntary processes. Baden-Powell advised that Scouts should at all times breathe “through the nose, not through the mouth,” because they would not “get out of breath so quickly,” or “suck into their insides all sorts of microbes or seeds of disease that [were] in the air,” or “snore at night and so give themselves away to an enemy” (18). Boys who could control their breathing, even when asleep, could surely master their own “unpatriotic” and “degenerate” tendencies—natural sexual impulses included—while wide awake, for as Baden-Powell makes clear in Scouting for Boys, it was possible to alter or improve nearly all behavior. It was simply a matter of effort: only the weak can be controlled by others, or by their own bad habits. Baden-Powell cited an excerpt from Kim to make this point: “As a trial of his strong-mindedness [Lurgan] attempted to mesmerize Kim... to make Kim’s thoughts obey what was in his own mind. It is possible for strong-minded men to do this with those of a weaker mind” (7). But weakness itself can be overcome through an act of will. As the Head Scout explains, even the most compassionate young boy can control his innate impulses and become an effective soldier if he applies
himself: “Very few men are born brave, but any man can make himself brave if he
tries” (222).

To achieve this goal, a boy should follow a program of desensitization
designed by the Head Scout to develop martial abilities. Visits to a “butcher’s
slaughter house” will get the boy “accustomed to the sight of blood” (261).
Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman’s (a former army Ranger and paratrooper)
claim that humans are innately repulsed by, and show a “singular lack of
enthusiasm for killing one’s fellow man” (16), is therefore countered many years
before by Baden-Powell’s directive to “harden up.” To insure correct attitudes in
Scouts, he employs the same techniques traditionally employed in the military to
insure prompt actions. Faced with a soldier’s natural instinct not to kill, officers
respond with drilling, the “primary tool for ensuring that he would do his duty on
the battlefield” (Grossman 17). While Baden-Powell did apply himself to
preparing strategies for overriding a Scout’s abhorrence of blood and killing, the
more immediate concern was with suppressing sexual impulses—and the same
methods applied. Nor were these methods those of the public schools. While
scholars have traced the influence of the public schools on Scouting, it was the
ideal public schoolboy that Scouting set as a model, and not the real one.
Although the public school boy might be an ideal son of England for the middle
classes—athletic, self-assured, patriotic, and well-positioned for successful
employment—he was still not necessarily the ideal defender of it, at least in the
way Baden-Powell assumed it would need defending. Getting bloodied on the
playing fields of Eton might allow boys to develop their physiques and their ties to
their houses, but it did not prepare them for the real world of Empire:

Take even the captain of your cricket eleven and put him
down on the South African veldt alongside the young
colonial, and see which can look after himself. Cricket
doesn't matter a hang—though it is a jolly good game to play, and comes in useful to a certain extent in training a fellow's eye, nerve, and temper. High averages and clean flannels are not much good to him there. (Baden-Powell 15)

Contrary to middle-class desires and upper-class employment expectations, representing your country in the unknown required more than knowledge of Latin, an inbred sense of racial and cultural superiority, and the ability to wield a cricket bat. While the Scout still was "a young man who could adequately emulate his public school peers" (Bristow 171), it was more important that young men do so selectively. An old boy himself, Baden-Powell understandably did infuse Scouting with some of the dominant public school philosophies. Philathleticism, patriotism, and a belief in the primacy of boyhood were points of convergence. But ultimately, the ideal Scout was quite different from his public school second-cousin, and surprisingly, this realization came as a relief.

For example, unlike the public schools, Scouting did not engage in "old boy" worship. Though a Scout was a Scout now and forever—especially in conduct—no "old Scouts" returned regularly to reminisce and fraternize with the younger crop. Instead, Scouting was an organization of perpetual youth—with adult leaders, the Head Scout included, dressing youthfully in shorts. This environment runs entirely counter to that realm of precocious maturity nurtured in schools, where boys of twelve in blazers and trousers smoked cigars, held supper parties in their rooms, and behaved as men about town. Gambling, drinking, and indulging in store bought delicacies, these boys seemed like miniature men. In contrast, Scouting denied that the boys were mature, even as the organization trained them to become mature. Though not men yet, boys could still be like (responsible) men. Scouting assumed that the child Scout had to be taught to speak, think, and reason like an adult, and prepared to put his childish ways behind
him—but only when called upon to do so. The Scout’s character was therefore bifurcated by design—a child when the nation was at ease, but ready to be an adult hero in times of crisis.

There were real national benefits to be gained from nurturing “natural” deference to adults. Scouts would eventually grow up, but the repeated reminders to behave respectfully towards others, regardless of their class status, would insure an awareness of such obligations, whether or not they chose to behave so. Most importantly, though, the emphasis on respectful and deferential behavior impressed upon Scouts that their positions in life, even as adults, would be ones of service. Their social betters were expected to lead, not only as employers and policy makers in civilian life, but as officers in time of war. Scouting’s responsibility was to provide servants for the Empire. Scouting’s emphasis on respect created the ideal future civil servants, because a subordinate’s task is to follow orders and respect the authority of his superior. Karen Volland Waters points out that for the Victorians, the gentleman “should be lord of his own actions”—someone “who should naturally ‘possess and dispense the goods of the world’” (37). The Scout was not this man. A man of little social power, as a civil servant or a foot soldier in the field, the Scout one day would respectfully follow his superior’s commands without fail, and without comment or argument. Though Scouts were not trained to be sycophants, there was no room in Scouting’s lessons for discussing the possibility that a superior’s orders could be wrong.

Of course, Scouting’s message of submission to adult authority figures took into account the necessary relationship between a well-trained and socialized white English boy and the adult native administrator. Unquestioning obedience was owed only to those who were recognizably superior, and these included only other white males of the Empire—whether American, Canadian, Australian, or South African. As Baden-Powell reminded his Scouts, like Kim, they were
friends and protectors to all the world. The change in preposition here—from Kipling’s “of” to Baden-Powell’s “to”—is important because the to stresses England’s power to bestow friendship, and all its attendant benefits, upon a native. Like Kim, a Scout was aware that there were distinctions—racial, social, economic—to be drawn between himself and foreign “friends,” and his behavior must be regulated accordingly. Respectful behavior, for instance, did not necessarily have to be extended to all adult natives in the colonies. Those who behaved like men were treated as men, while those who stood outside the British sphere of influence were enemies or chaff. As for those who exhibited childish behavior within the sphere, they were treated appropriately—and with disdain. And from Kipling’s Hurree Babu to Forster’s Aziz, the Indian (as popularly imagined) was definitely assumed to be childish. For this reason, colonial agents of the kind Scouts might aspire to be were not obliged to submit even to the authority of the native rulers who employed them. As for those not obliged to their hosts, ample literary evidence exists of their deliberately atrocious behavior. The gentlemen of the club in Forster’s A Passage to India can stand for most.

And yet, while the challenge of obedience might be resolved, Scouting still had to address a potential problem springing from its own ideology. For late Victorians and early Edwardians, keeping boys eternally boys could raise other difficulties, since youth suggested not just immaturity, but impotence. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, homosexuality carried associations of “childishness . . . an infantile need, a mark of powerlessness” (177). Scouting chose to reject the link between youth and immaturity by insisting that for those things that mattered, Scouts could serve as “real men in every sense of the word” (Baden-Powell 5). In his Camp Fire Yarns, Baden-Powell showed how boys could be just like men if given the opportunity and skills. But the Head Scout never forgot that his audience was still boys, and that their lessons needed to be
couched in a particular way: “Moral instruction did not often seriously interfere with Scouting fun. Baden-Powell was aware of the danger of boring his audience; his intention was always to make moral and patriotic instruction interesting” (Sons 157).

This approach to Scouts served two purposes. First, childhood was presented as a continuum, rather than an earlier stage. Second, by couching the lessons of Scouting in terms of “play,” Baden-Powell suggested that the joys of childhood were also the joys of adult service. Scouting not only encouraged boys to imagine themselves as the heroes of their own adventure, but also gave them the physical space and props to carry the heroic narratives out. In this way, Scouting used games and play to sell adventure as patriotic duty to the boys—a much more successful strategy than trying to convince someone of the excitement to be had doing his duty as a civil service clerk. Like the Lost Boys of Neverland, Scouts were encouraged to remain adventurous boys, delaying their entrance into a particular kind of adulthood. For while adults reading Barrie’s Peter Pan might see Peter as a tragic figure, children reading the story generally conclude that the boys’ lives would have been much better had they never left the island. As Barrie himself suggests, those who abandoned Neverland seem to have lost a life of excitement and wonder. Work is admirable and necessary, and was what a Scout should do cheerfully and willingly. But contemporary middle-class notions and representations of work, at least to children, very often seemed lacking in exotic appeal. Baden-Powell’s program cleverly broke the link between grown-up duty and dullness. Unlike Barrie’s stodgy, grown-up and civilized, Once-Lost, boys, Scouts were not doomed, because doing their adult duty could look like a rollicking good time. Scouting taught skills that could potentially make being an adult fun. Living rough in the colonies was the obvious example, but the grown-up Scout might find his skills could serve him in “civilized” cities as well. In the
African bush or the streets of London, an accident might happen at any time that would require a Scout's skills to save the day. The boat might overturn, and people might need rescuing. The docile horse pulling the cart could go on a rampage at any moment. Scouting taught boys that disasters were always looming, but guaranteed that if they took the time to learn Scouting skills, they would not be left out of the fun. Or the glory. As Baden-Powell remarked, “every boy has just as much chance of being a life-saving hero if he chooses to prepare himself for it” (239). Peter Pan’s fears to the contrary, adulthood was not incompatible with an adventurous life. What Scouting argued, however, was that participating in adventure successfully depended upon skills learned as a boy. Only prepared youths would have successful adventures as adults.

Like those managing the Game in *Kim*, the Scouting program saw youths as the ideal students for training as the future heroes of the nation. It was at this moment that a commitment to the “purity” of the program’s goals was most fervent, and like Kim, Scouts were always conveniently on the cusp of maturity: old enough to engage in adventure, but too young to be permanently sidetracked by inconvenient sexual impulses. This stood in sharp contrast to the supposedly debauched schoolboy, or degenerate aristocrat, engaging in homosexual relationships, or the lascivious Indian, gleefully marrying children. To encourage the Scout to avoid romantic relations of any kind, Scouting set adventure and heroics against women and domesticity. In the world of adventure, women and sexual impulses could only be inconvenient, distracting, and basically beside the point. *Kim*’s impatience with the Woman of Shamlegh’s proposition is not just a rejection of female overtures, but of any temptation that would distract him (and thus a Scout) from his mission: “How can a man follow the Way or the Great Game when he is eternally pestered by women?” (92). By praising the Scout’s delay in becoming a full-grown man, the program also sought to reassure a
middle-class uneasy with what it saw as a growing population of lower-class loafers. Treating Scouts, however old, as sexually immature youths, allowed Baden-Powell to regulate deviant impulses and population growth of the wrong kind. And prolonging a Scout’s adolescence meant that Baden-Powell could truly attest to the fitness of the Scout. Abstinence, even if it meant keeping the young man a child, was a prudent and patriotic part of this evaluation. Given the environment that the former Scout would encounter in the colonies as a settler, soldier, or civil servant, it should not be surprising that Baden-Powell and other conservatives should be so fervent in their praise of purity. For aside from brides brought from home, what choices did the young man have? Native women (full or part) or unattached white women in the colonies were very suspect—so suspect, that a young man serving his country should rely on his training in self-denial, and refrain from contact entirely.

But the celebration of extended youthfulness served an ideological function for Scouting and the nation as well. Scouting’s emphasis on youth created a sense of the Empire as still in its own youthful heyday. By depicting the body of England as a youthful one—recall how the young boy replaced the aged Queen in popular iconography—proponents of Empire could reject comparisons to Imperial Rome in decay and thereby calm fears for the future. Scouting therefore appealed to the hopes, fears, and beliefs of its support base: middle-class parents and social reformers. As Robert MacDonald notes, Scouting appealed to boys who wanted an identity separate from their parents, even though wanting such an identity was characteristic of their class position:

For its first recruits . . . Scouting provided an identity.

It allowed boys to assert those feelings which, as members of their class and age group, they already possessed: adventurousness, within limits; loyalty to each other; a
need for achievement; a desire for some freedom from adult control. (*Sons* 157)

Scouting also managed to present its values as the necessary components for a healthy nation, and therefore, a boost in the nation’s morale. These values were of course middle-class values, but at this time, they were becoming indistinguishable from *British* values: “Baden-Powell’s lessons in good citizenship reflected middle-of-the-road opinion. The success of *Scouting for Boys* as a popular text was based on his extraordinary ability to set down in a straightforward way the basic tenets of conservative morality and popular imperialism” (*Sons* 157). The number of young boys embracing Scouting’s tenets must have also gladdened Victorians, who could see in the bare-kneed, uniformed Scout a comforting return of sorts to the traditional values that had supposedly won England its place at the forefront of world powers. Events such as the 1913 Birmingham Jamboree displayed the vitality and preparedness, not simply of England’s young men, but of the nation as a whole. If Scouts presented the nation’s future, then everything was all right.

Those bare knees and handy skills, however, also represented the solution to another vital need—improving Britain’s racial stock. Based on Gregor Mendel’s theories on genetics, however incorrectly understood, improvement through the young Scout would most obviously manifest itself in his children, ensuring that each successive generation of Scouts would be increasingly genetically improved. But to take a more specific page from the eugenics of the day, Scouting’s devotion to creating a long childhood also fit with contemporary theories of how to prevent creating adults doomed to non-productivity and waste. As Bristow explains: “Without an extended and carefully organized childhood, adult barbarians would, according to Galton, remain ‘children in mind, with the passions of grown men.’” It followed, therefore, that the ‘highest minds in the highest race seem to be those who had the longest boyhood.’ Scouting would
lengthen boyhood as no organization had done before” (172). In the literature of
the period, and especially in children’s adventure fiction, childhood as a training
ground for asserting racial, physical, intellectual, and moral superiority was
pervasive. Scouting methods supplied the rationale and support for this training:
“islands are populated—if populated at all—only by savages. Since savages (even
adult ones) are racially inferior, they ultimately prove no threat to boys who
occupy this territory. . . . It follows then that white children are superior in strength
of body and mind to grown-up islanders” (Bristow 94). Given these assumptions,
a program devoted to self-improvement would only increase the distance, and the
longer the childhood spent preparing for the rigors of manhood, the greater the
success of both man and mission. As Baden-Powell reminded his boys, Scouting
“is a grand life, but it cannot suddenly be taken up by any man who thinks he
would like it, unless he has prepared himself for it beforehand. . . . Those who
succeed best are those who learnt scouting while they were still boys” (6).
Scouting was therefore the incubating period that allowed boys to emerge as full-
fledged men, ready to do the work assigned to them.

But, Scouting’s “extended and carefully organized childhood” stressed
potential and possibilities rather than certainties. It could not, and did not, for
example, promise its boys that they would ever enjoy the same kind of economic
or social ease that their public school counterparts expected post graduation.
Though Scouts (and their parents) were assured that they would receive some
measure of triumph at the end of it all, Scouting measured success differently from
how the public schools did. Scouting stressed sacrifice and service, rather than
economic achievement, for at its heart, Scouting was a program advocating social
improvement, not social reform or revolution. Since it had no interest in
overthrowing the established social differentiations of the day, presenting Scouts
as the genetic future saviors of the nation was a complicated business. Scouts had
to believe in the importance of their mission without losing the natural deference owed to their social betters—whose failures, ironically enough, Scouting struggled to correct. Scouting circumvented the potential problem of improper aspiration by appealing to the Scout’s training in self-denial. In Scouting, the benefits of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation were presented as infinite. They could reform the nation’s racial stock, they could combat sexual deviance and destructive behavior, and all without disrupting the social hierarchy of the nation. Weighed against the health of the nation, then, humbly declining personal advancement seems a small price to pay—or at least that was how it was presented to the Scout. Indeed, patriotic iconography before the First World War emphasized the beauty and primacy of sacrifice,¹⁶ and in Scouting, part of success was effacing one’s own achievements. While the public schools promoted a sense of greatness in being associated with the school and the heroes who sprang from it, Scouting encouraged heroic anonymity, nowhere confirmed better than in the famous, if somewhat dubious, story of the Scout who in 1909 helped William D. Boyce, the American founder of the Boy Scouts, when the latter became lost in the London fog. According to the story, the Scout got Boyce to safety, then stepped back into the mists, unnamed and unheralded, once his deed was done. Refusing a tip, he let his good deed speak for him.

Like Henry Higgins, then, Baden-Powell sought to improve, but ultimately not to transform. For all of Scouting’s contempt for the idle, degenerate aristocrat, it never ceased to believe that the lines between who should and who should not assume command in the colony, metropole, or battlefield remained intact and stable.

¹⁶ For a full discussion on the ideal of sacrifice in World War I, see Frantzen’s Introduction to *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (1-27).
Every organization needs a *raison d'etre*—to create an identity, and to provide an ideological focus designed to rouse the troops. Scouting declared itself a program dedicated to re-vitalization and progress. But such a grand goal could not be realized without giving something up in return. Accordingly, Scouting required self-sacrifice and suffering—of the spirit and the body. As Baden-Powell points out, “Through looking outwards ... boys thought less of self and ‘acquired a multitude of small interests outside themselves’” (Jeal 365). Moreover, anxieties caused by the Crimean and Boer Wars, apprehension over possible colonial unrest, and fears of an impending war in Europe lent an urgency to Britain’s need for reconstructing itself racially. These past and anticipated traumas also required a substantial number of men willing to offer up their bodies and lives in defense of the nation. The Scout must not only be ready to efface himself socially, but willing to do so physically. As part of the “solution” for the impending crises, Scouts were trained to become a prototype of the Terminator—an operative for whom the ends justified the means, who would do the job without assistance, and who would follow orders to the bitter end. More distilled than the dictates of Western European chivalry, Scouting’s code insisted on mental, physical, and moral purity combined with a lack of any worldly self-interest. Scouting’s mission statement could have been “Be the best your country needs you to be.” At this time, history textbooks, boys’ magazines, and Baden-Powell were pointing to the links between Imperial England and Imperial Rome. In his series of lectures proposing a Scouting movement, Baden-Powell noted that “the same causes which brought about the downfall of the Roman Empire (and of many others of the empires of antiquity) were working to-day in Great Britain” (Baden-Powell 244).
Though at the apex of its imperial and industrial might, England’s confidence had been profoundly shaken by international events. The ever-increasing number of skirmishes within the Empire, from General Gordon’s Sudan disaster to the Boer War, and England’s inability to settle any of them, seemed to be signs of the country’s decline. The Army, the War Office, and the British government as a whole sought to escape responsibility for these military fiascoes by discovering physical defects in nearly one third of those who applied for active service in the Boer War. The problem was, therefore, not in the machine, but in the materials it was forced to work with. The Englishman/boy himself needed recasting. More specifically, England’s decline was not the fault of its military officers, but of the enlisted soldier, the settler, and the civil servant at home or abroad who supposedly did not maintain a fit physique, a sober mentality, and upright morals. This scapegoating of the English public was in an odd way reassuring. If individuals, and not the English social system, were to blame, then the situation could change for the better.

The founding of the Boy Scouts was proof of this optimism. While the Army’s report on the degeneration of British health was equally concerned with the middle and lower classes, it was the “weak, stunted, and too often diseased slum dweller” (Sons 4) who worried upper middle class reformers like Baden-Powell. This anxiety partly arose from the visibly increasing working class. For middle class Victorians, the sight of youths loitering on street corners or in public houses fanned fears that the masses in their millions [were] foreign, godless, uncontrollable; they were awkwardly independent, at times almost lawless; they threatened good order with continual strikes and riots. The spectre of degeneration rattled its
bones: slum dwellers were probably polluting the race through mental deficiency. (*Sons* 20)

If the "root of the problem" was a "failure to produce men who were strong, both morally and physically" (*Sons* 4), then obviously the public could not reform itself. And recent social reforms in marriage and divorce as well as voting were not improving British society—at least in the eyes of those like Baden-Powell, who argued that a return to the past held the key to the nation’s revival. Scouting, therefore, would revitalize England from the ground up—starting with the country’s youth. In addition to improving individual beings, the eugenic streak in Baden-Powell’s thinking led him to think that changing the boy would ultimately transform the nation, as their children would enjoy the genetic benefits and improvement. Scouting definitely believed that the child was father to the man.

To carry out this social engineering, Scouting sought to reform current methods of childrearing. Maintaining its position as an authority in raising healthy children required up to date methods, so heavy doses of “old-fashioned, common sense” parenting techniques were blended with the latest scientific, forensic, and psychological tools. In fact, modern childrearing theories actually shaped how Scouting “returned” to past values and methods. Mothers, the traditional repository of child raising expertise, were now seen to lack *innate* skill. Besides the danger that women had been infected by the ideas of the New Woman, there was also a sense that a new century required updated, scientifically advanced methods. And women did not have them. In 1904, the Physical Deterioration Committee determined that the decline of the English city dweller was “located in childbearing, the upbringing of children, and the supposed ignorance of working class mothers in matters of healthcare and moral instruction” (Rutherford 54). Mothers were advised to care for the baby while it was still in-vitro, and despite the fact that these suggestions assume that the ideal childhood incubator is the
middle class nursery, they do indicate that expert, “scientific” intervention was not only medically sound, but patriotic. “The medicalization of women’s bodies was carried out ‘in the name of the responsibility they owed to the health of their children, the solidity of the family institution and the safeguarding of society,’” Stoler writes, and Scouting in Baden-Powell’s eyes did its part to re-make the English boy through social and hard science.

Unlike the scientific tinkering of Shelley’s Frankenstein, whose creature was the product of salvageable parts at hand, Scouting’s improvement of the English lad carefully attempted to create a hero out of the past and the future. Like Gregory Peck’s character in The Boys from Brazil, Baden-Powell tried to resurrect the “heroic” values within an English boy perfected through the most modern scientific methods. Here I should clarify that while eugenics played a part in Scouting’s teachings, Baden-Powell habitually used the term “race” for the entirety of British citizens. “Racial perfection” therefore meant the improvement of all British boys—including their [white] brothers in the colonies. Scouting did, however, see the value in segregation. Like his peers, Baden-Powell saw English society in terms of a hierarchy,17 but the head Scout also ranked citizens in terms of their usefulness to the Empire. Falling short of the level that Baden-Powell required was not an option. Those who would not or could not measure up were beyond help. Even science could not improve them—and unfortunately, the cities were teeming with such people. For the more affluent of the day, degeneracy had blended sin and crime into a medical discourse which proposed that the root of all social problems was hereditary, personal pathology. This discourse was responding to an ironic social success: “Civilization had enabled the ‘unfit’ to

17 Cannadine’s Ornamentalism contains an expanded explanation of class and caste in English society at home and in the colonies. Cannadine argues that British upper classes identified with the native upper classes in the colonies more than they did with the English working poor.
survive and unless they were checked the English race would be undermined and British imperialism would go the way of the Roman Empire and collapse from within” (Rutherford 55).

Baden-Powell began his campaign by focusing on boys. Enthusiasm would not be enough to assure that English boys could support their nation when called. Whether participating in colonial or military missions, boys who had never been outside of their city or town limits had neither the physique nor the skills to represent the nation. Solving this problem would require a war on both moral and physical levels. First came the physical, for while skills could be taught, the basic health necessary to survive and thrive out-of-doors could not. Scouting cured poor health and physical weakness through gymnastics, a germ-free environment, and paradoxically, a Spartan attitude toward modern conveniences. As Jonathan Rutherford points out above, modern comforts had created a reverse Darwinism. Natural attrition no longer weeded out many of the weak because post-industrial amenities allowed them to survive—however poorly. For this reason, Scouting weaned boys from modern comforts, forcing them outside and into tents, with the hoped-for-end an improvement in physical and moral health.

Developments in criminal studies, technology, and sociology influenced Scouting from the start. For as much as old boy Baden-Powell disdained traditional academics as training for the colonial servant, he was committed to scientific training—especially as it applied to his rather MI5-ish conceptualization of Scouting. Thus, while Latin and logarithms would be useless to the Scout—as it would to the colonial settler, civil servant, or military man—science could help transform the man of letters into a man of action. Other desirable skills had literary models. In addition to Scouting for Boys, two of the books Baden-Powell recommended for Scout reading were by Arthur Conan Doyle. Listed under the heading of “TRACKING AND WOODCRAFT” appeared Doyle’s Memoirs of
Sherlock Holmes and Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, confirming Baden-Powell’s reminder to Scouts that the most exciting animal to track was man. Here was a set of skills with real value. Scouts were taught that under their inconspicuous gaze, criminals and other unworthies would immediately reveal their presence as their crimes and misdeeds—intended or already committed—unfolded before the Scout’s all-knowing/guessing investigative sleuthing. Any alert youngster with the wits, health, and pluck could master the rudimentary elements of crime studies. Take for example “Winter’s Stob; or The Elsdon Murder,” Baden-Powell’s account of a shepherd boy who proves instrumental in apprehending a murderer by unconsciously following the precepts of Scoutcraft. This young lad solves a brutal murder, and leads authorities to the culprit, by practicing a number of Scout Techniques:

Woodcraft—He is out in the woods tending sheep when he notices a tramp

Observation—The boy surreptitiously records the tramp’s appearance, making note of any unusual characteristics and his location

Concealment—The boy’s observation goes unnoticed, so as not to arouse the tramp’s suspicions

Deduction—Upon returning home and learning of the murder of an old woman, the boy goes to investigate. He notices unusual footprints which recall to him the peculiar soles of the shoes worn by the tramp that he had seen earlier. From this clue he deduces that the tramp might be involved in the crime

Chivalry—To murder a defenseless old woman was dastardly!

Pluck and self-discipline, alacrity—Disregarding the potential risk
involved with identifying the gypsy, the boy informs authorities of his suspicions

Health and Strength—Although the tramp is far from the old woman’s house, the boy is physically able to return to the village and back

Kindheartedness—After the trial and execution of the tramp (a gypsy of course), the boy is filled with remorse for having caused the death of another human being

Lifesaving—The boy is comforted with the thought that his actions have not only allowed for justice to be served but also prevent the tramp from committing future crimes

Duty—The boy did his duty despite facing possible danger

Example—He exemplified Scouting’s lessons without having been taught them.

The “true crime” aspect of this example lured in boy readers, who would then feel moral indignation. Note also the eugenic blueprint. The future colonial civil servant here is trained to recognize social and racial subordinates as people who should arouse our suspicions. In his biography of Baden-Powell, Jeal notes that “Baden-Powell also indicated that judging people’s characters from their appearances might have rather more tangible results” (365).

The media at this time provided its own support for Baden-Powell’s program. As Richard Altick explains, the fascination with murder to be found in Victorian newspapers has a chicken-egg quality to it. “Who can say which was more responsible for the heightened appreciation of murder in Victorian times,” he

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18 And Powell’s work in turn influenced later fiction. Tim Jeal notes in his biography of Baden-Powell that “In line with Baden-Powell’s original praise of ‘observation’ as a tool for military scouting, Kipling made Kim’s training in that art his basic qualification for Secret Service assignments. *Aids to Scouting* was a best-seller in the year in which Kipling wrote *Kim*” (365).
asks, “an early cluster of sensational cases, or the accident that they occurred
during a brief passage in English history . . . when journalism was ready and eager
to exploit crime, even ordinary crime, as it had never been exploited before?” (17).
This coincidence between “spectacular” murders and development in newspaper
production created the possibility for detective studies in the Scouting program.
Even if England was not really in danger of being wiped out through an
assortment of diabolical murderers, the media’s focus made it certainly seem so,
and also made the need for action seem imperative. According to Altick, in an
inverse of “best world theory,” Victorians believed they were at risk because they
resembled the victims:

If, then, as a candid consideration of the realities insisted,
murder might not touch our own lives, the news of the day
assured us that it might well touch the lives of people just
like us. It happened in the very streets in which we walked,
in the very houses we visited, among the sort of men and
women we knew. (81)

In the face of this threat to all patriotic, virtuous English citizens, what else was a
Scout to do but protect the places and people he knew and loved best? When he
charged the young Scout to defend England’s domestic interests, then, Baden-Powell
had media help in impressing upon the boys the need for their service and
attention. Like Sherlock Homes, Baden-Powell believed in the value of detective
work, and he saw Scouts as an auxiliary service to the regular constabulary force.
Holmes himself had greatly valued the work of inconspicuous youths: “There’s
more work to be got out of one of those little beggars than out of a dozen of the
force.” He called his boy sources “sharp as needles,” and claimed that “all they
want is organization” (Study 50). That is what Scouting provided, and while
Baden-Powell always stressed the boy’s value to nation and Empire, there were
also job opportunities for young men with detective skills in the metropole. And even in terms of the Empire (including Ireland) the boy was learning valuable lessons. For despite the fact that the English maintained that they were in the colonies to “help” native governments institute “good” policies, British management frequently proved to be a form of policing.

Finally, Baden-Powell, like the philosophers of the “Classical School” of crimes studies, joined with Bentham in seeing criminal behavior as a result of free will and “‘hedonistic calculus’” (Lilly 17). It therefore followed that if a Scout could conquer his bad habits through self-will, he could also stifle any criminal tendencies he might be tempted to act upon. Rejecting the possibility that social or genetic forces could induce crime, Scouting assumed that crimes could always be rationally evaluated and thus solved. Any detritus left behind by a criminal could potentially betray his identity. Even theatrical or fanciful attempts to disguise an identity would ultimately prove to be clues. As Scouting’s fictional patron criminologist observes, “whimsical and bizarre conceits of this kind are common enough in the annals of crime, and usually afford valuable indications to the criminal” (Sign 57). Or even more to the point, when one has “eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth” (Sign 41).

The greatest model for Scout detectives, however, is not the boy in “Winter’s Stob,” or even Sherlock Holmes, but the hero of Rudyard Kipling’s Kim. The abridged version in the 1911 edition of Scouting for Boys equates intelligence work with patriotic duty, and although the summarized version differs significantly from the original model, many enthusiastic Scouting acolytes would have read the original Kipling as suggested. This bildungsroman provides the Scout with examples of deductive reasoning in action. Like the shepherd in “Winter’s Stob,” Kim is unschooled, but attuned to detective work. Sharp, courageous, attentive to details, and calm no matter how tight the jam, even before
his instruction Kim shows a talent for making quick associations based on accumulated knowledge. While sitting “in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun Zam-Zammah,” Kim first sees his lama:

There shuffled round the corner . . . such a man as Kim, who thought he knew all castes, had never seen. He was nearly six feet high, dressed in fold upon fold of dingy stuff like horse-blanketing, and not one fold of it could Kim refer to any known trade or profession. At his belt hung a long open-work iron pencase and a wooden rosary such as holy men wear. On his head was a gigantic sort of tam-o’-shanter. His face was yellow and wrinkled, like that of Fook Shing, the Chinese bootmaker in the bazaar. His eyes turned up at the corners and looked like little slits of onyx. (3)

Although much of this description establishes the lama’s character, it also gives readers a sense of just how acute Kim’s powers of observation are. Such skills are the ones Baden-Powell urged his Scouts to learn in the 1911 edition. A Scout must be on constant alert, noting everything, letting nothing escape his gaze—people, landmarks, events. Faced with the novel’s mystery, Kim displays the deductive logic that a Scout would need to be a good citizen and a successful operative of the Empire:

... it was Kim who had wakened the lama—Kim with one eye laid against a knot-hole in the planking, who had seen the Delhi man’s search through the boxes. This was no common thief that turned over letters, the soles of Mahbub’s slippers, or picked the seams of the saddle-bags so deftly. At first Kim had been minded to give the alarm—
the long-drawn "cho-or-choor!" (thief!, thief!) that sets the
serai ablaze of nights; but he looked more carefully, and,
hand on amulet, drew his own conclusions. "It must be the
pedigree of that made-up horse-lie," said he, "the thing
that I carry to Umballa. Better that we go now. Those
who search bags with knives may presently search bellies
with knives." (19)

Here Kim's adventure is in danger of ending before it began. Even Mahbub has
considered the risk of Kim being intercepted and the message taken: "If the worst
came to the worst, and the boy came to harm, the paper would incriminate
nobody" (17). Yet by keeping his wits about him, Kim comes through unscathed,
succeeding in part because, like the shepherd boy in the "Winter's Stob" tale, he
follows Baden-Powell's precepts of tracking.

As Kim and "Winter's Stob" both suggest, such activities could be not only
virtuous, but downright exciting. Public schools, church-sponsored youth groups,
or even life on the streets offered nothing as attractive as Scouting did to the
young middle class boy. Public schools could offer prestige, job security, rugby,
and even cricket, but the regimented, academic structure and the after hours
indolence would hardly attract a healthy young lad. As for group affiliation and
costumes, Scouting offered these as well—and with a more global recognition.
Although the YMCA would become a major success, church-sponsored youth
leagues were always suspect to boys not raised in religious households. And
lastly, while ruffianism seemed to promise absolute freedom, it did not provide
stable group identity for young boys. Skirting the edges of respectability had a
certain charm perhaps; Scouting exploits promised to be far more exciting than the
everyday humdrum of street life. The foreign and exotic locales, the intrigue and
danger served as powerful incentives for potential Boy Scouts. Scouting offered
its boys an organized escape from the mundane, and an entry into a fantasy world of secret agents and adventure—powerful stuff for English boys who had never left their town, or even their neighborhood.

While Baden-Powell’s military genius can be questioned, his instinct for creating a positive image of Scouting can not be. He had a talent for drawing on current events to create the “thing” that would satisfy the public’s needs while advancing his own sense of military, patriotic social service. Take again for example the extensive coverage of crime given in the press. As they read about shocking murders, members of the public picked up the argot of criminal investigations, and took the opportunity to assess for themselves motives, means, and possible culprits. As a result, generations of Victorians became amateur armchair detectives. By encouraging Scouts to learn the basics of detective work, and more importantly, by telling the general public that this is what Scouts were doing, Baden-Powell was responding to the temperament and the perceived needs of the age. Forensic training provided not just an admired job skill, but nicely dovetailed with public passions. Basic training in the criminal sciences made Scouting seem highly practical, admirably altruistic, and very exciting. The British public could only approve.

Within the program itself, crime and criminal literature clearly enticed, then intrigued young Scouts. There was intense public interest in crime narratives—the more violent and sensational, the better. As Richard Altick notes, “it was in, or just before, the early Victorian era that homicide first became institutionalized as a popular entertainment, a spectator sport” (10), and as early as 1826, English tourists were visiting sites of “true crime” as part of their itineraries of the picturesque and the pathetic. Altick declines to identify the precise cause of the Victorians’ fascination with murder, but he does point out that the rise of the popular press coincided with a series of horrible murders. These crimes inspired
the balladmongers and the newspapers” to “produce immediate classics.” So avid and numerous were crime devotees, that Altick counterbalances them with the evangelical movement: Religion’s “common enthusiasm” brought together “high and low in a common atmosphere of piety, concern for the souls of one’s brothers, and stringent, self-conscious morality,” while “at the opposite end of the moral spectrum, the widely shared taste for murder had a similar effect” (41-42). Changes in production, which allowed newspaper publishers to increase circulation among the middle and working classes, also created a popular press. Changes in the taxes on knowledge undermined the need for partisan funding for newspapers, resulting in papers increasingly dependent on advertisements and circulation. As early as the 1830s, publishers learned that “the perfect formula for increased circulation included generous helpings of Establishment scandal and sidewalk sensation.” After certain weeklies started giving “systematic, detailed coverage” to murder, their huge success transformed the dailies, who “soon were forced to remodel themselves on the same pattern” (Altick 57-58). Finally, advances in transportation and communication technology actually made crime reporting, and even the image of the journalist as detective, possible. Altick explains that “newspapers threw into the preparation of each new daily or weekly report the resources and energies of an increasingly professional corps of journalists with expense accounts and open telegraph lines ever at their disposal.” As for distance, hand-delivered “detailed versions of a murder or execution that had happened as many as several weeks earlier” gave way to railway-delivered newspapers that “could get the latest detailed news to the most remote hamlet within a few hours (66).

What is important here for my purposes is that the sensational and lurid subject matter, the detective tone of the articles, and the widespread circulation of these papers all created that working and middle class readership that would have
included almost all potential Scouts. That the hugely successful *Daily Telegraph* was until the 1880s "edited for a middle class clientele rather than for the workers is proof enough, that murder sold as well to the substantial shopkeeper, clerk, civil servant, and professional man as it did to the manual laborer who bought it, in his own press on Sunday alone" (Altick 61). As for potential Scouts, the literature of murder provided a welcome change from their school fare. "At mid-century the 'penny dreadful' was joined by the 'shilling shocker,'" Altick notes: "These garishly dressed entertainments were written in a style which, even to the loose grammar, was both comprehensible and agreeable to the dullest product of the dismal schools where children of the masses acquired such literacy as they possessed" (70). A young Scout's response to such shockers would predictably be positive, since even if he were very high minded, this did not rule out a predilection for the sensational. Hence again the significance of "Winter's Stob." With all the necessary components to capture the Scout's interest, the story has the additional value of presenting outraged resistance as the only correct/acceptable response to villainy. And just in case the very slow-witted did not perceive the correct moral responses, Baden-Powell supplied them. The murder of a "helpless old woman" should stimulate "chivalric indignation." Faced with the execution of a maladjusted individual, the Scout should solemnly accept his duty to the community. Finally, since a Scout's behavior will be observed by the public, he is obliged to provide the correct moral example.

Thus, a series of moral obligations emerges from a narrative whose energy comes from the description of a brutal murder, and an account of an amateur boy sleuth. Baden-Powell, for instance, encouraged scouts to follow the example of Kim by carefully observing and interpreting their surroundings. Every gesture, facial feature, piece of apparel, and how it was worn could provide important personal information about the subject. But of course, what these features and
accessories revealed was powerfully shaped by Scouting’s assumptions about
good citizenship, masculinity, and intelligence. As many critics have noted,
Scouting utilized Galton’s “scientific” theories of eugenics—or more accurately,
Karl Pearson’s expansion of those teachings, as Michael Rosenthal points out in
*The Character Factory*. I would like to extend these connections into the realm of
criminology, since one of the things that Scouts “detected” was the criminal type.
Baden-Powell argued simultaneously that self-control and self-improvement were
attainable ends, and that certain individuals were a certain way, usually due to
economic circumstance or race. The prevailing proponents of this second view
were the Positivist School, which “primarily emphasized the mind and the body of
the criminal” (Lilly 18). Taking the example of Caliban, Lilly explains the
positivist assumption that body and behavior reflect ethics and worth:
“Shakespeare’s *Tempest* portrays a deformed servant’s morality as offensive as his
appearance” (18).

Later positivists like Caesar Lombroso (the “father of modern
criminology”) sought to provide a more scientific basis for this assumption:

The central tenet of Lombroso’s early explanations of
crime is that criminals represent a peculiar physical
type, distinctively different from non-criminals. In
general terms, he claimed that criminals represent a
form of degeneracy that was manifested in physical
characteristics reflective of earlier forms of evolution.
He described criminals as atavistic, a throwback to an
earlier form of evolutionary life. For instance, he thought
ears of unusual size, sloping foreheads, excessively long
arms, receding chins, and twisted noses were indicative
of physical characteristics found among criminals. (Lilly 20)
Though Lombroso published his theories in *On Criminal Man* in 1876, many other European scholars had already made such associations. In any case, when Baden-Powell suggested that Scouts could identify potential wrong-doers and other deviants by appearance, he was drawing not only on his personal prejudices, but on popular scientific theory. Despite its supposed utility in making England a less crime-ridden place, such stereotyping also proved to have more sweeping implications. Just as certain stereotypes of homosexuals drifted over to native men, excluding both groups from positions of power or influence in the colonies and the metropole, Positivist School criminal characteristics provided Scouts with a vocabulary for discrimination. Acquainting Scouts with the "face of crime" taught the young boys two lessons. First, the young Scout recognized his own ideal appearance as the epitome of what was good, advanced, and respectable in England. If a degenerate criminal could be identified with a glance, so too could a Scout. His recognizable uniform and neat appearance, and his supposed athletic build and handsome visage made a Scout easy to recognize—though unfortunately also easy for a criminal on the lam to avoid, or at least detect. But this would be nitpicking. The Scout’s "real" job was to present this appearance to best advantage, since it would reassure social critics—and parents—worried about the decline of the English race that the future genetic health of the nation could be seen in the face of its Scouts. The second lesson not only reinforced notions of innate superiority over colonized citizens, but also instructed Scouts how, as future civil servants or settlers, they would have to "deal" with the natives. If the Scout abroad at some time was in a tight situation involving responsibility for Englishmen and women—as Baden-Powell had been during the siege of Mafeking—having the shorthand key to race relations would make deciding upon strategies and sacrifices that much easier. Such attitudes complicated Scouting’s lessons to its boys. While Scouting promoted universal fraternity amongst Scouts,
and challenged the boys to behave honorably toward those lacking advantages, Scouting also circulated negative stereotypes as factual and scientific.

An additional scientific concern, however, was on the surface less contentious: the gear. For although Baden-Powell emphasized preparation, and making do with what could be found in the wild, the right toys could make the adventure even more fun. As fans of James Bond know, the gadgetry can often be the hero of the story, but without a “Q” to supply the tools, Scouting had to look elsewhere. Fortunately, there were many ready at hand to provide technological support to the Scout on his mission. Obviously, Western scientific developments included communications aids like the telegraph, which could transfer information in ways that insured the instantaneous sharing of knowledge between England and all parts of the Empire. Less splashy developments in the fields of optics or armaments or hygiene could also help the young Scout in a foreign and potentially hostile environment.

Although advances in Victorian science may seem slow-moving in twenty-first century hindsight, at the time they seemed apocalyptic. My interest, however, is in the way science was thought about and was seen as part of the intellectual climate. Scientific and technological achievements were awe-inspiring and utilitarian, making daily life more convenient, enhancing industrial diversity and productivity, and improving the country’s military status. As for Scouting, while ostensibly an organization seeking to develop character rather than martial ability, scientific learning became a part of the program in a military way. When war came, Scouts would be prepared—equipped with the know-how and ingenuity that research had stimulated. As Magnus Pike points out in *The Science Century*, people’s response to both scientific and technological advances changed during the Victorian period. While some resistance occurred—London, for instance, took a while to warm to the telephone—incorporating new inventions into one’s life
became something the average citizen did all the time. While Baden-Powell saw some modern conveniences as contributing to the decline of the English race—see the discussion of reverse Darwinism above—major Victorian scientific discoveries did earn his approval. Baden-Powell’s emphasis on personal hygiene in *Scouting for Boys*, for instance, comes out of Joseph Lister’s revolutionary use of antiseptics in treating wounds. What is important here, however, is that Scouting often used modern science to support old lessons. In an age becoming used to the transcontinental telegraph, electric lighting, motor cars, and air flight, Scouting’s recommendations to look to the past should have been a hard sell. But Baden-Powell could make a message of personal purity rest on microbe research, allowing Scouting to act as both a broadsword, and the cutting edge, as it developed boys.

Scouting’s seeming alliance with scientific learning also tended to reassure an English public that no longer felt confident in its omnipotence. Particularly sensitive about its diminished lead in industrial, scientific, and military superiority, Britain was increasingly alarmed by the growing militarism and industrial output of countries like Germany and Japan. (The relationship with the United States was a very different matter.) Pig iron production, chemical advances in dyeing techniques—Britain was being overtaken in these areas in the space of a decade. As for the chemical industry, by 1914 “the British and their allies found that the entire science-based industry, begun so dramatically by the young English [W. H.] Perkin, had become a German one and had to be rebuilt afresh before uniforms could be dyed, sick men treated and new explosives manufactured” (Pyke 13). In the face of such decline, Scouting’s scientifically “sound” program assured a shaken public that England’s technologically-aware youth could again lead the way. Character was the key. Scouts were being taught thrift, the work ethic, efficiency, and most crucially, *ingenuity.*
The stimulus was Germany. Though the Boy Scout movement would
disavow any link between itself and the German continental youth movements, the
fact that Germany had established a youth corps to develop patriotic citizens, and
thus soldiers-to-be, was hard to ignore. Although the German youth movements
did not foster tremendous national industrial and scientific growth, the country’s
very visible technological developments did seem related to the large troops of
smartly uniformed lads, organized and disciplined. Scouting did not respond by
insisting on expensive technology. Instead, Baden-Powell encouraged kinds of
thinking and certain inclinations that we certainly recognize as being scientific in
nature. Take for example the demand that boys were to survive in the wild
without “artificial” aids. Scouts must know the suitable woods for building
shelters, and what vegetation is safe to eat. By requiring the boys to know such
“woodcraft,” Baden-Powell was introducing them to botany, and to some degree,
ecology. Similarly, while Scouting tended to dismiss the need for “hard”
technology—the favored fantasy models were the Zulu warrior, the Indian brave,
or the scout—innovative and imaginative thinking were some of the highest
virtues. Thinking beyond the expected, breaking through constraints of how
things were done or even thought about—these were the ways that the mavericks
of science created their marvels. Concrete, proven improvements were what the
country craved, and by 1900, science had ceased to be alchemy, and had become
the way to maintain the Empire, and an important key to the future.

Several yarns in Scouting for Boys featured advice on how to survive in
whatever wilderness the Scout/Imperial agent found himself. The manual’s
language is self-confident, and convincing. Boys were assured there “was no need
to rough it” as long as they knew what they were doing (Baden-Powell 76). By
following the manual’s instructions and their Scoutmaster’s lessons, boys could
learn to survive and thrive in any foreign land. Here the skills already mentioned
coalesce. Selecting the best woods for necessary structures. Determining edible vegetation. Becoming familiar with the habits of wild animals—both to find meat, and to keep from becoming it. Doing the equivalent of atmospheric/barometric readings—sans instruments. Avoiding germs and maintaining hygiene complete the picture. Botany, zoology, ecology, meteorology, and micro-biology.

The fact that plants appear both in Baden-Powell’s Camp Fire Yarn on Camping, and in a later chapter of their own, should not be surprising, since the woodcraft program is aimed at an outdoors/back-to-nature ethic. Then and now, knowledge of flora was basic: a boy needed to find food amongst the foliage, and avoid any plants that might incapacitate him—poison ivy and sumac, for instance. Perhaps rural boys would find such lessons infantile, but city boys needed the help. If anything, zoology was an even more alien subject for city Boy Scouts. Identifying with the spirit of the troop’s wolf representative, however, underscored for Scouts the practiced need to stalk game, rather than to become it. The spirit of ecology that accompanied the lessons on fauna was, however, somewhat surprising. Baden-Powell’s enthusiastic participation in pig-sticking in India to the contrary, Scouts were urged to use cameras rather than guns on animals. Baden-Powell also condemns outright cruelty toward animals, and while he does not urge Scouts to preserve the environment, he does not condone its wanton destruction. The Head Scout saw the Scout becoming a part of the wilderness by identifying with the animals. To survive, Scouts also needed to read their environment, and weather patterns especially. While the Scout tramping about the English countryside was not usually in mortal danger, recognizing the signs of impending rain or snow could make the outdoors more comfortable. In a foreign locale, the Scout needed to learn and be always alert about local weather patterns. Not recognizing the signs of a monsoon in India would also probably mean ignorance of the flooding shortly thereafter. As for Scouts planning to homestead
in the colonies, ignorance of meteorological knowledge would more likely doom his farm.

Finally, Scouting practices often mirrored recent medical findings about the relationship of germs, bacteria, and microbes to disease. Louis Pasteur’s 1856 studies on anthrax had established the existence of micro-organisms, and shown the link between them and infectious diseases. Assuming that anthrax “was caused by a micro-organism, he set out to identify it and, when he had done so in the blood of infected animals, he isolated it and grew it in . . . his laboratory” (Pyke 24). Pasteur’s experiments led to new methods of vaccinations in both animals and humans, but his work had an impact on Scouting in other ways. First, it supported the Scouting program’s concern for hygiene and health. Second, as Magnus Pyke points out, it helped to change how the British in general thought about medicine. As already mentioned, Baden-Powell’s concern with disease led him to recommend nose breathing to the boys, so they would not “suck into their insides all sorts of microbes or seeds of disease that are in the air” (18). Pasteur’s discoveries grounded such advice in advanced, “scientific” training, rather than simply seeming to be peculiar. Lister’s work on antiseptics to prevent infection in wounds would also influence first aid training for Scouts.

Most important, however, was the simple emphasis that sickness was largely preventable or treatable, thanks to science. In this Scouting was very much of its time. In A Victorian World of Science, Alan Sutton wryly comments on Victorian applications of new science to daily life. Besides “their morbid preoccupation with death” and “the desire to leave this world with an ostentatious funeral,” Sutton writes that “Victorians seemed to have had two other concerns. One was the state of their teeth and the other was inner cleanliness” (138). Printed forms advising Victorians on dental health were widespread, and Baden-Powell urged Scouts to keep their teeth healthy, instructing them on how to improvise a
toothbrush even in the wild. For like Tarzan, the Scout in the colony or dangerous
landscape would find little soft or easy food, and would need strong teeth. No
personal hygiene matter was too small to be considered. Both Baden-Powell and
medical advisers discouraged nail biting as a cause of ingrown nails. A manicure
or pedicure was healthier. This fascination with medical advances went hand in
hand with technological enthusiasm. “In 1850, medical science did not exist,”
Magnus Pyke writes, “Medicine was not a science at all.” As a result, science
transformed medicine, rather than the other way around, as “an expert trade with a
fixed system of tradition and practice” became “a branch of applied science—what
we now call technology” thanks to “men like Pasteur, a chemist without medical
training at all” (25). Such scientific/medical advances gave Scouts principles of
preventative medicine that could be practiced in places where easy remedies from
the chemist were not ready at hand. Scientific knowledge could therefore help
Empire building and defending by allowing the Scout to know what caused
diseases, and what he could do, far away from doctors, to treat himself.

All of these “scientific” skills naturally served the peacetime needs of
Scouting and of the British Empire, but potential military applications were never
ignored. Although Baden-Powell insisted that the Boy Scouts were peace scouts,
not war scouts, when asked by Ernest Thompson Seton what boys should be
prepared for, he replied, “Frankly, War” (Sons 179). In fact, Baden-Powell was
training his boys in skills that the regular military had neglected. Prior to the Boer
War, “disdain for secret service” was widespread in “polite society,” which
regarded “espionage as something indecent and out of keeping with British
traditions” (Fergusson 11). By the turn of the century, though, the myth of Baden-
Powell’s own scouting at Mafeking combined with England’s increasing paranoia
to confirm the need for surveillance scouting. By 1908, Scouting for Boys could
present such training as patriotic. Yet Baden-Powell was careful not to undermine
Scouting's reputation for training good citizens. A Scout was not a spy, despite the growing recognition of his value to the country. Spying implied dissimulation—a behavior antithetical to the ethics of Scouting. But as the hair splitting Colonel George Armand Furse points out, while "in all wars, the spy when caught is shot," thanks to a "hard and fast" rule "recognized by all civilized nations," the scout, while "akin to a spy" when captured "is protected from the capital sentence by his uniform" (5-6). A Scout did not spy, then, but conducted reconnaissance, drawing on the latest technology and techniques. The old method of the Indian brave, the Zulu, and the Ninja might still at times work, but new battles would be fought on a larger scale. Time became more of an issue, as did communications technology. England's chivalric past now needed the support of modern science, and Scouts were devoted to both.

Not surprisingly, Scout training in the fields of botany, zoology, and medicine proved useful during wartime. Botanical knowledge not only helped the Scout identify food, but conduct actual scouting. If Scouts must accurately describe the lay of the land to following forces, accurate accounts of topography are essential. As any hiker familiar with trail maps can attest, to report therefore that troop movement would be visible once soldiers passed the elm with the rhododendron at its base, rather than once soldiers passed a tree, was obviously more helpful. Botanical knowledge could make reports more valuable. Zoological and meteorological training also proved useful on the battlefield. Besides providing protein, animals were models for Scouts to emulate in the wild when tracking enemy movements. In his Camp Fire Yarn on Woodcraft, Baden-Powell encourages Scouts to learn camouflage from wild animals to make spying on enemy maneuvers more possible. Comparing war scouts to hunters, the Head Scout recommended that Scouts "take care that the ground behind them, or trees, or buildings, etc., are of the same colour as their clothes." If caught in the open,
Scouts should follow the lead of their animal counterparts: "if the enemy or a deer is seen looking for them, they remain perfectly still without moving so long as he is there" (150).19

Medical science was possibly of greatest use to the Scout at war. Neither young Scouts, nor Baden-Powell, nor most of the world could have anticipated what medical problems would stem from advances in war technology—gas, machine guns, airplanes—but basic knowledge of what to do for burns, wounds, and clean bone breaks remained invaluable. With the hindsight of almost a century, we can also see the practicality of Baden-Powell’s demand that Scouts should be tough and hygienic. Preparing to withstand the sight of blood and gore gave Scouts some resources for dealing with the trenches of the First World War, and thus made them more useful when called to act. And especially given the conditions, boys who even tried to maintain habits of hygiene during the war had a better chance of staving off infection, and perhaps disease. And during war, the mentally and physically fit man was the useful man.

For all its claims to be a peacetime organization, training boys for citizenship, Scouting was also preparing them for war. The Boer War forced England to see that it was unprepared to repel an invasion, or to defend its overseas territories against internal strife or from hostile outside forces. During the early years of the century, war on the continent seemed imminent, and so did invasion—probably by Germans, who, it was feared, would find England easy prey. Among the voices prophesying war was Baden-Powell’s, although he believed the coming conflict would start in the colonies, between native and English forces, before breaking out in Europe. Undercutting the pacifism in its mission statement, Scouting trained boys for war, stressing drilling, scouting, and

19 Baden-Powell was a skilled artist and would pose as a tourist drawing botanical and biological specimens. During one reconnaissance mission, he drew enemy fortifications as part of the design of a butterfly.
marksmanship. Or as the Head Scout remarked, “Every boy ought to learn to shoot and to obey orders” (10). *Scouting for Boys* drew on all military traditions—ancient and modern. As already mentioned, the place of honor went to the knights of old who defended England, but while Baden-Powell’s vision of Scouting—and the middle class Scout’s place within it—might have been paternalistic, romanticized, and deeply rooted in an attitude of noblesse oblige, he was neither militarily anachronistic nor (completely) naïve. As a Boer War military office, he recognized the usefulness of guerrilla tactics *and* overpowering weaponry. And although the romantic mythology of the siege of Mafeking rested upon the careless flippancy of Baden-Powell’s telegrams home, full of that old boy, devil-may-care attitude that thumbed its nose at the excellence of the Boer forces, confident instead in the superiority of simply being English, the Lone Wolf (soon to be Head Scout) knew that outgunning the enemy, and having a modern attitude towards warfare, were essential. Old methods—for instance, lining up static units to shoot at the enemy—were smashed by the Boer War: “when professional artillerymen, behaving as they had been trained to do, formed up their guns in solid lines to bombard concealed Boer farmers armed with what were then modern German precision rifles, they and their horses were destroyed by withering fire” (Pyke 44). The British, and many others, at least learned this lesson quickly. Precision and automatic weapons became popular—and hideously effective—at once. As Dave Grossman notes: “Britain’s World War I Machine Gun Corps

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20 Despite the confident rhetoric of pro-imperialist men like Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain, the British suffered numerous defeats in the Second Boer War. “Disaster followed disaster; English generals made mistakes; English soldiers were slaughtered; Magersfontein, Colenso, Spion Kop, Modder, Tugela—the list of defeats seemed endless” (*Sons* 90). It was an unpopular war—Ferguson likens it to America’s Vietnam—and increasing number of English casualties demoralized an English public already divided in their support of it. Baden-Powell’s defense of Mafeking—a small border town—represented a reversal of fortune, and newspapers (aided by the presence of journalists in the town) cast its defenders as a cheerful, plucky lot. Baden-Powell’s flippant telegrams reporting the situation were seen as delightfully impudent and helped to bolster English spirits and pride. For further discussion on the effect of relief of Mafeking, see the chapter entitled, “The Wolf That Never Slept,” in MacDonald’s *Sons of the Empire.*
Monument . . . is a statue of a young David, inscribed with a Bible verse that exemplifies the meaning of the machine gun in that terrible war":

Saul\textsuperscript{21} has slain his thousands

And David has slain his tens of thousands. (154)

In Baden-Powell’s vision of Scouting, modern technological developments, overwhelming superiority in force, and on-the-ground ingenuity went hand and hand. While the Mafeking myth arose in part out of a comparison between the English fort and the Boer forces with David and Goliath, Baden-Powell knew that beginning at an advantage would have been easier.

Hence Baden-Powell’s respect for military superiority. Since the Napoleonic wars, men had become much more adept at creating weapons of destruction. Technological improvements increased firing accuracy and frequency—the Gatling gun, for instance. Developments in chemistry were even more sweeping. Discoveries such as Alfred Nobel’s work with nitroglycerine in 1867 had revolutionized battle. As any one familiar with the history of warfare knows, superior firepower does not guarantee victory—but there is virtually no way to win a traditional war\textsuperscript{22} without any at all. Baden-Powell saw to it that Scouts were ready to use more than a pocket-knife and a compass. This attitude to a degree would seem to undermine his faith in class distinctions and chivalry. General Gordon might stride onto the battlefield, leading men armed only with a white umbrella, and old boys might still think of battle as a more exciting version of rugby or cricket. Scouting was more realistic. Again, although Baden-Powell greatly valued traditional relations between classes and the duty of the upper

\textsuperscript{21} Saul
\textsuperscript{22} Current events have made the term “war” a slippery one, and has shown that superior firepower does not ensure a complete “victory” at the end of the engagement. But Clausewitz’ definition that “War therefore is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will” (101), nevertheless holds for all modern acts of violence (whether it is being committed by an organized group or a nation).
classes to lead, he recognized that archaic chivalric attitudes toward warfare could be suicidal. Others shared this insight. In *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), Kenneth Grahame turned the impact of technology on class relations into a beast fable. Landed gentry Mole and Badger arm themselves with cudgels to defend their possessions. Such weapons, however, only work at close range. Sensible, working class Rat, however, realizes that fighting well-armed opponents like the weasels and stoats who have taken possession of Toad Hall requires escalation:

The Rat . . . was running around the room busily, with his arms full of weapons of every kind, distributing them in four little heaps on the floor, saying excitedly under his breath, as he ran, "Here's-a-sword-for-the-Rat, here's-a-sword-for-the-Mole, here's-a-sword-for-the-Toad, here's-a-sword-for-the-Badger! Here's-a-pistol-for-the-Rat, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Mole, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Toad, here's-a-pistol-for-the-Badger! (217)

Similarly, the young Scout out in the colonies soon learned that battle was not a rugby match, nor did his foe respect the Scout's innate superiority, and defer. Paranoia might be too strong a word, but certainly, preparedness would keep a man alive.

Military science was also evolving, both in its conceptualization, and in how soldiers were being trained to fight. In Scouting, the old ways were hardly dead, but they needed to be adapted to the twentieth century. Baden-Powell believed that resurrecting knightly values and virtues would revitalize the English, but he was also a man of military practicality. For soldiers in combat situations to rely upon rugby or cricket rules to regulate the "play" was naïve, and even suicidal. When he trained Scouts to carry guns—though wooden ones, to allay charges of promoting militarism—Baden-Powell acted on his knowledge that the
face of modern warfare was changing—certainly more rapidly than most European experts and observers expected. Scouting replaced the romanticized vision of military gentility and chivalry with at least some understanding of the discomfort (to put it gently) of warfare.

Besides creating more powerful guns, explosives, and long range weapons, the European nations were building more sophisticated technological infrastructures which suited Scouting exactly. Though airplanes were arguably the greatest military advance, for young Scouts the telegraph and technologically improved cameras were more immediately important. Telegraphy’s ability to transmit information almost instantaneously over huge distances was already changing the way the Empire was run, and how wars were waged. Governing the Empire through what amounted to absentee landlordism, and an accompanying colonial system of stewards and factors, gave way to hands-on decision-making in the metropole. As Tom Standage points out in *The Victorian Internet*, "Improvements in submarine telegraphy made it possible to run telegraph cables directly from Britain to outposts of the British Empire, without having to rely on the goodwill of any other countries along the route, and ‘intra-imperial telegraphy’ was seen as an important means of centralizing control in London and protecting imperial traffic from prying eyes" (102-03).

Certainly telegraphed directives from London must have at times forced colonial servants to deal with uninformed and untimely orders from distant higher-ups almost totally ignorant of the situation. Nevertheless, communication between forward “Scouts” and the leaders of the Empire could have remarkable effects. Take for example Standage’s account of the 1898 meeting between the French troops of Major Jean-Baptiste Marchand, and the British forces of Lord Kitchener. When the groups encountered each other at the Sudanese village of Fashoda, they agreed to allow their diplomatic superiors at home to decide the course of action:
But Kitchener had a crucial advantage over Marchand: access to the British-controlled Egyptian telegraph network. He was able to send to London an immediate report on the situation. . . . He then followed up with a more detailed report, in which he suggested that Marchand’s forces, which were in fact comparable in strength to his own, were demoralized, anxious, and in danger of running out of water—none of which was strictly true. But Marchand’s only means of communication with his superiors in Paris was to send a messenger overland to the Atlantic coast and then on by sea—a process that would have taken nine months. As a result, the first the French government heard of the matter was when the British ambassador in Paris read Kitchener’s report to the French foreign minister. . . . In the month it took for Marchand’s representative to reach Cairo and file his report, the French had only Kitchener’s version of events to go on, and took the decision to back down. (Standage 160-61)

To Baden-Powell’s thinking, knowing the situation first hand allowed those at home in England to revise their theoretical strategies. The war scout out on patrol with access to a telegraph could provide his commander with vital information that would still allow superior officers to make the decisions, but reduce the risk of stupid or ill-informed ones.

Developments in optics and camera technology also allowed scouts to gather intelligence much more efficiently and accurately, and pass it on to their betters. As a young scout, Baden-Powell “was given a solitary reconnaissance mission into the Drakensberg Mountains to obtain intelligence.” Drawing on
those skills he would later teach Scouts, “He disguised himself in torn civilian clothing, grew a beard.” The result was an important revision of existing information: “While surveying and sketching the territory, B-P discovered that the maps he had brought with him were inaccurate” (Deacon 14). While Baden-Powell was a skilled enough artist to make accurate and recognizable changes to maps, photography made almost any scout a source of exact military intelligence. By 1908, photography was already a popular hobby, with magazines offering plans for pin-hole cameras that readers could make themselves. No longer an exclusive science which only the wealthy and professional could indulge in, boys might by this point be familiar with the equipment. And the basic military utility of the device was undeniable. Not only were the pictures more accurate than virtually any drawings, but also they could be developed and sent almost instantly. Though often disinclined to bring machinery itself into the Scouting program, Baden-Powell would expect Scouts to use tools like these. The nation depended on it.

Finally, Scouting was also implicated in an increasingly analytic approach to social issues and stresses. Instead of dismissing such problems—specifically those of the working classes in large cities—social observers systematically looked for the causes and devised remedies for England’s supposed breakdown in social values. While the social science of sociology may not yet have become a recognized field, it seemed fairly clear that the English working class—and its boys in particular—were living under new pressures that were provoking new responses. In short, by 1908, the intellectual community and the upper classes were investigating the links between environment, economy, and human relations with an eye to improving them through some kind of social engineering. The approach brought together the roles of scientist and explorer. As the geographic space available for discovery and adventure began to shrink, English social and
cultural theorists became the new explorers, embarking on quests to open up and
civilize the east end slums of London, turning their attention to these only recently
charted, generally ignored “wilds” for answers to the problems.

While most Scouts were not from the lower working class, the ills
associated with the geography/economy/moral laxity of London’s East End and its
counterparts in other industrial cities became emblematic of what all Scouts
needed to escape if they were to flourish and grow strong. Environment was a
contaminating element, and the cure, not surprisingly, required at least temporary
physical removal from the infection. This attitude sustained the widespread
fondness for eugenics. David Livingstone reflected much late-Victorian sentiment
when he remarked that “Among geographers the idea that race and region were
umbilically connected surfaced both in theodicean and naturalistic depictions of
human racial history” (Climate’s Moral Economy 139). Since social reformers
could not radically alter the crowded, unhealthy conditions of a city’s tenements,
and since a redistribution of wealth and property ownership was not a likely
alternative, removing children from the slums seemed to be the only option—not
only for the individual children, but for the English nation and race, if indeed “race
and region were . . . connected . . . [to] human racial history.” Children in nature
represented the chance for national rejuvenation.

As avid campers and outdoorsmen, Scouts saw nature as a site of renewal
for boys and the nation. This location also promised fresh air for urban-bred
youths, something that Baden-Powell saw as essential to the health of all Britons.
Not only the best medicine for the population’s existing ailments, fresh air, when
linked to diet and activity, could also literally transform the race. “Open air
schools,” MacDonald writes, “an experiment that started in Berlin in 1904, were
quickly imitated in both Britain and the United States; it was realized that fresh
air, good food, and exercise made a startling difference to the health of slum
children” (Sons 24). This prescription was essentially the program Baden-Powell outlines in Scouting for Boys. In the section on Endurance, he encourages boys to practice hygienic habits, to eat plain good food (“namby pamby food” will cause teeth to rot), to drink clean water (boiled if gained from a stream or pond), and to get plenty of fresh air, which he considered the best preventative against disease. Further, simply spending time outside could remedy the atrophying effect of city life on boys’ limbs and minds. Outside, boys learn to swim, hike, camp, and track. In the wilderness—or what passed for it in the English countryside—boys could exercise their minds and bodies in the real business of manhood, shaking off the shackles of grammar and abstract geometry—subjects utilitarian reformer and old boy Baden-Powell considered virtually useless. (Instead, he suggests that boys study ju-jitsu as a means of exercise.) Distrustful of overly intellectual pursuits, Baden-Powell saw his wilderness toughening up program as the perfect antidote to the confines and the modern conveniences of city life that enervated and effeminized boys and left them ill-prepared for war.

Finally, given England’s recent military disasters, Baden-Powell wanted the countryside to serve as the training ground for successful future servants of the Empire—civil or military. Training in the “wild,” away from modern luxuries, Scouts would more closely approximate conditions in foreign colonies. Outdoor training also allowed Scouts a “real” sense of roughing it that guidebooks and adventure fictions could never convey. Nature brought Galton’s concept of natural selection into being. Technology would not succor the weak; they would toughen up, or be eradicated. At the level of social reform, leaving the city was seen as a way to revitalize the country’s sickly youths. If “Civilization sapped a man’s strength,” making him “‘soft and feckless’” (Sons 5), then the solution was to remove the boy from its contaminating atmosphere, and to emerge in the rejuvenating womb of Nature. The plan worked in two ways. First, it separated
the boy from the gambling halls, public houses, the smoking and the drinking, and the hundred other vices tempting him away from a virtuous life. Second, the organized excursion indoctrinated him in the ways of (conservative) British ideology—leading him to become the ideal Imperial servant of Empire. Baden-Powell encouraged his outdoor boys to live rough by giving them models to admire: “Scouting invited its members to live out a narrative in which the ideal protagonists were the trappers, hunters, and frontiersmen popularized in history textbooks” (Bristow 174). And then there was the hero of Mafeking, Baden-Powell himself. Comfortable as an icon, Baden-Powell presented himself as the embodiment of moral and physical perfection—in all senses, an “up-to-date invention” (Sons 3). Scouting did not just promise to make a man out of a boy, it suggested that boys—under the Head Scout’s guidance—could start behaving like adults right now. “Very few men are born brave,” Baden-Powell said, but “any man can make himself brave if he tries—and especially if he begins trying when he is a boy” (Baden-Powell 222).

But nature was more than a clean, wild space absent of sin and corruption. It was also the measure of a boy’s character, since only the most degenerate could fail to respond positively. As Robert MacDonald points out, “romantic appreciation of nature had deep roots in nineteenth and early twentieth-century British middle-class society”:

The countryside in its beauty was opposed to the grim and ugly city; the countryside meant harmony, peace, and ease . . . whatever was natural, seemed superior to the work of man’s hand. Nature was innocent, and unspoiled, as was the child until corrupted; put the child back in nature, and the child’s response was a measure of the pureness of heart. Nature was a moral test. (Sons 21)
More than a place with fresh air and the props for hands-on science and campcraft experiments, the “wilds” of Britain were therefore a site of moral growth for Scouts. The countryside would make a good boy forever a patriot. The hills, the forests, the lakes—together they made up the moral British homeland. Living within them, even for a weekend, linked the city boy to a place in Britain’s history—as it does for the children in Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*. In the hands of the Scouting program, the sense of adventure associated with being out of doors instilled lessons in citizenship. And the language and acts of adventure severed the Scout’s interest in the self-centered (that is, commercial) world their parents occupied, and replaced it with a patriotic fervor for England that Baden-Powell felt was more important.

The famous Scout uniform symbolically marks the transition. On the most basic level, out-of-doors training required different dress and behavior:

The outward symbols of the frontiersman—his cowboy hat, his flannel shirt and neckerchief, and . . . his short trousers . . . spoke of the difference between restraint and freedom: the Edwardian boy, who was buttoned up, stifled in heavy clothes, and too often under orders to behave himself, now had the chance to put on a Boy Scout uniform. Dressed up in frontier clothes, flannel shirt, “cut shorts,” and Stetson hat, he could play the exciting game of “man-hunting” under the leadership of the most charismatic hero of the day.

Small wonder, then, that as MacDonald goes on to note, “In its first fresh years the movement promised something new; it came with a breath of adventure, with the trappings of an exciting life lived on the edge” (*Sons* 5-6). But the change of dress carried things further. Like new inductees into the armed forces, Boy Scouts who
put on the uniform acknowledged a larger fraternity, and their own identity as Scouts, whose duties overrode class or personal economic interests.

The romance of the outdoors had to be irresistible to the Scout, for few could resist the call of patriotism when packaged so enticingly. Tramping through the wilds of the English countryside, a Scout could imagine himself as an adventurer on a mission of greatest national import. Nor were these outdoor excursions, so close in nature to military basic training, all that far imaginatively from adventure’s exotic locales, as “for the majority of Scouts, the British countryside was certainly uncharted territory since many of them had grown up in the cramped confines of large urban centers” (Bristow 176). But the alien open spaces had another function as well. Placing his scouts in geography that would more nearly approximated the terrain of the undeveloped colonies—in which Baden-Powell fully anticipated future conflict—would prepare them somewhat for navigating their way in alien landscapes.

Once in the field, Baden-Powell offered the boys of the new twentieth century the tools and space for creating and starring in their own adventure fantasy. Most obviously, the Scout had to be out-of-doors to adequately hone his craft. Where else could a boy learn to identify animal spoor, or to live without existing shelter? Training in the “wilderness” also fulfilled Baden-Powell’s command that “Instruction of all kinds” should be given as far as possible through practices” (3). You can pretend that city lamp posts are trees, but the real things, or real training, are preferable; it was only with ‘real-life’ training in the wilderness, as ‘real men . . . understand living out in the jungles’” (5), that a boy could experience what it was to be a man. The guidebook emphasizes the importance of learning nature, even at its most mundane. Knowing what potatoes look like in a market stall will not help you to identify the tops of the plant growing in the wild. Since Scouts were discouraged from passive learning,
“looking on” as Baden-Powell termed it (3), a hands-on approach had to inform Scouting. Though nothing like the Indian or African landscape, then, the English countryside could serve as land to be explored, a frontier to be conquered. Scouts could live rough, thrill to being unprotected from the elements, and prepare for wild animals (stoats and foxes?) with only their wits and skills to save them.

Moral and national regeneration was however the major goal. As Joseph Bristow has shown, locating adventure in the “wilds” of the country served to instill patriotism and notions of service into boys whose ethics, if shaped only by their middle-class parents, would supposedly tend toward self-interest and ambition rather than towards a value system centered on England. Bristow notes that “the boys’ life in the great outdoors of the homeland” encouraged “patriotic nostalgia” and “spiritual renewal”: “Britain was there to be discovered, understood and assimilated as a place to be respected, and above all, protected.” By encouraging such feelings, Scouting helped to “identify the boy with the country” (Bristow 176). As for the country itself, it was a landscape of honored ghosts. Those who had domesticated the countryside of England had gone out to civilize the globe. As Baden-Powell reminded his Scouts, “you belong to the British Empire, one of the greatest empires that has ever existed in the world,” an empire “made by your forefathers by dint of hard work and hard fighting, at the sacrifice of their lives” (19). In passages like this one, Scouting fills the interstice between history text and imperial adventure fiction, making the connection between Empire and middle class boys obvious. Nowhere is it clearer “that the boy’s physical and moral education is paramount in enabling the myths of empire to live on” (Bristow 174).

Of course, Baden-Powell’s historical pageants reminded Scouts that their place in the Empire was not at the vanguard; they would never be the true inheritors of the privileges of the knights of old. That their ancestors never had,
and they never would, ascend to the class that owned the lands and set the laws that governed the nation was however beside the point. Still, visiting the countryside—and most likely, having historically and geographically important sites pointed out—did, and still does, add a mythic quality to the visitor’s notion of the British landscape. Open fields and wooded forests imaginatively become the essence of Britain and Britishness. Like landscape tourists, Scouts were encouraged to take “possession” of whatever they were visually entering—a kind of virtual ownership that still recognized the (superior) rights of the legal owner and their own (inferior) position as a visitor. The Scouting mythopeia therefore both dismissed private ownership as a formality, whose legal claims shrank before the ancient rights and duties of the English born man, and trusted in the Scout/tourist’s instinctive respect for the property and class status of the land owner. The result was a proprietary and historically selective “patriotic nostalgia” perfectly suited to the ends of Scouting.
The Best Boy Worked for that "B": The Privilege of Being a Scout

A friend of mine is an Eagle Scout. From what I know of him, he embodies Scouting excellence in America—athletic, outdoorsy, knowledgeable in survival techniques. He also has three badges over the number required for the award, so his enthusiasm for the program goes beyond achieving a particular title. While an American Boy Scout, his belief in the program’s benefits, and in the outside public’s goodwill toward Scouting, echoes the absolute certainty that British Boy Scouts, their parents, and the general public had in Baden-Powell’s program of self-improvement. My friend’s belief is justified. Though 30 years old, he still keeps his Eagle Scout card in his wallet, next to his driver’s license. When stopped for such traffic violations as speeding, he has been let off when the police notice this proof of his general upstanding character. Who knows? Maybe his reckless driving was actually the urgency of someone accomplishing a patriotic mission.

By the time the first shots were fired and the first boys of the new century were being torn to pieces in World War I, Baden-Powell’s still-young Scouting movement had succeeded in firmly establishing itself. By reclaiming the youths of Britain from sloth, and rejuvenating public and civic pride in being English, Scouting helped to send an entire generation of happy and willing boys to their fates in the trenches and on the battlefields of the continent. Further, by building boys’ self-confidence and character without disturbing fragile class and social hierarchies, Scouting had created the perfect Imperial servant, willing to reject self-interest in the interest of Empire. As the hero of Mafeking, Baden-Powell had mythic status in England even before the founding of the Boy Scouts. As the Wolf Who Never Slept, he seemed to possess supra-human powers and abilities—a master of disguise and an able administrator, strict military commander, courteous
gentleman, and wily scout. As the Head Scout, Baden-Powell was the epitome of male perfection—middle class male perfection specifically. Patriotic, progressive, and principled, his lessons became primers for becoming properly English. Outperforming other social reformers, and superseding mothers in his child raising talents, he could best prepare boys for the trials of masculinity lying ahead.

But this movement, designed to build character and so well-respected, was also a curious mix of bravado, self-righteousness, moral superiority, and insecurity. It assumed it could solve the social problems of the country with a Nancy Reagan-ish sureness, and without any side effects. And yet, for all the certainty with which the Scouting program addressed social problems, the boy it intended to produce was a vessel of contradictions. Scouting presented itself as independent of any external (government or “expert”) influence, creating innovative methods in child raising, while avoiding the mistakes and defaults of other organizations. Independence and a “lone wolf” mentality were demanded; boys were encouraged to see themselves as not only the inheritors of Britain’s great heritage, but its future saviors. Britain needed her sons to protect her, Scouting said, and it invited the boys to take on the hero’s mantle. Yet it also took great pains to demand a self-effacing humility, and a willingness to step back from public praise. Scouts were to be the best they could be—as long as they did not presume to replace their betters, even as, ironically, Scouts stood in silent reproach of their betters’ failures.

The program therefore defined itself by what it was not. Every freedom offered came with a reminder of the boys’ inferior social positions. Though critical of the aristocracy’s sexual and economic excesses, and committed to repairing the damage caused by its rule, Scouting never considered its boys as potential replacements, nor did it view the program as any kind of social revolution. The training reflected this fact. The Scouting manual’s lessons and
yarns responded to social threats and dangers—women and mothers; weak, effeminate men and homosexuals; intellectuals; gypsies, immigrants, and the poor; the unpatriotic and unprepared—anyone, in short, who made conservative Victorians nervous. The successful Scout, on the other hand, was the perfect non-threat to the nation. Skilled, dedicated, polite, perfectly anonymous and perfectly obedient.

In an article entitled “The Keys to Kingdom Come,” David Quammen considers the personality necessary in those who might have to turn the keys that would launch America’s Minuteman missiles in the mid-1980s. “In essence, the job is quite simple,” Quammen writes, “to turn a key when—and only when—so ordered”:

Still, there has got to be time for boredom. There has got to be time for doubt. Boredom is bad enough, but doubt is anathema, so the Air Force must select these people cannily. The prerequisites for the job are character, of a certain sort, and an unambivalent belief in the moral and practical rightness of American strategic deterrence. Imagination and angst are unwelcome. (145)

A military captain working in this area agrees, explaining as well that “An ‘A’ student would be nice. But what you really want . . . is the hard earned ‘B’” (Quammen 145). A great expanse of time and geography lies between Quammen’s 1987 American servicemen in Montana, and the young English Boy Scout at the turn of the century. What makes someone an ideal candidate for both organizations is, however, startlingly similar. No need to be extra clever. No need to be extraordinary. The best candidate for a Scouting success story would be commonplace, sound English stock. Of course, finding a boy of sound English stock was becoming increasingly difficult, but the Head Scout and his program
were confident they could redeem those who answered the call, while the detritus would eliminate itself. Time would prove this assumption amply, amply true.
Chapter Two

Knocking off the Bastard:
Adventuring as Ideological Alternative

And then there was that other group of boys, for whom group affiliation just did not have the same appeal that it had for their British brothers and cousins. More than their counterparts in the public schools, the Scouts, or the missionary movements, these boys found themselves in the romanticized image of the adventurer that boys' journals, school history texts, popular adventure novels, and the published journals and biographies of explorers such as Sir Richard Burton brought to Technicolor life. Instead of letting a group define their identity, or provide a place for them in keeping with their appropriate social status, these adventure-bound boys conceived for themselves an admired and recognized space within the bounds of Empire—though not exactly one their parents would approve of.

Through the recognized and celebrated masculine outlet of adventure, these boys could imagine a life as active, contributing members of the British Empire without the need to be conventionally pious and patriotic, or administratively competent. And the wider public accepted this model as well, because the adventure narrative—popular, exciting, widely read—made exploration and daredevildry into a form of service. Anything that could make young men eager to charge overseas helped prevent unemployment—and thus dependence on social welfare—at home. Adventuring gave an aura of duty to virtually forced emigration, and England did not therefore try to keep its men from going on one. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the nation even sponsored such
emblematic adventures as the Tuckey and the Franklin expedition, both under the
direction of John Barrow, second secretary to the British Admiralty. For these
reasons, not only was there nothing to criticize about a boy’s desire for adventure,
there was even something suspicious about a boy who did not desire one. The
young English male was supposed to admire and emulate the adventurous heroes
of British history and literature—and not just while reading. Like these manly
examples, British boys were encouraged to get out of doors to master Nature by
conquering and cultivating geographical terrain, the atmosphere, various flora and
fauna, and natives, while in the process gaining command over themselves and
pushing back the limits of civilization. And since the same statistics pointing
toward racial and physical degeneration that spurred Baden-Powell to create
Scouting were generally available as well, the British public could only see
adventurous inclinations as something to be encouraged in boys. Though he might
be eaten alive at the trailhead, frozen in the arctic ice fields, hurled to his death
trying to summit mountains, killed in a raid in the Arabian deserts, or poisoned by
plants and wasted by dysentery in the heart of Africa, the English boy was
encouraged and rewarded for jumping at the chance to experience danger.

In this chapter I will describe how adventure narratives constructed a
masculine ideal that combined virile athleticism and middle-class morality and
consumerism with teenage-styled rebellion and shocking behavior to create a
figure ideally suited to carry out the aims of Empire. Even as adventure narratives
encouraged their readers to become outsiders and loose cannons, they also assured
these future champions of adventure that the attitudes embraced by this popular,
patriotically conservative literature were the correct ones to get behind. Even
though few readers actually opted for adventure, such education through popular
literature played an important part in shaping young British minds. This
possibility was new. The Education Act of 1870 had made literacy mandatory,
and therefore widespread, and periodicals such as *Boy’s Own Paper* made non-
school reading a daily part of life for many children. Popular adolescent titles
could see sales of roughly 200,000 per week, and “since children typically shared
copies, actual readership was considerably higher” (Nelson 77). Like the
narratives of other programs or movements, adventure literature (periodicals
included) encouraged its readers to adopt patriotic ideals in two ways: by
appealing to their “Englishness,” and to their ambition. The first method is fairly
straightforward: the reader is urged to recall with patriotic pride the heroic exploits
of heroes such as Lord Nelson. The second presents adventure as the vehicle
through which the reader/adventurer could transcend the physical, social, and
cultural environment into which he had been born.

The chapter’s first section will discuss the reasons why adventure narratives
found such a positive reception from the British reading public. The second
section will investigate how these stories satisfied the national fantasies of what it
meant to be British, and more specifically, pacified that population of Englishmen
lacking either the financial or social means to advance by assuring them that their
lives were in fact more exciting than they looked. The third section will discuss
why the adventure narrative not only masked the fact that it was encouraging its
readers to serve and even die for the Empire, but also diverted attention away from
adventure’s embeddedness in a program of global expansion—economic, cultural,
political—carried out at the expense of native populations—faunal and human.
The final section will then consider how the adventure narrative managed to
present itself as a means for achieving freedom and escaping a proscribed life
while remaining true to the goals of the Empire. Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Tarzan of
the Apes, The Return of Tarzan,* and *Tarzan Lord of the Jungle,* H. Rider
Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines,* Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and “At the End of the
Passage,” W. Somerset Maugham’s “The Outstation,” and the travel narratives
and memoirs of Sir Richard Francis Burton are the adventure narratives I’ve chosen to illustrate my argument.
Educational Reading Matters: Schooling in Adventureland

As seen through the lens of its popular narratives, adventuring was theoretically democratic. Heroics were possible in all manner of men, and neither inherited super-physiques nor special training were required—although they could help. Nor did the adventure hero have to be particularly courageous. Allen Quatermain repeatedly calls himself “a cautious man, indeed a timid one” (Haggard 41), and when presented with Sir Henry’s proposal to head for the Solomon Mountains, he claims to be frightened by it. What the reader therefore recognized was that while the hero was truly a very, very brave man, he was above all a modest one, because in adventure narratives, it is better for someone else to observe one’s fantastic qualities than to lower oneself by declaring them. Quatermain’s claims of terror only make his later behavior all the more thrilling, and his fame all the more well-deserved. “I am, to be honest a bit of a coward,” he confesses, but at the moment of truth, “perhaps for the first time in my life, I felt my bosom burn with martial ardour. . . . my blood, which hitherto had been half-frozen with horror, went beating through my veins and there came upon me a savage desire to kill and spare not” (181). Unlike reading material dealing with missionary lads, public schoolboys, or Scouts, adventure tales did not constantly require the reader to recognize how great the central characters were, how wonderful the system was that created them, and most importantly, how super it would be to be a part of this program. That adventurers did not automatically default to the pyrotechnics of heroism, with its usual muscle-flexing and violence, was winning, and yet the nonchalant storytelling style often testified to the teller’s familiarity with danger—a strategy that impressed the greenhorn reader at home. Quatermain’s offhanded explanation of an injury is typical: “Ever since that confounded lion got hold of me, I have been liable to this trouble. . . . It is a hard
thing when one has shot sixty-five lions or more, as I have in the course of my life, that the sixty-sixth should chew on your leg. . . . It breaks the routine of the thing” (24). Such heroes are unbelievable, yet human. Hardly a super specimen of young manhood, Allen Quatermain, for instance, is not only lame thanks to the aforesaid lion, but “thin, and short . . . weighing only nine stone and a half” (57). If this middle-aged hunter with a grown son in medical school could be so extraordinary, then anyone—even the reader!—could be an adventure hero.

The hero in the adventure narrative did not need special powers or qualifications at birth, or even any training to know how to handle. This was exceptional. The public schoolboy, for instance, that hero of another popular fictional genre, also received invaluable training before entering the world of adventure. While his school would never have fronted the necessary money to begin, it had prepared him for the rigors ahead. The old boy knew he had a destiny and an immortal legacy. He entered the world with the imperial manner necessary to deal with subordinates and native subjects. His school years would also have assured him that his talents were perfectly suited to defending and expanding the nation. As headmasters like Thomas Arnold or Hely Hutchinson were fond of pointing out, the old boy out in the wide world of adventure had all the social and rugby training needed to help him navigate his way. As for the Scout, he was the ultimate example of the hypertrained, hyperprovisioned operative. Always prepared, even overburdened, the heroes of Scouting never left home without a full pack. Recognizing that a good, plucky attitude isn’t enough, Scouting stories celebrated their heroes’ specialized training that enabled them to survive. And not only did the Scout learn the skills necessary for future adventure at weekly meetings, but he also had his manual in case his memory failed. In this way, Scouts domesticated adventure. While a hero could rough it, he did not have to, if only he knew how to dig an effective latrine or fashion a toothbrush out of
twigs. While not quite as neatly compulsive as Mr. Warburton in W. Somerset Maugham’s “The Outstation,” the Scout certainly had affinities with him.

In stark contrast to these prepped and primed heroes, the adventure narrative hero was a marvel of unprepared ingenuity. Never caught in the act of preparing or training for the travails to come, this hero just steps outside into the wild, and not only survives, but seems to thrive without ever acknowledging that to do so without the proper tools or training is incredible. And yet this situation is actually more plausible. Perhaps some person exists who could intuitively know how to tan animal hides to wear, but as David Rakoff notes, the more realistic response of anyone from the nineteenth or twenty-first century to the request that he make a fire without matches or a lighter would more likely be, “Well, how the hell am I supposed to do that?” (150).

In fact, this nonchalance was a pretty bit of legerdemain. The adventure hero usually had spent quite a bit of time preparing for his mission: the difference was that these narratives make it very easy for the reader to forget or simply not register this training. The reason lies in the nature of the hero’s apprenticeship. In short, his training is utterly alien to the reader—for Tarzan, learning to stalk and kill; for Kim, to steal and lie; in Burton, to practice the art of disguise and dissimulation; and for Quatermain, to hunt for big game and manage military attacks on warring tribes. Adventure training was therefore done primarily “on the job” in exotic locales—the deepest African jungle, the bazaars, trains, and mountains of India, the souks and mosques of Araby, and the deserts and diamond mines of South Africa. These sites divert the reader from the fact that “school” was in session. When talking about their holidays, Kim’s classmates at St. Xavier’s present themselves for the approval of their mates by showing how just living (and surviving) had granted them experience:
There were boys of fifteen who had spent a day and a half on an islet in the middle of a flooded river, taking charge, as by right, of a camp of frightened pilgrims returning from a shrine. . . . There was a boy who, he said, and none doubted, had helped his father to beat off with rifles from the veranda a rush of Akas in the days when those head-hunters were bold against lonely plantations. (93)

Not your usual school curriculum.

In the world of adventure fiction, then, a clerk in a colonial office could easily imagine himself as the hero, sustaining the fantasy that a civil servant, shopkeeper, or telegraph boy could drop into death-defying situations at any moment—and prevail. Though out of shape, asthmatic, or even mentally deficient, these boys could find themselves in adventure narratives. That a hero often disguised himself as a salary man lent mystery to professions lacking obvious glamour or sex appeal. Like today’s advertisements for the United States reserves, adventure narratives intimated that beneath the seemingly mild mannered facade of a working drudge lay the heart of a superhero.

This fictional adventuring life also seemed to offer the chance of becoming an insider—of being “in the know” in relation to all manner of state, scientific and technological, or cultural secrets. Of course, knowing things without the public knowing you knew them was not to everyone’s taste. Only a certain kind of personality enjoys concealing his true identity and access to power, but such a man embodied pure power. In *Kim*, Colonel Creighton perfectly serves as the man-who-would-be-(secret)-superhero. Although Kipling quickly outs Creighton as a high-ranking player in the game, exactly how involved he is or how much influence he wields isn’t clear. To most of his subordinates, and to the English establishment at Umballa, Creighton is simply a career Army man, and by
working with the “Ethnological Survey” branch rather than a fighting regiment, he encourages this opinion. This guise also provides him with an innocent, even trivial motive for his secrecy. When discussing Kim’s future with Father Victor, Creighton emphasizes his devotion to “Ethnological matters” in ways that insure silence. Claiming “professional jealousy,” as his weakness, he hides his official interest in Kim: “you see, as an ethnologist, the thing’s very interesting to me,” he says of Kim’s talents, and remarks he’d “like to make a note of it for some Government work that I’m doing.” Then comes the trap:

There’s one thing you can do. All we Ethnological men are as jealous as jackdaws of one another’s discoveries. They’re of no interest to any one but ourselves, of course, but you know what book-collectors are like. Well, don’t say a word, directly or indirectly, about the Asiatic side of the boy’s character—his adventures and his prophecy. (84-85)

For similar reasons, Creighton’s relationship with Mahbub Ali, a suspected double agent, is passed off as frivolous. Kim’s observations about Creighton show how misjudged he is—by his peers “not in the know,” and by the native population as well:

Oh, he is only Creighton Sahib—a very foolish Sahib, who is a Colonel Sahib without a regiment. . . . He is always buying horses which he cannot ride, and asking riddles about the works of God—such as plants and stones and the customs of people. The dealers call him the father of fools, because he is so easily cheated about a horse. Mahbub Ali says he is madder than all other Sahibs. (87)

Yet we soon know that “Colonel Sahib without a regiment” metes out devastating punishment to mutinous native rulers. The invisible power guides its public face:
in the matter of the "pedigree of the white stallion," we see him order troop deployments to put down the insurrection-minded kings. "That matter will be referred to the Council, of course, but this is a case where one is justified in assuming that we take action at once," he remarks. The following remarks are chilling: "This comes of not smashing them thoroughly the first time. Eight thousand should be enough. . . . It's punishment—not war" (28). Thanks to the narrator's omniscient eyes, readers know more than Creighton's own operatives about his power. He not only scrutinizes the landscape ethnologically and geographically, but surveys and governs it—running covert operations in India, directing public affairs, recruiting and overseeing the instruction of potential agents, and all the while playing the great Game himself. This publicly eccentric, easily fooled English officer of no particular influence is therefore a notable adventurer: on the inside, knowing the hidden secrets of state, and wielding the power to direct not only small districts and territories, but the destinies and futures of nations and empires.

Another reason why the reading public so eagerly embraced adventure narratives and memoirs was the possibility of advancement. In adventure's world, men without contacts or social or financial connections could succeed—and sometimes spectacularly so—without the need of the sustained hard work and perseverance of a Dick Whittington, or the genius of a Thomas Alva Edison. This was part of the genre's appeal. Adventuring looks like fun, and any stress on natural gifts, prerequisites, or diligence would take away its heart and soul, and throw a pall over its intrinsically optimistic cast. Such requirements would also rob adventure of its radical egalitarianism. While public schoolboys or Scouts found their occupations through their associations with influential friends, or with respected institutions, the individual who trusted his fortunes to the mercies of an adventurous undertaking expected no such favors. In these tales, though,
possibilities are often enough to ensure success, since the right stroke of luck and the pluck to seize the day accomplished more than all the learning and preparation in the world. In *King Solomon's Mines*, the anti-hero, Allen Quatermain, repeatedly reminds readers that he is unschooled and unread in all but the Old Testament, and lacks any formal training for “success” in life. Nevertheless, the skills learned living and hunting on the veldt earning his livelihood through adventure, when combined with his surprising, yet inherently heroic nature, make him an exceedingly wealthy man by the end of the tale. Well-placed friends or formal learning could not have helped him take advantage of whatever situation he finds himself in. When he, Sir Henry, and Captain Good are betrayed by Gagool and entrapped in the treasure room, Quatermain not only finds the secret way out, but also keeps his avaricious wits about him, despite being seemingly entombed for eternity:

I went creeping back to our place by the chests and as I was coming away an idea struck me. We had not thought much of the diamonds for the last twenty-four hours or so . . . seeing what they had entailed upon us; but, reflected I, I may as well pocket some in case we ever should get out of this ghastly hole. So I just put my fist into the first chest and filled all the available pockets of my old shootingcoat and trousers, topping up—this was a happy notion—with a few handfuls of big ones out of the third chest.

Quatermain has even sufficiently recovered from Foulata’s murder to stuff his basket, before generously advising his companions: “‘I say, you fellows,’” I sang out, “‘won’t you take some diamonds with you? I’ve filled my pockets and the basket’” (234). His companions listen to him, and Quatermain and Good attain
financial ease—something that readers heartily approved of in both fictional and historical adventure narratives.

Such tales also testified to the fact that for the adventurer, everything and everyone could be useful. All it took was the ability to recognize the full range of an item’s (or person’s) use, and the guts to take advantage of it. Even the seemingly tame lessons that St. Xavier’s attempts to drill in its students serve heroic purposes in *Kim*, as the prosaic multiplication table allows the adventurer Kim to resist Oriental mystical power. St. Xavier’s did not waste time teaching non-utilitarian subjects, focusing instead on skills that would enable students to fulfill their hereditary positions on plantations, in the “Railway, Telegraph, and Canal services,” or in government agencies. But while the rudiments of surveillance and cartography would allow a St. Xavier’s boy to hold a position (albeit a low level one) in any government institution, only the adventuring boy could *improvise* with these skills.

In fact, adventuring narratives also presented seductive images of unconventional or parallel schooling that seemed to imply that the structure of standard schooling actually dulled the minds of little boys. In Adventureland, even school was fun, and apprenticeships were things of wonder. Take for example, Kim’s lessons in Lurgan Sahib’s exotic and mysterious classroom:

> Kim looked intently; Lurgan Sahib laid one hand gently on the nape of the neck, stroked it twice or thrice, and whispered: “Look! It shall come to life again, piece by piece. . . . Look!” To save his life, Kim could not have turned his head. The light touch held him as a vise, and his blood tingled pleasantly through him. There was one large piece of jar where there had been three, and above them the shadowy outline of the entire vessel. . . .
“Was that more magic?” Kim asked suspiciously. . . .

“No, that was not magic. It was only to see if there was—a 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.” (116)

Only Harry Potter really gets to go to school like this, for while students could learn the trick of memorization with photographs of objects, boys in adventure narratives got to use actual gemstones, swords, and daggers. Subjects that never could have appeared in Halibury’s curriculum, even though they were central to imperial rule, were part and parcel of an adventuring education:

[Lurgan] made Kim learn whole chapters of the Koran by heart, till he could deliver them with the very roll and cadence of a mullah. Moreover, he told Kim the names and properties of many native drugs, as well as the runes proper to recite when you administer them. And in the evenings he wrote charms on parchment—elaborate pentagrams crowned with the names of devils . . . all fantastically written in the corners. More to the point, he advised Kim as to the care of his own body, the cure of feverfits, and simple remedies of the Road. (127)

Valuable though this kind of learning potentially was, the real test came only when the adventurer had to adapt his knowledge to the situation at hand. For instance, during the first part of his journey with his Lama, Kim arranges an escape for E.23 with scavenged goods from a Jat traveling with them, and his own odd bits of supplies. “‘We must make thee a yellow Saddhu all over,’” Kim says, “‘Strip—strip swiftly, and shake thy hair over thy eyes while I scatter ash. Now, a caste-mark on thy forehead.’ He drew from his bosom the little Survey paint-box and a
cake of crimson lake” (152). Et voilá. A little flour, ash, and tumeric, and “In
place of the tremulous, shrinking trader there lolled . . . an all but naked, ash-
smeared, ochre-barred, dusty-haired Saddhu.” While the narrative notes that “Kim
had been trained by Lurgan Sahib” (153), the success of the transformation, and
the saving of the agent and the mission, is obviously the result of Kim’s ingenuity.

And certain lessons of necessity can only be learned on the job. No mock-
up sims could prepare Kim for what he has to do when assigned to make a map of
Bikanir: “The Colonel ordered him to make a map of that wild, walled city; and
since Mohammedan (Kim’s then disguise) horseboys . . . are not expected to drag
Survey-chains round the capital of an independent native state, Kim was forced to
pace all his distances by means of a bead rosary” (127). Although he later comes
to appreciate and use his school lessons, like most heroes in adventure narratives,
Kim feels best taught through immersion in the “great and beautiful land” outside
of any institution. Like the Boy Scouts—only more so, since his adventure
training was customarily the “real thing,” rather than something like a practice
dash in English fields—Kim feels there is no substitute for “real life” training, no
replacement for actually doing the thing itself. Living life fully, breathing in the
spicy, dusty air of the Grand Trunk road as Kim does, might not seem like a
rigorous program of training, yet it succeeds spectacularly as a regimen. For in
adventure narratives like Kim, merely existing in the midst of life can replace the
need for perseverance and application. Though the Royal Ethnological Society
could debate and take notes to its heart’s content, it would still fail to understand
the native world outside. As Mahbub Ali points out, only by plunging into the
stream of humanity can Kim learn the secrets of assimilation and invisibility. No
one survived adventures, the narratives imply, because he had gone to school and
read a book, or because he knew important people. One had to experience the
cultural norms and expectations of the people firsthand to mimic them.
And yet, participation in heroic adventures almost always yielded patriotic results, because the experience or knowledge gained seemed to advance imperial goals even when this was neither the adventurer’s desire nor conscious goal. Self-serving behavior therefore somehow became civic minded, granting adventurers all of the glory, and none of the guilt. Richard Francis Burton’s pilgrimage to Mecca shows how pursuit of individual glory could be presented or read as scientific, geographic, or ethnographic discoveries, all of which were synonymous with Victorian imperial advancement. Though motivated by his sincere interest in the Islamic faith, Burton’s pilgrimage was also designed to achieve acclaim and financial rewards by making him the first white explorer to enter Mecca, to examine such Moslem objects of worship as the Black stone, Ka’aba, and to participate in such rituals as the stone of the Shaytan al-Kabi, the Great Devil. While subsequent generations generally remember Burton only as a giant of exploration and undercover espionage, or as a possible model for Colonel Creighton in *Kim*, and while Burton’s own writings betray self-interested impulses, his peripatetic wanderings yielded enough “discoveries” to allow many to agree with Lady Isabel Burton when she said that “During the last 48 years of his life, he lived only for the benefit and the welfare of England and of his countrymen, and of the Human Race at large” (*Pilgrimage* xviii). Even the British government could not ignore his achievements, eventually awarding him the Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George, and proving that the most opportunistic and self-interested soul, through adventuring, could earn the badge of “patriot”.

In the opening lines of his *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah*, Burton claims that he offered his services in 1852 to the Royal Geographic Society of London, “for the purpose of removing that opprobrium to modern adventure, the huge white lot which in our maps still notes
the Eastern and the Central regions of Arabia” (1). Here Burton declares that his projected expedition was initially and above all a patriotic undertaking, designed to advance British cultural, ethnographic, and geographic sciences. Given this beginning, it does not matter that Burton later identifies other reasons for wanting to go—or that his application had been denied, because Sir James Hogg, then head of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, was concerned that Burton’s plan was too dangerous. In fact, Burton took this denial as a challenge not to be refused:

What remained for me but to prove, by trial, that what might be perilous to other travellers was safe to me? . . .

[I] was thoroughly curious to see with my own eyes what others are content to “hear with ears” . . . to set foot on that mysterious spot which no vacation tourist has yet described, measured, sketched and photographed. (2)

Clearly, Burton’s obvious ambition did not hurt the public’s opinion of him, because ambition was a hallmark of masculinity. Hesitating was for the weak, and any glory gained for England would always be favorably received.

In actual practice, adventuring also had the allure of freedom—not just from geographic confines, or Victorian moral and social constraints, or rules and regulations, but from personal disadvantages or meager resources. Those who answered adventure’s call were often poor individuals from respectable backgrounds. Although he attended “a ruling caste training place,” Sir John Lawrence belonged to a “Scots-Irish military family, very poor and in most senses underprivileged” (Green 208). Burton also came from a military family—his father was a Lieutenant Colonel—with shaky finances. Although his mother’s family was quite well off, and her dowry was 30,000 pounds sterling, she received it as an allowance rather than as a lump sum. As a result, while the Burton family
was a "gentle" one, their financial circumstances made day-to-day living somewhat precarious, and led to constant moving about looking for "better situations." For such men, adventuring provided an honorable career affiliated with military or scientific/sociological endeavors, and a socially acceptable profession.

For other individuals, though, wildcatting and exploration were both financial and social steps up. By removing to a foreign land, they established themselves in ways denied them in England. Inured to hardships from the get go, H. Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain succeeds to the degree that in middle-age he settles into a kind of South African middle-class-ness. The boys in W. H. G. Kingston's "From Powder Monkey to Admiral" and similar figures begin in abject poverty, often as orphans, with no place to go but up. Adventuring is the vehicle by which they could rise. The point is that while an odd member of the middle classes might find slumming it on adventure appealing (Isabella Bird) or simply a chivalric necessity (Sir Henry Curtis in *King Solomon's Mines*), most not surprisingly rejected being cut loose from their geographic and social moorings. When myth and literary imaginings are sifted out, the numbers of "real" adventurers can be found in immigration charts, and although these men (and women) may not have been influenced by adventure narratives, the guiding spirit of the stories mirrors their desires to improve themselves.

And yet, even those disinclined to give up civilization still appreciated the allure of foreign spaces in books—the exotic and the fantastic, the wild and untamed, both geographically and culturally. Whether a clerk, a laborer, or a shopkeeper, the reader could leave the polluted city, with its various health ailments and social degeneration, and enter imaginatively the exotic cities of India, the secret landscapes of Arabia, or the verdurous jungles of the African continent. Of course, these places had their own maladies, dangers, and physical and
psychological discomforts. But contracting an illness in the colonies would be honorable, while homegrown infections were attributed to a man’s own lack of will, judgment, or discipline. As a disease, malaria was deadly, but unfortunate and even romantic. Physical degeneration in London, however, was blamed on willful inactivity and wastrel living. As the medical profession in England was learning, this was largely untrue: “physicians discovered that at least some diseases were transmitted not by atmosphere-corrupting poison seeping from decomposing organic matter but by germs; antisceptic surgery began to be practiced; preventive and occupational medicine as well as public health and sanitary medicine were founded” (Rothfield 173). But as we’ve seen, the sentiment that disease was the patient’s fault lingered in people like Baden-Powell, who listed ill health, squalor, infant mortality, mental deficiency, and physical deficiency as “National Inefficiencies.” The cause is “Irresponsibility and Ignorance on the part of Parents,” and the result is “physically deficient men with pigeon chests, bad teeth, flat feet” (Rosenthal 3). In this way, Britain perversely identified the deleterious effects of civilized living as most evident in the poorest citizens, as youth specialists attributed widespread physical and moral weakness to post-Industrial Revolution luxury, including increased dependence upon modern conveniences, soft foods, stuffy shelter, and little need for physical exercise and exertion.

Getting away from the unsanitary living conditions of city living would rejuvenate a man—or so the adventure narrative claimed. Nowhere is the difference in virility between the robust man of adventure and his weakling city counterpart more pronounced than in Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Tarzan* series. In *Tarzan of the Apes*, Clayton is unfavorably compared to Tarzan. Although in most respects a most masculine and heroic individual, Clayton appears woefully anemic when compared to his cousin. Early in their relationship, Tarzan,
quickened his pace so appreciably that Clayton, stumbling blindly in his wake, was down a dozen times in as many minutes in a vain effort to keep pace with him, and soon was left hopelessly behind.

Fearing that he would again be irretrievably lost, he called aloud to the wild man ahead of him. . . . For a moment Tarzan looked at the young man . . . then, stooping down before Clayton, he motioned him to grasp him about the neck, and, with the white man upon his back, Tarzan took to the trees.

Just in case the reader has not drawn the appropriate conclusion, the city dweller does himself:

From the first sensation of chilling fear Clayton passed to one of keen admiration and envy of those giant muscles and that wondrous instinct or knowledge which guided this forest god through the inky blackness of the night as easily and safely as Clayton could have strolled a London street at high noon. (132-33)

If a reasonably healthy and morally upright Clayton fails this test so utterly, other Englishmen might just as well shoot themselves and put an end to it. Disease will get them anyway. As for Tarzan, he is living proof that away from the corrupting cities, a young man could become the primeval god that an Englishman was meant to be.

Adventuring also erased the social problems the poor apparently brought upon themselves when living in the city. As already noted, Victorian and Edwardian Britons worried about the physical and moral state of their young. The stout trustworthy yeoman of old was becoming a casualty to modernization, and
city life was supposedly making England’s youth weak, susceptible to disease, unmanly, and unreliable. The many social challenges to the status quo in the late Victorian period led anxious Britons to see moral dissolution, patriotic decay, and civil deterioration as their children’s future, and while middle and upper class fears focused on working class children as the source for racial degeneration, as the century came to a close, class seemed less and less a protection against decline. Adventuring narratives and related movements claimed that rejecting the easy way, and embracing hardship and danger, would solve the problem.

This belief endures. At Tom Brown’s Tracking, Nature and Wilderness Survival School in New Jersey, students learn how to survive in the wilds without gear or benefit of any modern conveniences. Although such survival schools offer carefully edited “adventure,” their mission statements resemble closely the adventure fiction of a century prior. As writer David Rakoff finds during his week-long class at Tom Brown Jr.’s school, “‘Full survival’ entails being” “naked in the wilderness”:

no tools, no matches. It is both worst-case scenario and ultimate fantasy. Worst case being that the End Days have come upon us, the skies bleed red, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse have torn up the flower beds, and we must fend for ourselves and our loved ones. The fantasy being that we’ve gotten so sick and tired of our consumer society that we just park our cars by the side of the highway, step into the woods, and disappear. (97)

Tom Brown Jr. tells Rakoff that “It would be my dream to go back into the bush and live and never have to face another aspect of society” (149), making him a cultural ancestor of Tarzan, who loathes civilization and never misses a chance to observe snidely that city dwellers are diseased weaklings. A hard body badass like
Tarzan has the right to make such pronouncements (given his physical, mental, and moral superiority), though in his case, his status as a hereditary English lord complements his role as jungle god. “Civilized ways, forsooth,” he observes to D’Arnot after a treacherous incident in the city in which Tarzan’s gallantry and heroism has been betrayed:

Jungle standards do not countenance wanton atrocities.
There we kill for food and for self-preservation, or in the winning of mates and the protection of the young. Always, you see, in accordance with the dictates of some great natural law. But here! Faugh, your civilized man is more brutal than the brutes. He kills wantonly, and, worse than that, he utilizes a noble sentiment, the brotherhood of man, as a lure to entice his unwary victim to his doom. (Burroughs 31)

But for all its claims of a higher moral and physical standard in the wild, the adventure narrative also encourages readers to imagine a place free from proscriptions as well. Another life entirely was out there, and for those chafing at the geographical, social, and economic regulations—adventurers like Isabella Bird or originals like Wildred Thessinger and Richard Burton—escaping or even violating these rules appealed immensely. Richard Burton is the poster boy for living the exotic, foreign dream. Away from English eyes, Burton could indulge his intellectual and cultural curiosity. As a result, he not only observed foreign rituals and practices, but participated in them. In India, Burton reportedly indulged in opiates, transgressive sexual practices—non-white women, and perhaps, males—and arcane mystic ceremonies such as Tantric worship. And even if he didn’t, by setting his supposed adventures away, he could still refuse responsibility (and penalty) for having indulged in them. Leaving England was so
attractive for the unconventional Burton that he couldn’t help celebrating his
disaffection for his former chums. In India, he decided that “monkeys were
preferable to his messmates”:

He collected about forty of various breeds and proceeded
to live with them. . . . He assigned them ranks and titles
and formed his own mess. He taught them to sit at the
table and had the servants wait on them. Beside him sat
a tiny, pretty, silky-looking monkey he called his wife.

(Farwell 37)

While Burton may be an extreme example, narratives such as his certainly
suggested that adventure could provide the escape portal to an exciting life. All
the grim warnings against moral dissolution in the colonies—all of those naked
natives!—could not change the fact that “corruption” was not always a deterrent,
and, in fact, often was an attractive incentive for English boys of a certain
temperament.

Adventure novels, travel journals, and biographies were more than popular
entertainment for the young boys (and girls) who devoured them. They were
service manuals, inspirational tracts, myth makers (and sustainers), psychological
outlets, and potent propaganda for the Empire, its agencies, and its citizens. Best
of all, adventure narratives suggested that serving the Empire could be fun.
Except for the very religious, for whom colonialism entailed moral responsibility
towards the colonized, or for those adamantly opposed to imperial expansion and
rule, the adventuring spirit was a welcome safety valve for England and the
Empire. It showed that there was still hope.
Everybody Wants to Rule the World: Adventure’s Democratic Appeal

For English boys, the archetypic adventurer found in fiction and history represented the very best of untamed British masculinity—someone who seemed to enjoy absolute freedom. While adventure could have beneficial results for England, and possibly the entire Empire, it did not have to. Adventure narratives and biographies were outlets for the anxieties of the age, even as they still sustained the myths that bolstered the nation’s sense of itself. Such stories were a curious mixture of rebellion and conformity, of egalitarianism and elitism, of self-interest and subsumation of self to the cause of nation and Empire. Perhaps most attractively of all, these narratives suggested that adventurers served the Empire simply by doing whatever they wanted. Their authors knew that telling boy readers what was good for them and what they should do was the best way to render a lesson useless and unheard. Kipling’s hero certainly chafes under such admonishments: “Kim controlled himself with an effort beyond his years. Not more than any other youngster did he like to eat dirt or be misjudged” (157).

The brilliance of the adventure narrative has always been its ability to seem counter-cultural\(^{23}\) while still toeing the line and sending boys out to serve the Empire. For instance, while they promised excitement, and the virtual certainty of violence, adventure narratives suggested that grand financial rewards could be in the cards for those who dared. The odds of this happening were admittedly small—and few adventurous souls found spectacular wealth. But gain was possible, and some adventurers managed to fashion a materially and socially better

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\(^{23}\) Scouting was an exception for it openly declared that boys knew nothing, should keep their mouths shut, and obey those who did know, i.e. their betters. Fortunately for Baden-Powell, Scouting’s packaging was attractive enough to keep his acolytes from wondering how this undermining of their own skills and abilities could coexist with training that repeatedly told them to take initiative.
life for themselves than if they had stayed at home. Such stories were common even at the very bottom of the social ladder. Take for example those early mandatory adventurers, the transported Englishmen and women. Fergus Fleming notes that while convicts were initially “only a little better off than slaves, forced to work for the government,” they were still “given afternoons off to cultivate their own allotments,” and “once they got their ‘tickets of leave’ at the end of their stretches, prisoners were free to sell their labour to the highest bidder,” a practice that often led to convicts becoming independent themselves (Empire 106). Under Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s development plan for Australia (1809-1821), “thirty-acre land grants” were offered in the town of Windsor “to those who had completed their sentences” (Ferguson 108). If Australia’s convicts could succeed, were the promises of adventure narratives any less plausible?

It did not however pay to be too fastidious a reader—at least of any historical accounts documenting the fates of those who went before. Living and working in the colonies meant exposing oneself to an astonishing array of mental and physical diseases, maladies, and traumas. Gain was possible, but sometimes at the cost of your life. Hummil’s illness and death in Kipling’s “At the End of the Passage” is a chilling reminder of what a man faced in India, and how he could end up. The story repeatedly reveals what the job entailed and how dangerous it could be. This opening account of Hummil’s duties as host and friend matter of factly acknowledges the dangers of India:

Hummil . . . received his friends thus every Sunday if they could come in. When one of them failed to appear, he would send a telegram to his last address, in order that he might know whether the defaulter were dead or alive. There are very many places in the East where it is
not good or kind to let our acquaintances drop out of sight even for one short week. (330)

Later, when Spurstow directs Lowndes to have the coolies dig Hummil’s grave next to Jevins’s, the reader not only realizes that Hummil’s earlier gestures were not done for show, but that Hummil is not the first to die in that particular job. As he gloomily predicts, his likely successor will also die without much of a fight: “Burkett is the only man who could be sent; and he’s a born fool. . . . Burkett hasn’t the physique of a rat. If he came here he’d go out” (353).

More alarming than death could be the Englishman’s loss of himself in the service of adventure. While Spurstow lists the cause of Hummil’s death as physiological, he knows that Hummil has been fleeing his nightmares. Hummil had begun to hallucinate, and dreamt of “A blind face that cries and can not wipe its eyes, a blind face that chases him down corridors!” (352). Terrified of sleep, he gouges himself with a hunting spur to stay awake. In the end, the narrative offers two possible explanations for Hummil’s malady and death. Either his brain has turned in the heat, or the terror haunting Hummil has claimed him.

Hummil turned on his heel to face the echoing desolation of his bungalow, and the first thing he saw standing in the verandah was the figure of himself. He had met a similar apparition once before. . . . He approached the figure. . . . It slid through the house and dissolved into swimming specks within the eyeball as soon as it reached the burning light of the garden. . . . When he came in to dinner he found himself sitting at the table. The vision rose and walked out hastily. No living man knows what the week held for Hummil. (355)
Given Kipling’s general fondness for the marvelous, there are several explanations for Hummil’s decline. In any case, Kipling’s story confirms that adventure has a price, and adventurers could lose. The careful reader will recognize that exotic locales and experiences, so seductive when tucked safely in at home, are quite different when you live in them. And if this reader look very carefully, he might catch the hint that he has absolutely no business being elsewhere—that the land or the people will destroy him if given the chance.

But the unofficial “poet laureate of Empire” could not entirely discount the appeal of the thrilling escapade, or the chance to break the bounds of the everyday. Regardless of the adventure narrative’s fuzziness about geography, native peoples, and the writers themselves, would-be-adventurers could still conclude that they would be no longer at the bottom of the food chain. These narratives often encouraged readers to see themselves wielding power and influence denied them at home. And while the mission need not have a patriotically inclined purpose—the rescue of Sir Henry’s brother in *King Solomon’s Mines* is a decent reason to set off—simple entry of English characters into these places necessarily created effects that went beyond bushwhacking for the hell of it. Adventure heroes soon found themselves responsible for effecting change on native populaces they encounter. The popular myths of Empire, that even the lowest Englishman, be he civil servant, engineer, reporter, office clerk, or professional soldier of fortune, had a hand in shaping and carrying out policies rose to the nth level in adventure fiction. More than simply maintaining irrigation systems or reporting on the escapades of others, “real” adventurers affected the courses of empires.

Adventure fiction thus perpetuated and elided over the given fact that even the lowest British soldier stationed in the outposts possessed more power than virtually any native did. “The laws establishing [the colonizer’s] exorbitant rights and the obligations of the colonized are conceived by him,” Memmi notes, “he is
the beneficiary of the entire enterprise” (8). On this level, then, any Englishman could easily imagine himself as the star of his own adventure story. Even before landing in the colony, the civil servant has been told by history primers, editorials, journal articles, sermons, and the like that his presence in the colonies would be benevolent and beneficial. Hyperbolic literary tendencies sustained these unrealistic expectations:

Even a city [Nyanuggar] rose at Dixon’s bidding with the rapidity of magic. In three months from the laying of the first stone, its spacious bazaar was opened for traffic; and in a short time two thousand families had flocked in ... and engaged in those manufacturing and commercial operations which were wanting to complete the well being of Mairwara. (Patterson 647)

In this fantasy space of Adventureland, an entire city infrastructure, and the city’s economic revitalization through a switch to a market based economy, could all occur with the imperial wave of an English hand. That such a triumph required forcing unwilling thousands of native workers to participate was beside the point. That one could supposedly gain such power, influence, and standing through adventure did much to recommend it and as the vehicles for this glad message, adventure narratives were eagerly devoured.

Testosterone driven readers cheered the “superman” figure who could outjump, outpunch, and outman his opponents, be they man or animal. Characters like Tarzan—an amazing athlete, gymnast, scout, hunter, and ladies man—appealed enormously because they so flattered the self-image of the would-be, still-at-home adventurer. But adventure heroes like Tarzan did more than bolster self-esteem. His admirable intellect, his cunning, and his physical ability are certainly engaging, but perhaps his most inspiring quality is his refusal to take any
disrespect. Tarzan punches and headlocks his way to dominance, however
grudging and forced the path, and regardless of the class standing of his opponent.
For a readership that habitually deferred to its “betters” and observed the etiquette
of class lines, this simple exercise of the will, supported by individual merit and
strength, was new and exciting. When Tarzan makes threats—often violent in
nature—he can always carry them out. Here for instance is how he deals with a
blackmailer in The Return of Tarzan:

You know what has brought me here. . . . It should be to
kill you, but . . . I shall not do that—now. . . .
Rokoff assumed a truculent air, attempting by bravado to
show how little he feared Tarzan’s threats. An instant
later he felt the ape-man’s steel fingers at his throat. . . .
When Rokoff commenced to blacken about the face
Tarzan released his hold and shoved the fellow back into
his chair. After a moment of coughing Rokoff sat sullenly
glaring at the man standing opposite him. (Burroughs 47)

In the Tarzan stories, the tables turn. Traditional sources of power and
influence—money and social standing—crumple before the moral rightness—and
fists—of a heroic adventurer.

Readers gloried in this leveling of the playing fields with those who ruled at
home. Brawling accomplished little in England, but in Adventureland, it was the
mark of a real, and effective, male. Here is Tarzan repelling an ambush:

Selecting his most formidable antagonist, the fellow with
the bludgeon, Tarzan charged full upon him, dodging the
falling weapon, and catching the man a terrific blow on
the point of the chin that felled him in his tracks.
Then he turned upon the others. This was sport. He was
reveling in the joy of battle and the lust of blood. . . . the
ten burly villains found themselves penned in a small
room with a wild and savage beast, against whose steel
muscles their puny strength was less than futile. (Burroughs 27-8)

Adventure novels suggested that in foreign lands, Englishmen would not rule
because of Imperial military might, but because they would somehow acquire
powers that would allow them to overcome any opponent. These super powers
often stood in stark contrast to the lack of power the reader at home often felt—
especially within the literate lower classes, for as Drotner points out, “within the
ranks of the British themselves, only the lower orders express open defiance of
accepted norms” (99). Though read across the classes then, the adventure plot
featuring a man who was nobody at home, but became somebody away, might
have had its greatest appeal to that reading group composed of the literate but
subordinate lower middle classes.

Or by the community of boys. Although Tarzan’s adventures appeared in
novels rather than in boys’ magazines, they were very similar to those offered to
that “mass reading public of juveniles” (Drotner 4). The culture, the social norms,
and the politics of the late nineteenth century are significantly different from our
own, but it is still easy to recognize the appeal of such offered fantasies of being
one’s own man, enacting vengeance on those who would deny this franchise for
boys and adolescents. For the young middle class reader still under the
governance of his parents, adventure’s promise of power, and the freedom to
exercise it, were potent. And without indulging overmuch in Freudian
assumptions, it’s also clear that these adventure narratives were also attractive to
the middle class boy because they were so resolutely male.

The generation which grew up after 1860 displayed an
insecurity in their masculine identities which manifested
itself in a flight from domesticity, a growing disparagement of the "feminine", a readiness to go abroad and an increasing refusal amongst late Victorian men to marry.

(Rutherford 19)

Although the idea of mother was adored—see Peter Pan and company—adventure therefore offered a nursery for becoming a manly man.

Another force that sustained enthusiasm for adventuring in foreign, wild spaces was the desire to know and therefore somehow to possess, the geographical, cultural, and social realm one was exploring. Travel narratives by adventurer tourists gave the British public a sense of the wild places hitherto unknown—blank spaces on a map, or indecipherable because previous descriptions of exotic places and peoples were rendered incomprehensible by their very "foreign-ness." Furthermore, when Victorian journals published travels through previously unexplored geography that was not currently part of the Empire, British readers were not only getting geography and cultural anthropology lessons, but a sense of how far British influence could extend. Even if the territory did not officially "belong" to the British Empire, the account created the sense that it could. What, after all, were exploratory expeditions but forerunners of colonial expansion? This was the lesson of British history, and even if immediate colonization was not likely, the reader still saw that British influence was powerful enough to "open" previously prohibited lands. For this reason, travel narratives like Richard Burton's acculturated the British public to the idea of ever expanding colonial possessions. The red places on the map became "knowable" through quick narrative tours of the region, and Burton's fascination with the hidden or the extreme gave readers the illusion that they were getting the "real" story by reading them. Finally, even if Burton's peripatetic wanderings, note-takings, or published
works never physically expanded Britain’s colonial possessions, they still created the illusion that England could touch all parts of the globe at will.

But as they “opened” the world to British readers, and bolstered their confidence in their superior natural abilities, adventure narratives also reinforced stereotypes of inherent native inferiority. For instance, that the hero of the story had to come from outside implied that in Adventureland, Malays, Hindus, Sikhs, Sudanese, or any native group were not yet advanced enough to lead, or to assume responsibility or power. Primed by school history texts, the Englishman could perhaps conceive that “The day may come when a native shall discharge the functions of collector and magistrate, shall represent the government as the highest authority in a district or division, remote from superstition, and shall exhibit those qualities of self-reliance, activity, and fertility of resource in difficulties, by which English men have signalized themselves in every period of Indian history.” But a constant in Indian colonial relations was that “this time is not yet,” and that while an Indian “may even carry out the complicated details of executive management,” it can only be “under the immediate eye of his European superior” (“Indian” 5).

In Maugham’s “The Outstation,” the Malay characters are all subject to the stereotypes and prejudices reinforcing assumptions of Britain’s right to rule. Mr. Warburton calls his chief personal attendant his “head boy,” even though the narrative drops hints that his age and service could deserve a more respectful title. The boy had been with Mr. Warburton for fifteen years,” Maugham writes, and “was not afraid of him, they had gone through too much together” (917). Though bound by close ties, Mr. Warburton is master. His boy “knew when the Resident must be obeyed without question” (917), and as sympathetic as Warburton may appear, he can be indulgent because his position is clearly the superior one. He treated the Malays with an air of tolerance, and “with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders condoned their vices” (910). Standing “in place of the Sultan,” he shuns
native habits, clings to his superior English ways, and treats his charges with “a happy mixture of condescencion and kindliness” (912).

Similarly, Kipling’s fond reflections of Hurree Babu, Mahbub Ali, Teshoo Lama, and even the old Sahiba herself mask a critical view of the native character. They are in turn sycophantic and pedantic, vicious and intolerant, simple and benign, superstitious and imperious—all the stereotypes of the Asian character. Hurree Chundar Mookerjee will be my example of how fictional caricature comes to “justify” certain stereotypes, and in turn rationalize official policies. Kipling’s narrative never treats Hurree harshly, but it does assign him the role of comic native fool. Though an accomplished agent, whose skills in the Game surpass even Kim’s, Hurree also embodies some of the most damaging stereotypes of Hindu gentlemen—cowardly, sycophantic, pedantic, self-interested, superstitious, physically anemic. As a result, Kipling’s Babu, while intelligent, learned, daring, and capable, is clearly unfit to stand completely in the place of an Englishman. In this way, Kipling’s character adds substance to arguments against Indian self-determination. How could England responsibly trust the governing of a country to such men? Although liberal editorials and commentaries on India allowed for exceptions in character, by and large, British publications sidestepped England’s agency in past atrocities, and the resulting explanations for native reticence, choosing instead to warn readers to expect the worst.

Hurree’s academic inclinations are an example. For all of his training and ambitions, Hurree Babu appears as a parody of an English scholar—more noise than substance. He can quote Shakespeare and Spenser, discuss ethnological matters, practice medicine, and speak many languages, but Hurree’s talents never appear in the best light. His physical appearance is determinedly picturesque, and his language undercuts his accomplishments. Unlike Mahbub or Lurgan, Hurree speaks a comic version of English that marks him as a near cousin of Mrs.
Malaprop. Regardless of his learning, he remains a Babu—undignified, cowardly, and cringing. Though the English reader never gets more than a glimpse of Creighton, then, there is never any doubt as to which of the two men has the better chance of getting the nod from the Royal Society. Close mouthed Creighton could never act the fool. Hurree does so as a matter of course, conducting “offeecial” business, or conveying intelligence and briefing a subordinate, through simpers, giggles, and bubbly speech.:

[Colonel Creighton] found me at a loose string, and I had to go down to Chitor to find that beastly letter. I do not like the South—too much railway travel; but I drew good traveling allowance. Ha! Ha! . . . I tell our mutual friend that you take the bally bun, by Jove! It was splendid. I come to tell you so. (165)

Even Kim, who delights in the telling of the Asiatic tale, has no patience with Hurree when it comes to talk about the Great Game. After listening to the account of the Russians and the Five Kings, Kim impatiently rebukes Hurree. The admonishment has two effects. First it reminds both Babu and the reader who is actually in charge. As he reminds Hurree, Kim is a Sahib, and his demand that Hurree behave with the dignity that his office requires confirms that a Bengali, even a first rank one, is still not ready for a position of authority. Second, it prevents the reader from admiring Hurree Babu’s (flowery) command of the English language, and his knowledge of English culture and arts. Hurree gets told that he should stick to what he knows, and not try to be something that he is not. Or as Edward Said puts it, “lovable and admirable as he may be, there remains in the Babu the grimacing stereotype of the ontologically funny native, hopelessly trying to be like us” (153).
Mrinalini Sinha, Gauri Viswanathan, and many other scholars have all argued that a clean equation between constructing a negative stereotype and denying native authority is difficult. Keeping Hurree Mookerjee in mind, though, helps us understand how adventure narratives served to shore up English policies in India. The epitome of Sinha’s “effeminate Bengali,” Hurree is giggling and superstitious, pedantic and priggish—and openly declares himself to be so. As a result, poor examples of Indian administrators, while obviously not directly condemning the Indian population, still could reinforce the sense in England that British governance was still necessary. What readers recognize was that the bad administrator needed to be replaced by an active, virile, adventurous English male. Compared with Tarzan, Hurree Chundar Mookerjee crumples in the reader’s imagination, for when faced between choosing a man who will take charge and start punching heads, and one whose response to a crisis is a “call for reinforcements,” any reader—English, colonial, or native—will choose the former. Native agitation for increased (if not total) self-representation in their own government would strike readers of adventure fiction as a bad idea on the face of it, since natives of any sort cannot provide responsible, manly leadership. Nor was the opinion inherently racist, since Englishmen who did not meet the physical standard of excellence often were banned from the highest positions of power and influence. General Sir Herbert Plumer, “unmilitary in appearance, being stout, chinless, white-haired, and pot-bellied” (Fussell 14-16), for instance, remained in the shadow of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig during World War I.24 Adventure novels primed readers to expect certain qualities in heroes. While a native like Hurree may “excel in thee exact science [of the written report]” (209), for

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24 Plumer’s 1917 mine attack brilliantly demonstrated the effectiveness of surprise—“ten thousand [Germans] were permanently entombed immediately. Seven thousand panicked and were taken prisoner” (16). And yet, although Paul Fussell does not claim that Plumer’s subsequent status in the war was determined by appearance, he hints at it by pointing out that Plumer emerges “in sad contrast to Haig” (14).
instance, readers did not necessarily value such skills as requirements for successful governance. And ironically enough, it was the possession of such mental abilities that apparently disqualified natives from positions of authority. Soaked in fiction that celebrated rugged thickheadedness—public schoolboy stories, boys' stories in serials, adventure fiction, historical biographies of English heroes—British readers rarely encountered the intellectual hero. As Sinha has pointed out, masculinity even became a quantifiable attribute. Upon discovering that Indians routinely outscored English applicants on civil service examinations, the tests were changed to include physical and "character" components. A riding test and a "test of character" were introduced to "ensure proper 'gentlemanly qualifications' among British civil service recruits" (104). Masculine obviously was as (British) masculine did.

On a purely physical level, Hurree Mookerjee is comical and grotesque, with mannerisms of exactly the kind that English books condemned as ingratiating, flattering, idiotic—the antithesis of the stoic, restrained masculine Englishman (see Tarzan). Skilled as Hurree may have been at disguise, he never exhibits any physical prowess. In his dangerous escapade with the Russian and French agents, Hurree emasculates himself by carrying a "blue-and-white gored umbrella," which Kipling likens to "a wind-blown harebell" (75) to shade him from the sun. What follows is another example of apparent native cowardice. While Kim flings himself at the Russian who attacks the Lama—"The blow had waked every unknown Irish devil in the boy's blood"—and has to be stopped from delightedly "banging his breathless foe's head against a boulder" (181, 182), Hurree, the mastermind of the operation, plays the servile fool to the stupid

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25 Although A. N. Wilson claims that Dr. Arnold "had high academic standards" (279), and was credited with rescuing Rugby school "from a state of moral and intellectual torpor" (278), most accounts for example stressed the public school's celebration of sports over learning, convinced that leaning to play the game was better preparation for life.
foreign agents. Never mind that he plays this role for a purpose: the reader sees in this scene evidence of what an adventurous hero is—and what he is not.

Adventure novels also underscored constitutional differences between the masculine English hero and the native. The Babu's weight aside, there is the issue of activity. The English saw themselves as active and industrious, and the natives as lazy and idle. (Thomas Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question" is a classic example of equating race with indolence) Furthermore, those labeled "lazy" at home were either the nobility or the unemployed poor, creating a vivid image for English readers of non-productive natives spanning the entire social hierarchy. Though he comes and goes for official reasons, the Babu seems to conform to the stereotype. The reader never sees Hurree actually "working," or his activity having a concrete result. It is Kim who carries the message of the pedigree of the white stallion, Kim who engineers the transformation and escape of the agent on the train, Kim who warns Mahbub Ali of the impending ambush, Kim who steals and carries the kilta over the hills. It is therefore easy to elide over Hurree's role in the Game. As an apparent herald or gossip, he furthers the Game, but with the possible exception of his intervention with the Russian and French agent, he does not do anything. And even then, Hurree's contribution seems unimportant. Although he sets a high value on his own efforts—"Now all the hill-people believe all Russians are all beggars... And I told the common people—oah, such tales and anecdotes" (209), Hurree stands as the antithesis of the "imperial man of action" that Karen Volland Waters has identified as one of the roles assumed by English colonials. There's also a matter of discipline. Englishmen kept to the task, denying themselves all pleasures except at socially mandated times—Mr. Warburton working until it was time for his evening drink, Hummil toiling during that last, horrible week before his death—Hurree's work and social pursuits overlap. Discussing Hurree's desire
to be a Fellow of the Royal Society, and his tracking of the Lama as a potential paper subject, Lurgan responds to Creighton that “I tell him about the lama everything. . . . Hurree Babu goes down to Benares—at his own expense, I think.” “I don’t,” Creighton, who has “paid Hurree’s travelling expenses,” ruefully replies. Unlike his self-denying English counterparts like Kim—lean, mean, and always ready for action—Hurree seems self-indulgent. Casting up at the Sahiba’s “like a strayed camel,” he “eats five times a day. . . . so full of anxiety for [Kim’s] health that he sticks to the cook-house door and stays himself with scraps” (208). Though he is “offically” still on duty, and concerned and anxious for Kim and the mursala, when the Sahiba asks for Hurree, she is told that “the hakim sleeps after his meat.”

By epitomizing the “effeminate Bengali,” Hurree Babu therefore justifies the denial of Indian self-determination—if not in actual political fact, then at least in sentiment. The Babu’s apparent failure to fill the role of administrator on any but the lowest levels due to the “constitutional timidity” of his race, and “the inherent physical weakness or cowardice of the Bengali civilian” which “rendered him incapable of performing his duties” (Sinha 41), paradoxically helps to extenuate after the fact the disintegration of the colonial administration’s absolute control. In Adventureland, England did not have to pass legislation to keep Indians from power, because even the most educated natives did not want it. Hurree does not strive for Indian representation in government because he is so busy gathering ethnological notes; in fact, self-determination never seems to enter his head.

The English adventurer’s supposed easy mastery of foreign landscapes and native customs also had the effect of presenting foreign cultures as both unknowable and transparent. Since adventure fiction was set in places that the vast majority of readers would never visit, the language, the customs, and the
people were exotic, and even alien, making the hero’s mission highly difficult. Clayton’s and Rakoff’s instinctive reaction to life without modern conveniences only increases the average reader’s admiration for Tarzan’s jungle fluency. And yet, these narratives also emphasize the ease with which Englishmen mastered the geography and cultures of colonial possessions. Thus, Kim’s thorough familiarity with Indian customs, languages, and traditions was literally child’s play, and even Creighton, who learns the ropes as an adult, has India down cold: “Kim pretended at first to understand perhaps one word in three of [his] talk. Then the Colonel, seeing his mistake, turned to fluent and picturesque Urdu. . . . No man could be a fool who knew the language so intimately, who moved so gently and silently” (88).

Behind such assumptions lay a quasi-scientific attitude toward culture. Traveling adventurers almost inevitably represented native subjects as homogenous figures. Just as “a photograph pushes a small part of the person forward and presents it as the whole and adequate person” (Elkins 28), in England, fictional portraits like those of Hurree Mookerjee or the Lama became images of India in English minds. Even fictional reports had this effect, but the published accounts of traveling adventurers—usually received as accurate narratives—came to stand as scientific evidence that natives were knowable, containable things. As Nicholas Thomas points out, anthropological categorization is necessarily reductive because it aspires to generalization. Proposing the observation of animal behavior as an analogy, Thomas notes that “In virtually every case, the animal is not treated as a collectivity but reduced to a singular standard specimen: ‘The ape . . . is as untractable as he is extravagant.’” This process eliminates the distance between individual and species. Though “the description shifts from the concrete and observable facts,” and moves “to the generalized disquisition upon species character,” “What the species has is the same as what the person or singular
animal has, namely a character and personality that can be recognized through behaviour and dispositions.”

Thomas also notes that “a species is an entirely different entity to a particular creature, and it might be thought that the characters of species could only be appreciated in a partial way, just as travellers could only have opinions that were limited by their restricted knowledge of a place visited” (Thomas 81-83), but this widespread simplistic equation of individual with species informs the work of early naturalists and biologists such as Carl Linne (Linnaeus) or George Louis le Clerc, Count de Buffon. Mary Louise Pratt quotes Sten Lindroth’s observations that Linnaeus’s “dream was that ‘with his method it would be possible for anyone who had learned the system to place any plant anywhere in the world in its right class and order, if not in its right genus, whether the plant was previously known to science or not’” (27). A similar methodological certainty came to inform subsequent travel and adventure narratives, for as Mary Louise Pratt reminds us, “Journalism and narrative travel accounts” served as “essential mediators between the scientific network and a larger European public” (29)

What can be seen, can be classified; what can be classified, can be given a value. As a result, in almost all narratives—scientific, historical, fictional—British observers inevitably dissolved any exotic foreign subject into a stereotype. Back in England, Irish stereotypes are an obvious example, but amongst Londoners there was even the tendency to assign certain characteristics to the inhabitants of particular boroughs. One consequence of such classification tendencies, however, was that the English adventure hero was literally a different species from the natives he encountered. Despite his own fondness for disguise, Burton presents native behavior and physical attributes as distant and separate from himself and his readers. Arab natives he encountered could therefore never cross the line of their nature, and become one of the brotherhood of adventuring heroes.
During the nineteenth century, readers increasingly came to expect that adventure narratives would contain scientific and technological references. Such references were expected to inform non-fiction account, for as Fergus Fleming notes about Pierre Balmat’s attempt to summit Mont Blanc, he “had to find a respectable person to climb with” since “it would all be considered valueless without a man of science to hand with his barometer” (Killing 42). Adventure narratives served English imperial ends because the pseudo-ethnological, “scientific” observations in these stories mimicked other “European colonial discourses” that “have often dehumanized others and thus made brutal treatment more intelligible, less shameful, even appropriate” (Thomas 80). Despite overwhelming evidence that native cultures, technologies, economies, or art were often highly sophisticated at the time of the first European contact, adventure fiction doggedly continued to present native life as dim-witted and scheming, confirming what the reader of travel and “ethnological” reports knew already and wanted to hear.

Adventure fiction’s often retrospective nature made them loaded history lessons for readers too young to have experienced colonialism’s events first hand. By the time Kim was published in 1901, disastrous events like the Indian Rebellion were musty facts in a school history primer. In Kipling’s and other fiction/travel writers’ hands, these events become the setting for youthful adventures. By exploiting the ripples following the Indian Rebellion—the intrigue and danger that results from the interception of the paper that Mahbub Ali sends with Kim, for instance—Kipling turns the past into a new geography to conquer for young boys fantasizing about intrigue and danger. Further, by suggesting that the past’s reverberations could extend into the modern age, adventure narratives also served as warnings against government accommodation. When contemporary native Indians argued that they were qualified to serve in mofussil or on the Public
Service Commission or in native volunteer corps, fears of "native treachery," often very much alive in historical adventure fiction, were trotted out to quell any English support for increased Indian participation in Indian government. During the Ilbert Bill controversy, for instance, "Far-fetched notions of the dangers to white women thus assumed extra-ordinary importance in the propaganda against the Bill" (Sinha 51). Annette Ackroyd-Beveridge's 1883 allusion to the 1857 Rebellion is typical: "Six and twenty years have not elapsed since no inconsiderable portion of the most active classes of North India proved they did not understand what is meant by justice and mercy to the innocent and helpless" (Sinha 59). In twentieth century Kim, the repeated attempts on Mahbub Ali's life, beginning with the "smooth-faced Kashmiri pundit's search of the horse-dealer's belongings, lead Kim to comment that "Those who search bags with knives may presently search bellies with knives" (19). Any acknowledgment that many, many natives were slaughtered during the course of actual historical events like the Indian Rebellion disappears when the British reader encounters such treachery. Clearly, the British had done the right thing.

Perhaps the most important colonial work the narratives of adventure performed, however, was to assure readers that the good natives wholeheartedly supported English rule and policies. While traveling with the Lama, Kim encounters an ancient, native veteran of the Mutiny, who gives an account of 1857 that not only confirms English history's version of the Rebellion, but offers an Indian soldier's considered opinion that the behavior of native Indians made the British response just—even by native standards:

A madness ate into all the Army, and they turned against their officers. That was the first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill
the Sahibs’ wives and children. Then came the Sahibs from over the sea and called them to most strict account. (39)

Adventure narratives anticipate and dissolve imperial guilt. No conscience needs to be searched if the righteousness of the British cause makes Indian men like the good veteran turn against his own people: “Give me work,” he pleads, “for I am an outcast among my own kin, and my cousin’s blood is wet on my sabre” (40). In fact, in Kipling, native authorities get frustrated by British leniency toward rebelling Indians. Discussing the case of the five mutinous kings, Hurree Mookerjee confides to Kim his frustration at the English government’s decision to refrain from more harshly punishing insurrection. And when ordered to observe the Russian operatives, Hurree blurts out “This is not a lawsuit, that we go about to collect evidence” (167). His solution is more direct. “Why the dooce do you not issue demi-official orders to some brave man to poison them,” he blusters, calling it a “most reprehensible laxity on your part,” and ending his tirade by scolding the British for their naiveté: “It is all your beastly English pride. You think no one dare conspire! That is all tommy-rott” (167).

Adventure narratives are full of such gratification for the English ego. Though the praise natives offer in Kipling’s narratives seemed curiously aligned with certain pet projects of the English government, it was nevertheless well received. The Jat, whose infant son Kim cures, remarks that “The Government has brought on us many taxes, but it gives us one good thing—the te-rain that joins friends and unites the anxious. A wonderful matter is the te-rain” (Kim 148). Native opinion of experienced British administrators (both high and low-level) was also positive: “These be the sort—she took a fine judicial tone. . . . These be the sort to oversee justice. They know the land and the customs of the land. The others, all new from Europe . . . learning our tongues from books, are worse than the pestilence. They do harm to Kings” (57). Clearly, it was not enough that the
British felt themselves superior in every way to the native populations they ruled. The British Imperial ego also needed to believe that its colonial administrators, and English rule, and therefore, the English people, were not only welcome, but beloved—and had been from the start. In his chapter on Kipling in *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, Martin Green discusses this “godfather motif,” observing that the native characters in *Kim* all dote on the hero, “in effect competing for his affections” (266). By creating an English adventurer obviously beloved by the native characters, adventure narratives assuaged any twinges of guilt in any home or colonial readers who may have been aware of the inequalities of colonial rule—Miss Adela Quested, for example. The belief in native love for the Englishman was of course stronger at home—those in the colonies would have to work very hard to avoid evidence to the contrary. (Although Richard Burton apparently felt himself welcomed everywhere.) It was still part of the fantasy that innate Britishness—understood by its possessors as winning combination of fairness, cheerfulness, steadfastness, courage, humility, and moral uprightness—made them lovable to all they came across. And while admittedly Kim is charming, the reader can never forget that he is English, because no one else does—not Kim, not the other characters, not the narrator. Furthermore, this sahib is much beloved because he is a sahib, and therefore owner of the traits which the English fancied made them so adorable. Other admirable characters—the Lama, Mahbub Ali, the old Sahiba, Hurree Babu—have their individual great characteristics, but Kim possesses all of them in one distinctive British package. Thus, even in his rags Kim displays the Lama’s gentleness, Mahbub’s courage, the Sahiba’s generosity, and Hurree’s quick wits, and Kipling assumes the reader will immediately recognize these traits compose the English character which shines through, even when the person looks like a lowly chela.
Kipling’s representation of native esteem and love for Kim verges on the maudlin. But ultimately, it goes to the incredible extreme of suggesting that love for the English is India’s greatest hope. So united are his native characters in their love for Kim that they abandon their cultural beliefs, allegiance, and prejudices. “Thou art beyond question an unbeliever, and therefore thou wilt be damned,” says Mahbub to Kim: “So says my Law—or I think it does. But thou art also my Little Friend of all the World, and I love thee. So says my heart” (107). The Sahiba demands that Kim “thank her if you carest as a son” (207), apparently forgetting that she has grandsons already. At the end of the novel, Kim occupies her thoughts and heart. Though she clamors for charms to protect her own children, for Kim she rolled up her own upper caste sleeves:

She brewed drinks . . . drenches that smelled pestilently
and tasted worse. She stood over Kim till they went
down, and inquired exhaustively after they had come up. (206)

Her grandsons were her blood and heirs, but Kim is the apple of her eye. His noble nature shines out, making him beloved to all worthy of loving him—a situation that certainly suited the Imperial ego.
It's Not Just a Job, It's an Adventure: Stuff You Won't See at Home

_Duty, service, sacrifice and obligation_, were the Scout’s watchwords, and by and large, adventure fiction avoided invoking these principles like the plague. Although many adventure writers were supporters of imperialism, overt advocacy of furthering the Empire was suspect by the end of the nineteenth-century. It is also true that the adventure novel “prepared the young men of England to go out to the colonies, to rule, and their families to rejoice in their fates out there” (Green 38). But from their history primers and expedition travel narratives, these boys also knew that they could die out there—killed by spear or machete-wielding natives, or the sun, the water, the food, the smelly swamps, the germs. Duty alone would therefore not get a young boy out there, and though Baden-Powell boasted that he could make “duty” alluring, even he knew that those answering Scouting’s call were enticed by other things as well—the costumes, the outdoors, the chance to play at adventure, and the possibility of social and economic advancements. Adventure narratives often hinted at financial gain, but what they guaranteed were some wild times. Adventuring seemed a better bet than Scouting for excitement. Since danger and recklessness were part of the appeal, the adventuring young man was more likely, at least imaginatively, to turn his back on the expectations of polite society, and on a conventional British identity. He was the individual who went _because_ of what might happen, not in spite of it.

Though death frequently happened to “real” adventurers—John Franklin, Mungo Park, and Gordon Laing—heroic exploits not only offered a field for manliness and individuality, but an alternative to responsibilities to women, societal rules, tradition. For late-Victorians, adventurers stood outside the mainstream, mundane, mindlessly soft lifestyle of the general populace. Unlike the call to duty or service, the call to adventure was (and still is) associated to
freedom—or it seemed to be. That many adventures took place in remote areas and had no obvious result only added to their allure. There was no moral or institutional point to what adventurers were doing—play passed for work, and work was an endless vacation. Though often English writers turned them into role models, adventurers did not have to be responsible, self-sacrificing, or practical. And even if the English reader would never actually plunge into foreign danger, it was a mark of the times that he was fascinated by those who went, saw, and did. In *British Imperial Literature*, Daniel Bivona writes that for the late-Victorian/early-Edwardian age, “the future would increasingly be shaped less by the individualist efforts of the Napoleonic or Carlylean hero than by the much more impressive corporate power of well-organized agglomerations, well-oiled machines” (17). And yet, as “the popular discourse of this period,” adventure writing, “dominated as it was by the myths of individual heroism, remained hostile to this emerging bureaucratic ethos” (17). This supposed rejection of a corporate, imperial identity, even as it embraced the results, meant that in adventure narratives, “the Empire was being sold to the masses as a space for the exercise of individual initiative, a space of adventure offering almost unlimited possibilities for self-transcendence” (Bivona 18). The heroic adventurer therefore reflected the reader’s image of who he was as an individual and as an Englishman. All one had to do was step out into the swirling, foreign masses, and an exciting adventure would ensue.

In Kipling’s short stories, “The Return of Imray” and “The Mark of the Beast,” such experiences present themselves at every turn to the Englishman abroad. Unlike the artificial Indian adventure set up for Forster’s Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore, Kipling’s narratives expose a complete break with the laws governing reality as the British knew it. What cannot happen at home—intrigue, danger, magic—occur in broad Indian daylight, with the supernatural lurking
around every bend in the road. In “The Return of Imray,” a low-level British administrator is murdered by his body-servant, and his corpse hidden away. Though most of the English colony at Imray’s station notice his disappearance, and briefly wonder about it, they quickly resume their lives: “Imray became a man of mystery—such a thing as men talk over at their tables in the Club for a month, and then utterly forget” (285). Kipling’s tale is not, however, about Imray’s death, but about the adventure it makes possible for the hero Strickland, his dog Tietjens, and the unnamed narrator. Strickland and the narrator are a kind of Holmes and Watson duo: the former logical, deductive, and unflappable; the latter emotional and prone to agitation. But the circumstances would have been totally alien to the Baker Street gentlemen, for in India, to follow Todorov, the uncanny merges with the marvelous, and supernatural events are a matter of course. The corpse of a murdered colonial subaltern may fall from the ceiling and walk about the house, spooking houseguests and the animals:

I could see the great dog standing, not sleeping, in the verandah, the hackles alift on her back. . . . In the very short pauses of the thunder I tried to sleep, but it seemed that some one wanted me very urgently. He, whoever he was, was trying to call me by name. . . . Somebody tried to open my door, walked about and through the house, and stood breathing heavily in the verandahs; and just when I was falling asleep I fancied that I heard a wild hammering and clamouring above my head or on the door. (290-91)

In Adventureland, native house servants who believe in sorcery and devils may kill their employers for unknowingly casting an “evil eye” upon a child. As Imray’s servant, Bahadur Khan, explains, the master said Bahadur’s son “was a handsome child, and patted him on the head; wherefore my child died. Wherefore
I killed Imray Sahib in the twilight, when he . . . was sleeping” (300). Even Englishmen familiar with Adventureland may carry out native enchantments—the dead Imray helps solve his own murder by harassing the new tenants of his house. Adventure narratives therefore took late-Victorian fascination for murder mysteries to an entirely new level. Though Englishmen serving abroad may have fancied themselves inured to the magic, devils, and religious practices that were part of daily life in India, for readers at home, tales of murder like Kipling’s were far more gripping than the straightforward tales of gypsies murdering helpless old women as occurs in Baden-Powell’s retelling of “The Stob’s Tale.” Even the animals were bewitched in foreign lands. According to Kipling, an Englishman abroad could own a dog whom “the natives believed . . . was a familiar spirit” and who “spoke to Strickland in a language of her own; and whenever, walking abroad, she saw things calculated to disturb the peace of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress” (286).

In “The Mark of the Beast,” uncanny and marvelous beliefs are as powerful an influence as Western science, medicine, or philosophy on daily colonial life. Strickland and the unnamed narrator once again discover “there are more things in heaven and earth . . . Than are dreamt in . . . philosophy.” In England, people can cavort about without too much of a threat of divine retribution. In Northern India, though, a moment’s indiscretion could have fantastic consequences. The point here is not that defiling a religious statue of Hanuman will lead to a faceless, silver-fleshed leper’s turning of the perpetrator into a werewolf, but rather that living in Adventureland could require drawing on personal resources that most people never know they have. The Adventurer may question at first whether he has the intestinal fortitude to handle something like Fleete’s metamorphosis and exorcism, but to survive, such strength had to be found quickly. If so, Kipling’s characters pass the test: “I think that Strickland must have stunned him with the
long boot-jack or else I should never have been able to sit on his chest. Fleete could not speak, he could only snarl, and his snarls were those of a wolf, not a man” (182). The exotic landscapes, the fantastic plots, and frightening characters of adventure fiction therefore were not just interesting in themselves, but the justification for unimaginatively violent behavior that is offered as the only thing to do—whether shooting a renegade elephant as Orwell must do, or torturing a mute leper:

Strickland wrapped a towel round his hand and took the gun-barrels out of the fire. I put the half of the broken walking-stick through the loop of fishing-line and buckled the leper . . . to Strickland’s bedstead. I understood then how men and women and little children can endure to see a witch burned alive . . . for though the Silver Man had no face, you could see horrible feelings passing through the slab that took its place, exactly as waves of heat play across red-hot iron—gun barrels for instance. (187-88)

Narratives like these accustomed readers to the harsh decisions and extreme methods that solitary administrators in the colonies might have to adopt in self-defense. Adventuring’s learning curve was therefore not only steeper than Scouting’s, but carried the student farther away. Only real men could survive such challenges, and the true adventurer could never be the vulnerable and naive creature he had once been.

A man who could carry out the grim tasks that needed to be done had the chance to reach beyond the world of his birth. Only his own nerve and imagination could limit him, because in Adventureland there were more opportunities than serving in the trades or the military. “We have been all over India,” Daniel Dravot says, “We have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty
contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn’t big enough for such as us.” The solution? To “go away to some other place where a man isn’t crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men. . . . Therefore, we are going away to be Kings” (568). Here truly was a counter worth jumping. Scouting and polite society to the contrary, obeying orders and listening to “common sense” did not give the adventure hero his advantage, and playing it safe was a lost opportunity. Daring meant winning. Who but a risk taker would contemplate becoming a country’s “thirty-third and fourth heathen idols?” Or plan to “subvert the King, seize his throne and establish a Dy-nasty” (568)?

Every man obviously could not become a king, but in adventure fiction, an Everyman could—one, that is with certain skills. Take for example, Dravot. A skilled linguist and an adept administrator, he has intestinal fortitude and he does a fair job of passing as a native—but in adventure narratives, what Englishman does not. Neither Dravot nor Carnehan, however, has a real advantage—lineage, finances, formal education, or skills. Their qualifications as adventurers have more to do with an innate get-up-and-go spirit, a desire to go because of what might happen, and an unshakable belief in themselves and their mission. When they let the narrator in on their plans, he heaps doom on them: “You’ll be cut to pieces before you’re fifty miles across the Border. . . . You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to [Kafiristan]. It’s one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn’t do anything” (569). Listening politely, Dravot and Carnehan continue to pore through the Encyclopaedia, then generously reply with an offer to share the pie: “When we’ve got our Kingdom in going order we’ll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it” (569). Since the narrator has already turned in his minor adventuring for the safety of “an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents outside the daily manufacture
of a newspaper" (565), it's obvious who is living life large in "The Man Who Would Be King." And so Dravot and Carnehan, who dared to go because India was too small to contain them, become, if only for a short time, Kings and gods. Free from the restrictions of the British Empire, they set up the beginnings of their own.

Stories such as "The Man Who Would Be King," seemed to suggest that all a man needed was to keep his wits about him, keep his eyes and ears open, and keep his faith in his ultimate success. Adventures were not meticulously pre-planned, nor were they for people who assumed that the Empire would protect them. Planning was for those too soft, weak, or incompetent to "wing" it, as the way that Dravot and Carnehan leave for Afghanistan underscores. While they do consult the narrator's "big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and the two smaller Frontier maps . . . volume INF-KAN of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," and they do purchase the weapons to carry out their plan, "Twenty of 'em and ammunition to correspond," with gewgaws to serve as cover, "under the whirligigs and the mud dolls," the heart of the enterprise is a dream: "We have slept over the notion half a year," they reveal, "and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-whack" (569, 571, 568). Courage and pluck replace preparation, apparently because nothing kills spontaneous, joyous exciting adventures more than over-planning, over-packing, and over-thinking. Confident in Dravot's linguistic skills and in his ability to assimilate culturally, the two men are the very models of bold adventuring—so much so, that they do not avoid other natives traveling on the road, but actively seek out their company, allowing the editor to track their initial movements through letter from a friend. The narrator knows, for instance, that they have made it into Afghanistan when his correspondent writes that:
There has been much laughter here on account of a
certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell
petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes
as great charms to H. H. the Amir of Bokhara. He passed
through Peshawar and associated himself to the Second
Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. (572)

Furthering the myth that the adventurer only needed to trust in luck, when
Dravot and Carnehan finally reach Kafiristan, two extraordinary circumstances
lead to their kingship. First, the two Englishmen are Freemasons; second, the
natives of Kafiristan practice a form of the Craft. As a result, Dravot stumbles
unknowingly but happily on to the secret Master’s Mark as the perfect design:
The minute Dravot puts on the Master’s apron that the
girls had made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and
a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was
sitting on. . . . The priest begins rubbing the bottom end
of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows
all the other priests the Master’s Mark, same as was on
Dravot’s apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of
the temple of Imbra knew it was there. . . . “Luck again,”
says Dravot . . . they say it’s the missing Mark that no one
could understand the why of. . . . It was a amazing miracle! (579)

Studying will not help you pass these kinds of tests. But no matter—adventure
fiction suggests that however great the difficulties, pluck would eventually pave
the adventurer’s path with roses. Take for example this lost tribe of semi-
European Freemasons. Even if they had known that the natives of Kafiristan
thought they were related to “us English,” how could Dravot and Carnehan have
guessed that Freemasonry would be the link? In the myth created by these
narratives, adventures not only happened regularly, but resolved themselves favorably \textit{without} the fussy business of forethought. And though Dravot and Carnehan’s success is not permanent, this is beside the point. That the kingship was lost, or that Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan was crucified between two trees, or that Daniel Dravot literally lost his head, is not important. What the young reader learns is that greatness lies in attempting a tremendous deed and in pursuing a great destiny, rather than sitting at home, safe and bored, always knowing what was going to happen next.

In Alan Moore’s inventive tale that unites some of the more colorful literary adventurers (Captain Nemo, Allen Quatermain, Wilhemina Murray, Henry Jeckyl, Edward Hyde, and Hawley Griffin) as a secret group operating as agents for the newly created MI5, Quatermain and Nemo try to puzzle this one out:

\begin{quote}
Nemo, what are we doing here?
Ha! Yes, it’s curious, isn’t it? The great colonialist and the great colonial rebel. For my part, if I’m honest, I’m here because I wanted another adventure.
Yes. It’s hard to just stop, isn’t it?
\end{quote}

This imagined exchange reveals the secret of all adventurers. They’re addicts: once salted by a tremendous event, they can never successfully return to “normal” life. Once the adventurer had seen all manner of miracles and madness, home was no longer an option. He must join the brotherhood of adventurers, those beyond the petty concerns of “normal” life, who knew that those at home were barely living. Nothing else could offer the same kind of reward or stimulation. Though Allen Quatermain claims that he is a fearful man, even he can’t deny the thrill of danger. Serving as a sniper, he knocks off two men, and “was brute enought [sic] to feel delighted at the sight” (168). What other “job” could offer such delight legally, with no messy moral or psychological after effects or nasty consequences?
Wars, of course, but they tend to be unpredictable—and often entailed following orders.

As writer and twenty-first century adventurer Mark Jenkins explains, an adventurer is “self-selected, a volunteer” exercising his “own free will” (46). Furthermore, while “Fascists and fetishists of war have smugly described adventure as an adolescent surrogate for war—as if war were the apogee of human engagement,” Jenkins explains that “adventure is largely a luxury of peace” (49). True, to an extent. But the Empire’s long shadow has a lot to do with this luxury. I would argue that British adventurers and explorers felt recklessly confident about their safety, even when traveling “unprotected” in the dark and dangerous places in the world, and even Allen Quatermain and Tarzan sense the strong British presence in the narrative. The law of the jungle never supersedes the laws of the British Empire. With the possible exception of Tarzan’s early revenge upon Kala’s murderer, Kulonga, and his murderous attacks on “bad” black tribes—which, of course, the reader is expected to understand and forgive—he always defers to English law when handing down judgment, or handing malefactors over to justice. In fact, once “discovered” in the jungle, Tarzan rarely wanders far from territory controlled by the English Empire. Tarzan himself is a child of the Empire, since John Clayton, Tarzan’s father, “was commissioned to make a peculiarly delicate investigation of conditions in a British West Coast African Colony” (2)—to shine, in short, the light of British law upon a colony that is suffering from bad government. That British might and right can restore order is never questioned, and neither is the rightness of their intervention. As Daniel Bivona points out, then, while British colonial interests and the myths of individualism forwarded by adventuring narratives might seem to be at odds, they were in fact co-dependent: Though “the popular discourse of this period—and especially popular art dedicated to celebrating the achievements of Empire—
dominated as it was by the myths of individual heroism, remained hostile to this emerging bureaucratic ethos,” at the same time, “the Empire was being sold to the masses as a space for the exercise of individual initiative, a space of adventure offering almost unlimited possibilities for self-transcendence” (18).

And a part of this transcendence was the opportunity to be violent. Adventuring offered Victorian males a stage for enacting masculine fantasies of aggressive heroism. As I mentioned in the previous chapter on Scouting, the increasing presence of women in formerly male-only realms at home and in the colonies provoked strong reactions from the conservative male public. In adventure narratives, this took the form of celebrating such aggressive, energetic, uber-males such as Tarzan, Sir Henry in *King Solomon’s Mines*, or Richard Burton. Such heroes embodied not only martial celebration of violence, and the nation’s anxieties about women and natives at home and elsewhere, but also a strong belief about what kind of behavior would ultimately be necessary to maintain Britain’s position in the world. *Fin de siecle* fears about an impending fall from glory fed directly into the fetishizing of masculine adventure narratives. Rational or diplomatic approaches to maintaining the Empire and the nation could only fail; past triumphs showed what was needed. Unlike Scouting’s invocation of a heroic, medieval past, however, the adventure novel tended to focus on more distant, dangerous, and lawless times. In the non-European realms that the English Empire sought to control, courtly manners, subtle diplomacy, or moral absolutism were not the appropriate tools—or so the adventure narratives suggested. Survival and success ultimately depended upon ruthless drive, absolute conviction, and the willingness to commit cruel, often brutal, acts. Since the nation needed revitalizing, a return to the time of its first aggressive stages was the antidote. “The adventures of the past explain the greatness of the white nations now, especially some white nations,” Green explains, “and their greatness depends
on renewing that tradition of adventure” (170). Brutal acts often committed against subjects unable to retaliate, and without any threat of legal difficulties, were not only exciting but necessary.

Paradoxically, though while adventure narratives expected readers to cheer on English heroes as they soundly defeating hordes of evil do-ers, technology could not be the reason for such success. One adventurer with a Gatling gun mowing down a whole army carrying spears somehow did not seem very heroic. As a result, while guns might be standard equipment, and were regularly used by others, adventure fiction tended to eliminate sophisticated weaponry as an option, forcing the hero to draw on physical and intellectual prowess to succeed. To this end, adventure narratives competed in creating bigger and better heroes. Part of the reason was gendered. If physical might and Herculean feats were required, only male characters had a real shot at success as adventurers. Adventure narratives insisted upon the absolute physical dissimilarity between the sexes: men were made to conquer the landscape; women were not. Lingering, approving gazes on the bodies of the male heroes often underscore this point. In *King Solomon’s Mines*, for instance, after Umbopa/Ignosi’s incredible physique is celebrated, it is then compared to Sir Henry’s:

Umbopa [stood up] . . . slipping off the long military greatcoat which he wore, and revealing himself naked except for the moocha round his centre and a necklace of lions’ claws. Certainly he was a magnificent looking man. . . . Standing about six foot three high, he was broad in proportion, and very shapely. . . .

“They make a good pair, don’t they?” said Good; “one as big as the other.” (Haggard 53)
Leaving aside the obvious homosocial or sexual overtones here, it is clear that in a pre-handgun toting society, the Rambo-esque physiques of an Umbopa and a Sir Henry suggested that such men would succeed in beating their foes into submission—whether a landscape, or the people inhabiting it. Hard bodies are not just for show—they serve a purpose.

In Tarzan, the entire male body is celebrated. Tarzan’s physical perfection pervades *Tarzan of the Apes*, and always through another narrating man’s eyes. Jane may be taken with Tarzan’s physique, but the reader gets a more important sense of it from Clayton, whose appreciation of the “immense muscles of his shoulders and biceps,” which leap “into corded knots beneath the silver moonlight” (*Tarzan* 136) is a male tribute to Tarzan’s ability to master his surroundings. Clayton, and the reader, recognize that such physical fitness allows Tarzan to survive in darkest Adventureland. Furthermore, through this handling of perspective, Burroughs places the reader in the perfect position to compare Clayton against his cousin, and therefore to compare the two primary competing tropes of late-Victorian masculinity—the intellectual, debonair, urbane, and civilized man about town, and the rugged he-man. Guess which one would survive Adventureland?

While late-Victorian readers were of course familiar with more than these two forms of masculinity—the stoic, Christ-like, muscular Christian, and the plucky, good form, public schoolboy were just two other possibilities—popular fiction tended to stress the contrast between the dandy and the daredevil, and not surprisingly chose the side of virility, physical prowess, athleticism, and noble savagery. Social conventions, niceties, and over-intellectualization un-manned men. Better the he-man than the half-man, Burroughs declares. In *Tarzan* the first type sees and confesses the supremacy of the second. As a result, Tarzan, even when gobbling down “a great quantity” of “raw flesh,” and wiping “his greasy
fingers upon his naked thighs,” represents a much healthier and vigorous masculinity than that other “Lord Greystoke,” who “sent back his chops to the club’s chef because they were underdone, and when he had finished his repast . . . dipped his finger-ends into a silver bowl of scented water and dried them upon a piece of snowy damask” (77). Tarzan therefore personifies a more heroic and healthy England, one that could thrive in the brutal and dangerous worlds of the colonies.

Clayton’s own jungle adventures stand as a warning against soft, urban living. Though not an effete weakling, he is a victim of the crippling effects of civilized living. When he loses his way in the jungle armed only with an unaccustomed spear, he is in serious trouble: “Clayton came to his feet with a start. His blood ran cold. Never in all his life had so fearful a sound smote upon his ears. He was no coward; but if ever man felt the icy fingers of fear upon his heart . . .” (124). In *Tarzan of the Apes*, luxurious living inevitably causes natural gifts and talents to atrophy, making men incapable of reacting with appropriate energy and activity. Thus, while the novel insists that Clayton is a pretty decent specimen of British manhood, this does not make its assessment of him less brutal. What men need is the chance to be men. A real English man should be ready to survive and thrive in the most threatening and adversarial of surroundings, and in adventure narratives, the heroes were therefore not good, obedient boys, or angelic, God/Queen fearing missionaries, or even patriotic empire builders. Heroes had to kick butt, and through their pictures of the savage British hero, adventure narratives supplied blueprints for how this ideal form of masculinity could be achieved.

To this end, adventure narratives ultimately dismissed endurance as a virtue for adventurous living. While Christ may have been the “moral model” for the late nineteenth century lad, He was ultimately inimitable (Waters 36-37). And a
good thing, too, for Christian stoicism and fatalism could not help the adventurer survive the perils of a dangerous expedition. In *Tarzan of the Apes*, the reader is clearly supposed to admire D’arnot’s fortitude when assaulted by Kulonga’s tribe:

> They fell upon D’Arnot tooth and nail, beating him with sticks and stones and tearing at him with claw-like hands. Every vestige of clothing was torn from him, and the merciless blows fell upon his bare and quivering flesh. But not once did the Frenchman cry out in pain. A silent prayer rose to his Maker that he be quickly delivered from his torture. (198)

Even so, the reader is also expected to cheer at the violent means by which D’Arnot is liberated. Even in the hands of “liberal” narrators—and Burroughs qualifies, since he attributes the behavior of Kulonga’s tribe to the “poignant memory of still crueler barbarities practiced upon them and theirs” by Leopold II of Belgium—blood cries out for blood.

Because the enemy is always killed in great numbers, he must be reduced to monstrous, inhuman hordes, indistinguishable from one another. Two recognized psychological responses are at work here. First, as Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman points out, the person who commits an atrocity must believe he is killing “someone caught in the act of atrocity” (217). While Grossman’s argument is concerned with the (de)sensitization of soldiers during wartime, his observation that committing such acts requires tremendous rationalization by the person committing them and by his entire society fits the adventure tale as well. The hero, *must* believe that not only is this atrocity right, but it is proof that he is morally, socially, and culturally superior to those whom he has killed. . . . It is the ultimate act of
his superiority. And the killer *must* violently suppress any dissonant thought that he has done anything wrong. Further, he *must* violently attack anyone or anything that would threaten his beliefs. His mental health is totally invested in believing that what he has done is good and right. (209-10)

While Tarzan’s mental health never seems compromised or endangered, and he doesn’t seem to feel the need to justify his belief system to anyone else—although he does—when he rescues D’Arnot, he does prove fully able to deny the humanity of his victims, and sees his actions as right because of the “cause”:

Tarzan had looked with complacency upon their former orgies, only occasionally interfering for the pleasure of baiting the blacks; but heretofore their victims had been men of their own color. Tonight it was different—white men, men of Tarzan’s own race—might be even now suffering the agonies of torture in that grim, jungle fortress. (199)

Adventure fiction reifies this “us versus them” stance. Though Burroughs is American, D’Arnot is French, and Tarzan is a British ape, they share what the reader understands are cultural and moral similarities based on race. All of these players will naturally form an alliance based on these shared traits. An injury done to one is an injury done to all.

If allegiance based on race or culture is one justification for atrocity, the insuperable difference of the other provides a second motivation. “It is so much easier to kill someone if they look distinctly different from you,” writes Dave Grossman, and the recognizably black natives in *Tarzan of the Apes* and *King Solomon’s Mines* clearly fit this profile. In *Tarzan*, the cannibalistic members of Kulonga’s tribe are monstrous others: “The bestial faces, daubed with color—the
huge mouths and flabby hanging lips—the yellow teeth, sharp filed—the rolling, demon eyes—the shining, naked bodies—the cruel spears. Surely no such creatures existed upon earth” (198). Twala in *King Solomon’s Mines* also fits the bill:

a truly alarming spectacle. . . . an enormous man with the most entirely repulsive countenance . . . ever beheld. This man’s lips were thick as a Negro’s, the nose was flat, he had but one gleaming black eye, for the other was represented by a hollow in the face, and his whole expression was cruel and sensual to a degree. (120)

As this description suggests, the native enemy was not merely physically different, but *less than human*. History of course provides ample evidence that reducing the guilt of the killer often takes the form of assuring him that his victims were “not really human but are ‘inferior forms of life’” (Grossman 161). Quatermain’s description of the witch, Gagool, is typical. Ugly though he may be, Twala retains the form of a human. Gagool is a “monkey-like figure creeping”:

a woman of great age so shrunken that in size it seemed little larger than the face of a year-old child, but made up of countless deep and yellow wrinkles. Set among these wrinkles was a sunken slit that represented the mouth, beneath which the chin curved outwards to a point. There was no nose to speak of; indeed, the visage might have been taken for that of a sun-dried corpse. (124-25)

Significantly, Gagool is a powerful, scheming female, and Haggard’s narrative makes any remorse for killing such a creature unlikely. After all, she already looks like a “sun-dried corpse.” If however the adventurer/killer has trouble reducing his opponent to an animal, moral distancing is always available to help
rationalize and justify his actions. Similar to the excuse for acts of atrocity, "Moral distance involves legitimizing oneself and one's cause," and also "establishes that the enemy's cause is clearly wrong." This dynamic overrides any tendency toward identification: "the enemy is still a human, and killing him is an act of justice rather than the extermination that is often motivated by cultural distance" (Grossman 164). In the unlikely event that a reader could feel some remorse over Gagool's death, the book reminds him that by killing the witch, Quatermain and company were liberating a tribe of innocents from tyrannical rule.

Regardless how it is justified, rationalized, or explored psychologically, though, violence drives these stories. In Seven Types of Adventure, Martin Green suggests that novels celebrating the British Empire drew heavily from what he calls the "Sagaman" adventure trope:

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sagaman adventures differ from other adventures in their archaizing and atavistic character, their looking backward to so much earlier an age. Its historicalness "justified" the story's more savage style of virility, and the story itself gave the justification of history to the imperial nations at the end of the nineteenth century. (167)

And simply put, this "savage style of virility" was violence: "What is most striking about this type of adventure is the frankness of the violence, which is committed by the hero as much as by the villain" (166). If the author constructing the story, and the reader consuming it, are supposedly judging from history, violence is required for the hero to survive and succeed. Thus naturalized, violence plainly becomes the benchmark for civilized masculine behavior, and in adventure novels, the presence and the depiction of violence is always justifiable. Completely untroubled by the possibility of native casualties, these narratives present violence
not only as a rite of passage, but as a thrilling and necessary part of adventuring. A hero unwilling to endure the ugly part of adventure dooms his enterprise to failure from the start. To survive out in the dangerous world, a man must have the stomach to do what is necessary. Neither squeamish about shedding blood, or losing some of his own, he had to be a man about both. And in the world of the adventure narrative, he never had to apologize for being exactly that.
Signs that God Loves the British Empire Best: Dominance, Status, and a Good Paycheck, Too

For all the seemingly radical, macho, violent, lone-wolf posturing found in adventure narratives, these stories nevertheless supported mainstream nationalist and imperial objectives. It is true that to a far greater degree than Scouting, adventuring tales soothed class frustrations by offering up glorious tales of successful counterjumping and nose thumbing at the status quo. But such fiction’s radical edge was tempered by the routine admission that the chance to have an adventure usually depended on the Empire’s first pointing to the region. Adventure fiction therefore made Imperial Britain the dispenser of marvels and delights—at home, as well as abroad. Adventuring heroes might be more attractive than the Scout, public schoolboy, and missionary lad, but they were equally champions of the imperial cause. Further, their victorious exploits proved that the British Empire was both blessed and omnipresent—around the world, and in the lives of Englishmen and women. An apparently radical life choice turns out to be quite a conventional one.

Here I will show how financial gain and race relations served to domesticate some destabilizing ideas in adventure narratives, turning them into vehicles for carrying the British Empire. Despite the penchant for violence, adventuring heroes are enlightened, humane, beneficent human beings, who willingly endure the same hardships and troubles arising from the harsh geography of foreign lands as their native neighbors. They are never evil colonialists or imperialists out to exploit, to destroy, or to steal from the natives. For Kim, Allen Quatermain, or Richard Burton, any material gain is incidental and secondary. Although Quatermain and Burton might make noises to the contrary, at crucial
junctures, all these heroes’ actions belie any stated ambition of attaining fortune. And for readers, personal, material gain was never what they remembered most about the adventure or the hero.

Nevertheless, the hero’s non-profit adventuring status did not prevent him from being amply rewarded for his efforts. Even Kim, the least recompensed for his actions, and the least inclined to seek personal gain, thrills to the rewards that he does get: “Lurgan Sahib had given him five rupees—a splendid sum—as well as the assurance of his protection if he worked. Unlike Mahbub Ali, Lurgan Sahib had spoken most explicitly of the reward that would follow obedience, and Kim was content” (121). Tarzan initially seems motivated only by noble instinct and love; in fact, he is clueless about money. Even after it was explained to him, “It took a long time to make him understand even imperfectly” (235). Tarzan does however come to understand its value, and though he sees this method of survival as a weakness of “civilized” society, he quickly grasps the need to have a lot of money. Hence his sucker bet with a Frenchman, for which “he had won ten thousand francs.” This money

was a very important item to Tarzan, who was just commencing to realize the power which lay behind the little pieces of metal and paper which always changed hands when human beings rode, or ate, or slept, or clothed themselves, or drank, or worked, or played, or sheltered themselves from the rain or cold or sun. It had become evident to Tarzan that without money one must die. (249)

This conclusion profoundly changes Tarzan’s relationship with his physical surroundings and the people who inhabit it. But the reader’s understanding of Tarzan doesn’t—in part because the attractive wild spirit of the ape-man stands as an implied critique of sissified living and the ridiculous whims of society, and in
part because Tarzan’s choice of a radically different path brings him success even by the standards of civilization. His success therefore gives hope to everyone else. Tarzan disdains societal conventions, including gainful employment. While surviving in the jungle requires more skills and effort than any “civilized” job ever could, it is also a “non-job.” Wages have no meaning, and something as mundane as eating regularly was iffy. Tarzan’s march with D’Arnot shows that deprivation was a normal part of jungle life: “For a month they traveled north. Sometimes finding food in plenty and again going hungry for days” (Tarzan 236). Even in his own home environment, he follows no set routine. Although his early days were filled with ape chores, after he defects from the tribe, Tarzan’s days are his own, to laze about or adventure as he chooses. Contrary to the warnings of such prophets of work as Carlyle and Mill, Tarzan seems to flourish without regular employment. The antithesis of the middle class social climber, who seeks self-improvement and financial gain, Tarzan viewed in this light is a complete failure. But this is absurd, since the rules of “real, English life” give way in Tarzan of the Apes to those of adventure. Tarzan spends his days raiding African villages, finding pirate treasure, rescuing imperiled women, or hunting large game. He lives outside the limits of class and occupation, and this alone makes the job worth taking.

A second reason why readers ignore Tarzan’s domesticity lies in their fantasies of freedom and excess. Tarzan’s life is filled with bizarre, dangerous encounters with fantastically exotic creatures. Late Victorian and early Edwardian society seemed too predictable. The occasional runaway cart or car, a murder, or a scandal were nothing compared to the thrilling events of Tarzan’s life. On any given day, he could find himself raiding a village of cannibals, getting tossed from an ocean liner, becoming the king of an ape or African tribe, being taken as a slave
by Arab traders, or even finding himself offered for sacrifice by La, an “S and M queen” (Torgovnick 4):

When Tarzan first meets La . . . she is the priestess assigned to make him into a human sacrifice by piercing his heart. She . . . dances around him, sings . . . Then she places a rope around his neck and leads him to a blood-stained altar, “transformed by the fanatical zeal of religious ecstasy into a wild-eyed and bloodthirsty executioner, who, with dripping knife, would be the first to drink her victim’s red, warm blood.” (Torgovnick 64)

Though Marianna Torgovnick’s summary of Tarzan’s meeting with La laughingly highlights the titillating quality of Burroughs’ narrative, it should be noted that however unpleasant these fates might have been for the hero, for the reader, they were quite thrilling. By identifying with Tarzan, then, the reader could be a hero, a king, and a sex object. Even more importantly, the undomesticated, unfettered Tarzan offered the reader the vicarious thrill of freedom in all its possible forms:

This was life! ah, how he loved it! Civilization held nothing like this in its narrow circumscribed sphere, hemmed in by restrictions and conventionalities. Even clothes were a hinderance and a nuisance. At last he was free. He had not realized what a prisoner he had been. (Tarzan 247)

Almost no British reader would actually choose Tarzan’s life; what is important is its very existence—its capacity to make the reader believe that if he chose to, he could have such a wild time.

Perhaps the most compelling implicit reason for keeping Tarzan an uncivilized, undomesticated he-man was that he did not have to answer to any
woman—mother, wife, or queen. When Queen Victoria died in 1901, she had ruled England for over sixty years—generations had therefore identified the nation with a woman. As the twentieth century dawned, Victoria was in fact synonymous with a tremendous imperial power, greater than any other nation. Many adventure novels featured other females possessing great power; however, unlike Victoria, whose sex life produced legitimate brood, and whose domestic life was spent as a fabulously wealthy hausfrau, adventure’s women were seductive and dangerous. “They are powerful and therefore, iconographically masculine despite their voluptuous beauty,” Marianna Torgovnick explains. Often “rulers—priestesses and queens,” such women often play dichotomous roles—either beautiful maiden in need of rescue, or loathsome but powerful hag. *King Solomon’s Mines* sets Foulata and Gagool against one another; in the Tarzan series, they are often the same individual. In any case, powerful women, even when inclined to help the hero, are suspect. As savages, their motives can never be “pure,” and changing their minds and turning against the heroes is always possible. Power and women, adventure narratives suggest, are an unnatural combination: “These women who are not dependent on men, who are in fact rulers of men, are murderous, usurping male postures and male prerogatives, bearing conspicuously the knife elsewhere associated with Tarzan. Here indeed is a challenge to Tarzan’s power, to Tarzan’s manliness—and he meets it” (Torgovnick 65). These women abound in adventure tales—Gagool in *King Solomon’s Mines*, Ayeesha in *She*, or even Hufneefa or the Woman of Shamleigh in *Kim*. In adventure fiction, the dangerous woman has powers no one else has, and she uses them to gain control outright, or to influence unduly the legitimate male rulers. Another common adventure fiction motif is that men living under the rule of powerful females are cowed, half-males, living subservient lives, and bearing an unfortunate resemblance to the image of the weakened man invoked as
a warning when advocates of female suffrage agitated too loudly for male privileges. In all cases, however, the male hero’s (and the reader’s) reaction is the same: fascinated repulsion. A quick reversal of the power balance follows, with the happy restoration of masculine authority.

As in the plots of other adventure narratives, in the Tarzan novels, heroic male resistance to female power is always successful. By the end, the powerful woman either submits to male power and resumes her proper place in society, or she is done away with altogether. La’s situation offers an interesting but orthodox twist on the standard plot. Having made the Oparian males idiots, La must continue to rule—only, however, at Tarzan’s sufferance. As Marianna Torgovnick explains:

Tarzan saves La’s life (quite absurdly he cannot resist “the call of the woman in danger,” even when the woman was about to kill him). He then steals La’s knife, wins her love, and ultimately becomes the kingmaker in Opar. In the later novels, La rules her people only on Tarzan’s sufferance and by virtue of Tarzan’s physical strength. From murderous femme fatale, La becomes Tarzan’s platonically protected friend and ally. (65)

The fantasy of being free from all inconvenient or troublesome females was a strong one, since it figures in so many adventure plots. Even “good,” weak women suffer narrative banishment. At first, Jane Porter, the “good” female, is admired for her pretty idiocy and her status as endangered female dependent on Tarzan’s male supremacy, but whenever she threatens Tarzan’s self-determination and freedom, the narrative packs her off to England. In adventure fiction, the new woman, the old woman (Queen Victoria), and traditional female power give way to visions of male dominance and power. Though never under any real threat,
many men believed their dominance was, and therefore Tarzan represented a fantasy of male emancipation and the celebration of male power, political and domestic.

As this treatment of women suggests, for all of its supposed rebelliousness, the adventure novel affirms a conservative vision of the Empire. Though it seems to have only a casual interest in the benefits associated with Empire, and it would never wish to appear a stooge of the state, such fiction ultimately celebrated imperial pursuits. Apparent critiques do of course appear. Adventure novels reject and condemn the Belgian slave trade, and the pursuit of personal financial gain never gets affirmed. A fuller reading of the novels, however, reveals a more unsettling theme. Tarzan may reject the notion of money at first, but he soon embraces the acquisition of it. Although D’Arnot and Tarzan presumably could have lived together in a homosocial household—literary examples include Captain Good and Sir Henry, and Holmes and Watson (before his marriage)—Tarzan’s desire to be his “own man,” his need for money after his marriage to Jane, and an emerging exploitive, colonialist mentality make his entry into capitalism a swift one. By the second novel, he has become the very picture of an imperial man on the make in the colonies. During his escape from Opar, Tarzan also makes a felicitous discovery: “Carefully feeling about, he found himself within a large chamber, along the walls of which, and down the length of the floor, were piled many tiers of metal ingots . . . The ingots were quite heavy, and but for the enormous number of them he would have been positive that they were gold” (187). Of course, it does indeed turn out to be gold, but the “accidental” nature of this discovery serves as a smokescreen for Tarzan’s thorough embrace of British imperialist ideology. While he does go to Opar determined to seize their treasures, he only finds them when escaping, and by this time, the reader has basically forgotten why Tarzan went to the city in the first place. Further, after watching
Tarzan feel his way out of the dungeons, the reader believes the ape-man deserves the treasure as compensation for almost being sacrificed to the Flaming God.

This attitude mirrors exactly the sentiments held by the early British administrators of the East India Company, the nabobs, who believed that their personal suffering and industry entitled them to princely rewards. As part of the settlement that Mir Jafar made with the Company after the Battle of Plassey, Robert Clive, for instance, received a “lump sum of 234,000 [pounds sterling] and land worth 30,000 [pounds sterling] a year. These were the sums that led Clive later to declare himself ‘astonished at [his] own moderation’” (Bayly 56).

Moreover, though Tarzan technically steals the golden treasure store, the narrative argues that it really does not matter, because the Oparians have become so debased over time that they no longer appreciate the value of the gold. In contrast to the dim-witted, half-human Oparians, Tarzan fully values the gold and what it can do for him. The gold will serve a purpose. This attitude pervades colonial thinking. By definition “lost civilizations” are always worth “plundering”: “These cities are of gold and ivory, their inhabitants’ garb encrusted with jewels. Their cellars and storehouses are loaded with gold or gems viewed as simply ornamental by the inhabitants but known to be fabulously valuable by the Europeans” (Torgovnick 61). Such wealth, however, must exist without any obvious signs of toil or difficulty, and often at more polished stages. The diamonds and other precious gems have already been mined and cut, the gold is in ingot form. Raw goods, and the effort that went in to obtaining them, would only be unpleasant reminders of British colonial dependence upon native labor. Of course, adventure fiction’s convention that wealth appeared in foreign lands without effort mirrored standard British colonial ideology. Take India, for example. British popular understanding had been shaped and influenced by travel narratives and memoirs, and by portraits
and sketches by professional portrait artists. The portraits in particular presented India as a land of vast riches. In *India and British Portraiture 1770-1825*, Mildred Archer shows how "the popular image of India subtly altered," as those at home "saw" more of it: "The exotic myth of a land rich with gold and jewels persisted and was even strengthened. The 'Great Mogul' and his successor remained as figures of mysterious grandeur" (40). One portrait by Tilly Kettle, for instance, showed Muhammad Ali, Nawab of the Carnatic, in a rich brocade surcoat, and adorned with strands of pearls, jeweled necklaces, and an elaborate headdress.

The magnificence of Indian costumes and wealth, however, did not suggest to the British that Indian culture might be equal to their own. In fact, popular reaction leaned towards suspicion and covetousness. The suspicion had to do with legitimacy. Princes who possessed such fabulous sums must have gotten them through illegitimate means. According to the Reverend F. S. Banks, for Mahmud, Sultan of Ghuzni in Afghanistan, the "object was plunder, not conquest": "From single temples he carried off wrought and unwrought gold and silver, pearls, diamonds, and jewels by the hundred weight" (3). English narratives habitually represented Indian rulers as depraved, greedy princes who grossly mismanaged their fiefdoms—yet another incarnation of the time-honored, fabulously wealthy Oriental male despot, and one that sumptuous costumes only confirmed. While raids and financial mismanagement could and did account for the tremendous wealth enjoyed by Indian princes and nawabs, it is also true that English colonialists, industrialists, and the landed classes employed similar methods—in India and in England—with the same results. For the English reader and writer, the difference lay in the supposed direct relationship between overlord and serf. Growing up learning of the glories of the Magna Carta and the charter of liberties, and priding himself on belonging to a nation with a parliamentary government, to the English reader the natives' lack of representation was criminal. And yet
English imperial laws ensured that not only did nearly all natives lack representation, but that English citizens often had as little control over their economic future as the Indians they pitied.

Contemptuous pity did not however lead to empathy or to a call to action. Although they were presumably supposed to be outraged by the vast gulf separating wealthy maharajahs and those who had little, readers were not expected to do something about the caste system. Such unfairness, while outrageous to fair-minded Britons, did not ultimately matter, because Indians could not appreciate wealth the way the English could. They were too simple, too accustomed to living in an exotic landscape, where jewels and gold seemed as common as stones in the road. Tarzan's plundering is therefore justified, because his "victims" were too stupid to know they were being ripped off, and therefore undeserving of wealth. And after all, what benefit was gained from making a native materially rich? The country never seemed to gain from any improvements. British possession of wealth, on the other hand, ensured that it would be spent "wisely." Even natives appreciated the changes wrought by the British Empire. In Kim, for instance, it is the wonderful train—and here, fiction followed fact, for Lytton Strachey's father, Richard, had created "the systematic extension of railways and canals" which in India increased "the wealth of the country and profoundly altered its condition" (Holroyd 31). For similar reasons, when the second installment of the Tarzan series celebrates the full blown colonialist hero untroubled by plundering "his own kind," readers do not blink an eye, so primed are they to expect that wealth is better in English hands than in native ones. Though Tarzan robs the Oparians before he has proof of their genetic degeneration, their grossness and viciousness makes it hard for readers to care. Tarzan's actions, which do not harm the city or its current citizens, hardly seem culpable, and the gold may actually serve a useful end in his hands—he does consider the welfare of the Waziri. The accidental
nature of the find and the unworthiness of Opar’s current owners therefore keep Tarzan firmly in the camp of benevolent Englishman.

Of course, it could be argued that the Oparians still have an organized society and civilization, and considering its situation in the midst of a jungle, the city itself is a technological wonder. And while the present inhabitants no longer have the skills to produce anything equal to the architectural splendor of the city, they are still the sovereign population. Fortunately, eugenic stereotypes are ready at hand. Physically, the Oparian men are grotesque and bestial: “thick, matted hair upon their heads grew low over their receding brows, and hung about their shoulders and their backs. Their crooked legs were short and heavy. . . . With their receding foreheads, wicked little close-set eyes, and yellow fangs, they were far from prepossessing in appearance” (Burroughs 165). Their intellects are equally subhuman. During Tarzan’s attempted sacrifice, a male priest flies into an insane rage, and leaped “upon the woman opposite him, dashing out her brains with a single blow of his heavy cudgel” (169). Tarzan recognizes the behavior instantly as something he had “witnessed a hundred times before among the wild denizens of his own savage jungle. He had seen the thing fall upon Kerchak, and Tublat, and Terkoz; upon a dozen of the other mighty bull apes of his tribe” (170). The most telling proof, however, comes from the natives themselves. “Slowly we have dwindled in power, in civilization, in intellect, in numbers,” La admits, “until now we are no more than a small tribe of savage apes” (173). As Opar’s history unfolds, the reader encounters new horrors. Though probably descendants of Atlantis, the Oparians no longer practice those pursuits that are the hallmarks of a civilized society: trade, commerce, mining. The original Oparians also owned slaves who toiled in the gold mines to produce Tarzan’s treasure. Left on land when the parent stock’s empire fell into the ocean, the disheartened Oparians first
felled prey to "the black hordes of the north and ... of the south" (173), and then, apparently, to animals. Isolated in their mountain fortress, the Oparians now speak a mixture of their original tongue and ape language—which is how La and Tarzan can communicate. Even worse, some Oparians live and breed with apes. La concludes that, "in time we will no longer banish those of our people who mate with apes, and so in time we shall descend to the very beasts from which ages ago our progenitors may have sprung" (173). According to popular anthropological and phrenological theories of the late Victorian age, the physical features of the male Oparians indicated a lower intellect, culture, and species, and their behavior only confirmed this reading. While Burroughs' Oparians may seem to be extreme examples of the degenerate native, they are in fact a fairly common adventure type—one that grants the colonizer permission to exploit away, guilt free.

Just as reading adventure fiction does not necessarily require the reader to admire the hero, all writers of adventure fiction cannot automatically be identified as raging imperialists. My point here is that the inherited plots and character—the characteristics of the genre—almost unavoidably invoked racist and imperial stereotypes that the writer and the audience were highly familiar with. "The speaker does not deceive the audience but tells it what it wants to hear," Stanley Fish notes, "and, moreover, tells it in terms that allow its members to give full reign to their prejudices and yet appear to repudiate them" (90). Fish here is discussing coded speech masquerading as "neutral" speech, but his remarks accurately describe the dynamics of adventure fiction. A contemporary source makes the deterministic qualities of the genre clear: What reader of the Harry Potter books could possibly think that Draco Malfoy is neat, or that Slytherin is the cool house to be in? Conversely, Harry not only has the writer on his side, but his actions are typically brave and good. Primed from childhood to know what heroes looked and acted like, late-Victorian readers undoubtedly recognized that
adventuring heroes met their expectations. Moreover, readers knew that adventures needed a villain just as much as a hero. In the familiar world of adventure, there was little or no wiggle room for imaginative detours from established plot lines or character development.

As “Western documents on the ‘primitive,’” Torgovnick explains, the Tarzan books “also have to be about slavery, imperialism, and economic exploitation, all facts of life in the West’s relations with Africans” (58). Necessary preconditions for enjoying such stories then were an acceptance of racial hierarchies, and of the past century’s unchecked, unquestioned, and unrepentant English imperialism as a part of national destiny worth celebrating. In fact, current colonial engagements paradoxically made it easier for readers to accept the exploitation found in adventure fiction. The Oparians were far less sophisticated, technologically advanced, or culturally developed than the people of the Indian sub-continent. If the British could and did see themselves as superior to the Indians, how much more could they claim a difference from the marginally human races that Tarzan encounters? The class/caste pecking order familiar to the English at home and in the colonies are replicated in adventure fiction, which then re-affirms such attitudes about “inferior” natives.

Like most of his fictional kin, Tarzan ultimately acts out a conservative, and willing, imperialism. His attitude towards Africans, his reactions to the people that he encounters, and his actions in general all reveal his colonialist assumptions. Now consumed with raising his social and financial situation, Tarzan sees adventure as a part of material acquisition. “The fabulous wealth of the fabled city had been almost constantly in his mind,” Burroughs writes, and admittedly, “The lure of adventure may have been quite as powerful a factor in urging Tarzan of the Apes to undertake the journey as the lure of gold, but the lure of gold was there, too, for he had learned among civilized men something of the
miracles that may be wrought by the possessor of the magic yellow metal” (160). As adherents, and even converts, to the ideology of imperialism as an inalienable British right, Tarzan and other adventure heroes helped sex up service to the Empire. Though their activities weren’t exactly a nine-to-five job in the civil service, they lent the paper-pushing aspects of Empire some purpose, because such activities were the necessary consequence for making foreign soil and its inhabitants profitable. Although success in adventure narratives rarely set the adventurer on a deliberate course of landscape management or resource development, that is what usually happened. The African jungle for instance is fertile and lush, but not particularly useful. Once Tarzan has set claim to it, though, its mineral wealth not only starts coming out, but Tarzan himself establishes a plantation of sorts later in the series, and his relationship with the Waziri dramatizes the British Empire’s desire to find a useful purpose for its acquired possessions. Moreover, imperial ideology and adventure narratives agreed that foreign landscapes were inexhaustible, and therefore exploitable, resources. Any plunder the British took home was the mere tip of the pile lying around in Africa or India. Plundering robbed people of their livelihoods, and adventurers did nothing of the sort, because there was plenty for all who made the effort.

As should be clear by now, the excesses of Tarzan and other adventurers echoed the cultural mood of the times. Scouting, while successful, generated nothing like the imaginative attraction of Adventuring. In fact, Scouting’s acolytes were themselves other literary addicts of this highly popular genre. The end of the nineteenth century had produced a steadily increasing number of Englishmen who were more cosmopolitan in attitudes. As telegraph lines and improved transportation shrank the distance between the metropole and its possessions, the colonies were viable employment options for those outside the
public-schoolboy/Oxbridge class. But considering the Empire's farthest reaches as broad based revenue sources meant displacing its riches. For as Memmi points out, a colonizer cannot help but adopt an exploitive attitude. Here the career trajectory of Cecil Rhodes is instructive. "By the age of thirty," Rhodes "was among the richest men in the world and had become one of the most influential figures in the history of Africa" (Bayly 149). His spectacular success seemed to follow closely the adventure tinged script that British boys and men were urged to imitate. Overcoming adversity—poor health, a limited education, no influential friends—Rhodes completely remade himself. Refusing to kowtow to his superiors, or to accept his assigned place in the food chain, he makes his fortune in the diamond fields of Kimberley. But then, he enrolls in Oriel College, Oxford, and sets out to alter his heirs' social standing forever. Rhodes was therefore the poster child for the imperial project that encouraged young men to immigrate to the colonies. Following the traditional tale of self-improvement, Rhodes pulled himself up by the bootstraps, but in the process, his enthusiasm for personal gain melts into that larger national project of expanding Britain's imperial holdings.

Adventure novels suggested that all these desirable agendas could be fulfilled without much conscious effort on the individual's part. Do a little plunder, make a lot of money, get a bit more land for the Empire, all the while reveling in the joys of action. In fact, at home even the most destructive and exploitive acts would be recast as a cheeky lark. Hindsight for example makes it difficult to think of anything favorable to say about Rhodes' behavior in Africa, particularly towards the Ndebele. Nevertheless, his actions, his adventures, were accepted by an English public already primed by adventure fiction to revel in successful imperialist adventures. And when the imperial spin could not conceal just how rapacious and violent these "adventurers" had been, then a "redefinition of terms" defiantly celebrated precisely that:
the Tory press had taken to calling Rhodes and his associates “adventurers”. This word was used approvingly. They were “Elizabethan merchant princes”, filled with the spirit of modern yet historically sanctioned adventure. . . . the self-styled high-born “adventurers” on the spot in Salisbury and afterwards in Bulawayo cheerfully called themselves “buccaneers”, and dressed the part as rough and ready frontiersmen. . . . Frontier adventure was part of the spirit of the age; Elizabethan privateers had not troubled their heads much with the morality of plundering Spanish gold. (MacDonald 126-27)

Quite the spin. Plundering native wealth now appeared as part of an established, time honored legitimate business move.

What then really was the difference between a little privateering, Tarzan’s raids on the Opar gold store, extortion and protection fees exacted by clerks and their superiors in India, official government-supported extractions of tribute (i.e. “dues”) to the East India Company from various maharajahs, nawabs, and princes, or the riches sent to Queen Victoria by African kings? In keeping with this emphasis on “commerce,” adventure narratives also presented the exploitation of raw material wealth as being in Africa’s best interests. If raw materials entered the world market, so could the continent. Transferring the location of “lost” or hidden wealth made English adventurers agents for Africa’s joining the ranks of modern nations, and their “finder’s fee” was a small price to pay for the civilization of the continent. Adventure fiction increasingly describes what Bivona calls, “a new Africa coming to be defined as less in need of moral transformation by Christian missionaries than of economic and political
transformation by colonial bureaucrats and economic imperialists, an Africa offering plenty of confirming evidence of its own ‘need’ for economic modernization and political decentralization” (45). While the actual financial benefits generally flowed in one direction—out—Africa’s forced position as a “partner” in “trade” relationships could be “spun” by “investors” and “entrepreneurs” into an agency legal enough to satisfy humanitarian critics of colonial expansion and development. Even those opposed to outright plundering as a right of Empire could be persuaded to see the opening of the continent as a step toward bringing Africa into the modern age.

Even the Tarzan novels, which ostensibly reject profiting from the enslavement or abuse of natives, still fail to recognize certain capitalist transactions as inherently abusive or exploitive. This problem was systemic. While Greystoke’s adventures begin when his father sets out to investigate the abuses of Belgian imperialists, and the novels condemn the evils of slavery, they cannot acknowledge the evils arising from alternative forms of forced work. As Daniel Bivona explains, in *British Imperial Literature*, England could not “examine critically how ‘freedom’ operates in a context in which global differentials of power threaten to make a mockery of the very possibility of free trade” (49). Bivona is speaking here of David Livingstone’s vision of the transformative power that commerce would have over Africa, but the comments on late Victorian understanding of slavery and commerce are generally appropriate:

The very notion of “free trade,” however, like the concept of slavery, is enmeshed in a set of assumptions about property that are . . . rigidly ethnocentric. The Livingstonian notion of “slavery,” in fact, cannot be detached from the play of conceptual contrast with types of coerced labor
familiar to his Victorian readers which Europe has never acknowledged to be forms of slavery in the strict sense (examples run from apprenticeships to the duty children owed to parents) . . . As Dorothy O. Helly reminds us, "slavery" in this particular European sense rests on notions of "commodity" and "property" that are not easily translated into a nineteenth-century African context, except by dismissing out of hand alternative conceptions of property. (49)

Burroughs easily differentiates between legitimate and repressive forms of employment. England's and France's colonial management is beneficent and beneficial; Belgium's is oppressive and corrupt. And yet, while the Tarzan novels always condemn involuntary native labor, they unabashedly support capitalist ventures of almost any kind—from small wagers between bored, wealthy hunters, to organized enterprises of European capitalists, including Tarzan. Arab slavers are inhuman; private landowners who "hire" native blacks to work in their diamond mines are not. Despite Burroughs' attempts to present Tarzan's behavior as adventurous entrepreneuring, the ape-man's actions and mindset betray conservative British expectations of men, money, and the perks of Empire.

Beyond the basic plundering of the land, the Tarzan's novels also exploit labor—whether through groups the hero puts together himself, or groups from another society's pool. But since Tarzan's ventures always sit at one or two removes from the actual manual labor enlisted, and because it isn't instantly recognizable as a form of oppressive colonial enterprise, readers glide over Tarzan's treatment of natural resources and his relations with natives who serve him. In The Return of Tarzan, the myth of Empire is explored in two ways. First, colonialism becomes a job placement office for Tarzan. Although employed by
and representing France, his relationship to the English government reflects the basic relationship between the British adventurer and England. The way Tarzan is recommended for a position, and the way he is flattered, mirror the ways England enlists its potential colonial civil servants and workers. After Tarzan's duel of honor with De Coude, the Count proposes that he become a special agent for France:

"I think that I have found just the thing for you, Monsieur Tarzan," said the count. "It is a position of much trust and responsibility, which also requires considerable physical courage and prowess. I cannot imagine a man better fitted than you. . . . It will necessitate travel, and later it may lead to a very much better post—possibly in the diplomatic service.

Like young English recruits, Tarzan sees this imperial job as having a host of benefits: "At last he was to be of some value in the world. He was to earn money, and, best of all, to travel and see the world" (55).

Second, Tarzan understands that the opportunity to take full personal advantage of whatever native situation he finds makes his own prospects much brighter. As Memmi explains, the colonizer can climb higher than he could back in Europe "because jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid and business more profitable. The young graduate is offered a position, the public servant a higher rank, the businessman substantially lower taxes, the industrialist raw materials and labor at attractive prices" (4). By helping himself to native sources of wealth, Tarzan and his historical counterparts—Clive, Rhodes, Stanley—fulfill the imperial myth that the colonies are transformative space. But as Memmi reminds us, imperial success is always at a cost to someone. Drawing a
parallel between adventuring and economic imperialism, Torgovnick shows how popular fiction rationalized, justified, and legitimized plunder:

The resources of the continent are "useless" to the inhabitants (Africans, Oparians), though very useful and valuable to others. Tarzan views these civilizations as... Western civilization traditionally views "primitive" land and culture—a treasure trove, as the observers' rightful possession. Indeed, Tarzan funds himself... exclusively by raiding gold and jewels from the lost city of Opar. Tarzan thus replicates the action of colonialism itself. In this, Tarzan resembles many of his readers in the West, even when their beliefs and politics are humane or anti-imperialist. His prosperity, our prosperity, depends—seemingly inevitably—on the poverty of others. (61-62)

Though Oparian gold offers him financial freedom (and later after his estate is reduced through speculation, salvation) this independence depends upon low (actually, free) labor costs, abundant raw materials, high demand in industrialized countries, and what Arendt terms "superfluous money." Adventureland looked very much like home.

It should be no surprise then, that in adventure fiction even utopian societies follow the rules and regulations of imperialism. The ancient relationship between Opar and its mother "country" is, for example, a colonial one. Oparians are "descendants of a people who came to this savage world more than ten thousand years ago in search of gold," La tell Tarzan: "They were very rich and very powerful, but they lived only a few months of the year in their magnificent palaces here; the rest of the time they spent in their native land, far, far to the north" (172-73). Like Memmi’s "birds of passage," even these early adventurers
arrive hoping to find financial success without forming any emotional attachment to the land providing them their fortunes. England’s own relationship to her dark colonies was similar. Although Good, Quatermain, and Sir Henry’s brother profit greatly from South African diamond mines, these adventuring heroes don’t invigorate the African economy by spending their money there. Instead, they return home to England, including even Sir Henry, Ignosi’s sworn blood brother. At the end of the novel, he writes the old hunter Quatermain, urging him to use his share of the diamond treasure to “come home . . . and to buy a house near here” (253). Though adventures must happen elsewhere, when they are successful, the heroes return home—to England itself, or to some approximation that they have created in a foreign land.

Perhaps the most significant legacy of imperialism, however, is its implicit suggestion that adventurers with middle class values could make their fortunes, even if they lacked the “superfluous finances” needed to invest in an established enterprise like the gold mines of South Africa, or the desire to labor ceaselessly in their own mines, as in Australia, where a few lucky prospectors made their fortunes in opals and gold. Direct colonial conquest was the key. This way, the adventurer could avoid losing any profits by needing to hire intermediaries to negotiate with tribes for their goods—as in the case of ivory—or having to refine materials such as gold or diamonds into marketable condition. Adventure narratives offered ways of ditching the middleman, or the start up. Goods and commodities ready for sale magically appeared, ready for the taking, without requiring the adventurer to deal with the moral issues that came with employing a native work force. The Tarzan narratives gloss over entirely the fact that labor was required to produce the gold ingots, even though the Oparian stash would have required a huge, highly organized and skilled working group. And yet, while the massive amount of dirty labor involved in mining and finishing gold goes
unnoticed, any British reader (by virtue of the gold boom in South Africa, and the migration of Europeans to work in the mines there), would have known something about what was needed to bring the precious metal to any kind of marketable condition. By depicting the adventuring hero stumbling across treasure already mined and refined, the narrative in effect "launders" the gold, thus distancing him from any taint of exploitation as he claims a huge guilt free financial fortune.

And yet, relationships between adventurer and natives still had to be formed during his pursuit of treasure, and while a true British hero is not a racist slaver—the English after all were sensitive about their early role in the slave trade, and proud of being the first to abolish the transport of slaves—he invariably falls into some kind of master-servant relationship with his native companions. That natives should naturally take subservient positions, and be treated in a patronizing, domineering manner, generally would have reflected the grossest imperialist point-of-view—one absent from more sophisticated adventure writing. But expectations of native gratitude certainly remain. Even the most enlightened adventure hero unconsciously sustains the hierarchy of races. In *King Solomon's Mines*, the same Kukuana warriors that Quatermain, Good, and Sir Henry had fought with only days earlier, and whose absolute bravery they had admired, are pressed into service as litter carriers for Gagool. Further, these Kukuana warriors assist the Quatermain party’s plundering of their nation’s treasure, with no share offered for all of their trouble. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this narrative, however, is the way Haggard almost instinctively inflates the role of Quatermain, Good, and Sir Henry in restoring Umbopa/Ignosi’s throne. While certainly instrumental—Sir Henry in his duel with Twala above all—they were not solely responsible for the happy end to the Kukuana’s civil war. Umbopa/Ignosi’s charismatic presence gave the spark to the coup; the brutality of Twala’s kingship incited others to follow Ignosi’s challenge; and the military strategies and
sacrifices of the older warriors (the Buffalos) gave the man the power to win it. Yet in his parting speech, Quatermain reminds Ignosi of his debt to the three outsiders, presenting his attendance on them as the cause for his later success. And apparently, the reader is supposed to assume the same:

"Behold, Ignosi, thou camest with us as a servant, and now we leave thee a mighty king. If thou art grateful to us, remember to do even as thou didst promise: to rule justly, to respect the law, and to put none to death without a cause. So shalt thou prosper. To-morrow at break of day, Ignosi, thou wilt give us an escort who shall lead us across the mountains." (243)

Ignosi's sudden change in social standing does not alter the power dynamics between himself and the Englishmen. Quatermain's speech is patronizing and dismissive. Though nearly all of the men he hired to travel with him have died, Quatermain nevertheless presumes to lecture Ignosi on how the young king must behave. Moreover, any praise the young king might desire for his behavior should be credited to the three Englishmen—Ignosi's nobility arises from his gratitude toward his white benefactors. In this way, the narrative models a need-based colonial relationship (Ignosi needed Quatermain and company's help and guidance), creates a debt for the king before he begins to rule, and affirms that relations with the British will supersede any foreign (native) social hierarchies.

Though David Cannadine makes a case for class as the prime determinant of how British representatives responded to their counterparts in the various colonies, and even claims that "the theory and the practice of social hierarchy served to eradicate the differences, and to homogenize the heterogeneities, of empire" (10), this policy does not seem to be in effect in the adventure novel. Here, class is completely eclipsed by race, and by the English adventurer/reader's
assumptions about the native. Like the reader, the adventurer always was sure of the native’s status as a colonized individual, and of the power dynamics inherent in such a relationship. It did not matter if the hero, or the reader, or the prospective adventurer was a poor dirtbag—he would still be worthy to advise and bully dark kings—or as is the case of Dravot and Carnehan, to take the native king’s place outright. This double standard of behavior pervades the Tarzan adventures. Whenever he is among natives and primates, Tarzan quickly establishes himself as the head of the tribe. Within European circles, he is deferential (at least initially) towards other whites, and while generally treated respectfully, he is definitely not in charge—at least not politically, financially, or socially. Although his stock rises when his identity as true heir to the Greystoke title is revealed, and his uber masculinity assures him alpha status in terms of maleness, he never achieves the exalted status that he does on the African continent. This raises some complicated issues. Is Tarzan only exceptional when compared to lower life forms or natives? Has the European community fallen so far away from the zenith of its great civilizations that the people can no longer recognize or reward true nobility? Or does true talent still count for less than inherited social and financial standing?claiming refuge in Tarzan’s disdain for civilization and its depraved mores, Burroughs’ novels skirt anxiously around these issues, and Tarzan spends little time in European or American cities, hightailing back to the jungle as soon as possible, where ironically enough, he recreates European hierarchies sans Europeans. Assured of his superiority to the Africans, Oparians, and apes, Tarzan naturally rises to the top. This behavior should not be surprising given Said’s and Memmi’s reflections on the colonial’s expectations of the foreign colony. But Tarzan is interesting because even as he rejects European obsessions about wealth, he imposes a European based corporate
blueprint upon the jungle landscape. King (or CEO) of lower life forms is still
king of somebody.

Though adventure fiction’s readers don’t seem to have found fault with the
upward mobility of adventuring heroes, the stories themselves are self-conscious
about this, and tend to downplay the European’s distinct advantage when
encountering the jungle and natives. Adventure fiction casts its readers as pull-
themselves-up-by-the-bootstraps kind of Englishmen, assuring them that real men
rise on merit rather than by unfair advantage, while at the same time confirming
that white adventurers inevitably rise to the top. Tarzan for instance rises quickly
up the jungle ladder. He initially relates to the Waziri tribesmen as his equals, but
they soon are functioning as “mediators between the ape society no longer his and
the white society not really his either” (Torgovnick 56). Given Waziri behavior,
though, it is easy to see why Tarzan unavoidably distances himself from them.
When first encountering the tribe, Tarzan nearly kills one of their warriors.
Afterward, this man offers “by every primitive means at his command friendship
and affection for his would-be slayer” (Burroughs 125). No English adventuring
hero would fawn this way over anyone—clearly, this Waziri at least lacks the
aggressive masculinity of true men. And while the Waziri are never depicted as
craven, they—and by extension, all natives—lack the uncompromising spirit that
differentiates English adventurers from even the best native. It is only natural,
then, that when the old chief dies, Tarzan’s recognized innate excellence leads to
his coronation: “Since old Waziri’s death Tarzan had been directing the warriors
in battle,” Burroughs writes, and “so successful had they been under the ape-man’s
generalship that they had no wish to delegate the supreme authority to another for
fear that what they had already gained might be lost” (148).

Burroughs presents this ascension as mapping out the entire hierarchy of
man: “And so Tarzan of the Apes came into a real kingship among men—slowly
but surely was he following the evolution of his ancestors, for had he not started at
the very bottom?” (149). This can be read a number of ways. First, it recalls
Tarzan’s origins as a boy lost among the apes of Africa, who climbs his way
upwards to lead a tribe of men. It also suggests that Tarzan’s promotion to upper
level management came through hard work and exemplary behavior, rather than
by unfair advantage arising from his status as a white colonizer in a colonized
foreign space. Natural and democratic, Tarzan’s success comes though ability,
rather than race. He is simply the ideal hero, the absolute epitome of masculinity.
But is this the profile drawn for any colonial, whether living or just visiting in the
colonies? Rises in states require falls. As Memmi explains, “A foreigner, having
come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating
a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant, granting himself
astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them” (9).
Given the rules of the playing field, it would have been “unnatural” for Tarzan not
to rise, abilities or not.

Adventure fiction therefore soothed any anxieties of those contemplating
life away by assuring them that though they may roam far from home, they could
emulate Rupert Brooke and create “some corner of a foreign field / That is for
ever England”—though not like Brooke through their imagined deaths. The
methods were militant and sweeping. As Dravot teaches English military drills to
Kafiristani men, showing them how to “click off a rifle, and form fours, and
advance in a line” (“Man” 576), he dreams of handing over his crown to Queen
Victoria. Ignosi immediately realizes that Quatermain and company will need a
“white man’s houses,” and declares, “Ye shall teach my people how to build
them” (243). Though traders or missionaries are banned from his kingdom, heroes
are welcome. As for Tarzan, the ape-boy establishes a plantation estate in the
jungle, with his faithful Waziri serving as caretakers. This belief that India,
Arabia, Africa, or any foreign space was less than, and should become more like, England was common in adventuring narratives. Foreign spaces are incomplete, and English changes made by English adventurers would inevitably better the native place and people. That these places and peoples expressed no need for English help or intervention doesn’t arise, and neither do the functional, even thriving, cultural, social, and economic systems often in place. Existing infrastructure and native governments would offer no playground for the adventuring imperial ego. In fact, with no uncivilized “Lost World,” no possible glory in “discovering” a primitive tribe, was there really any exciting reason to go? Autonomous, functioning native governments might even require English readers to reconsider interventionist policies. A self-contained, well-operating native system would render adventure narratives meaningless—and also shake the comforting belief that no matter what kind of loser the reader might be at home, if surrounded by natives in foreign fields, he would emerge a hero comparatively. And if the reader continues to believe in this, then adventure fiction is doing its job.
“What We Get from this Adventure Is Just Sheer Joy”: How Adventure Made the Empire Relevant

The claim by George Mallory, first European alpinist to summit Mt. Everest, has its ironies, as Mallory himself perished when descending—quite horribly, if we consider the desperately grasping attitude of his corpse. But in adventure narratives, pursuing joy also often depended on Britain’s imperial designs and needs for its supporting cast. This was not stressed. The male audience of adventure fiction was encouraged to believe that great things might be in store for them, with no need to share the glory. For all its camaraderie, adventuring was not a team sport, but an individual event; a boy’s or man’s future was his own making, though he might choose to have friends. This great dare was both attractive and distracting for that section of English society who was not likely to achieve greater economic prosperity or social progress—that is, the majority of the nation.

The fantasy of making good without social connections appealed to many readers, and so did the adventures themselves, which were seductive, exciting, and fascinating. As an actual possibility, adventuring drew in a much smaller group than Scouting, but as a dream, it was more inclusive and pervasive, because for all its impracticalities, it served a powerful ideological function in late-Victorian British culture. “The nineteenth-century adventure novel,” Martin Green concludes, “had three functions”:

- to compensate the reader with fantasy power for his or her lack of actual power in politics and the workplace;
- to strengthen the reader’s trust and pleasure in what he or she did have, for example, family unity; and to explain social and political conditions. (18)
The fantasy and the explanation were closely linked. Readers who could not expect to rise socially or economically through their own efforts, or through "friends," found in the adventure novel "proof" that these inaccessible forms of help were unnecessary. Adventuring leveled the playing field by creating another one separate from the one that required special training, schooling, or connections.

By equating the adventuring hero with the self-made man, despite the hero's actual background, the narratives offered the luxury of thinking that if pursued, adventuring could lead to economic, social, and cultural freedom. Adventuring heroes achieved financial independence without fulfilling any prerequisites—attending a public school, or learning anything about foreign languages or cultures. The career of danger could be entered immediately, and what you gained, you alone gained. This lack of requirements paradoxically gave the adventurer-to-be the license to imagine himself to be as he wanted to be. Adventuring heroes did not need to forward any particular patriotic or humanitarian agenda; in the narratives, the adventurer's job was simply to adventure. Freedom from duty, from meeting social expectations—Peter Pan—was tempting stuff for the Victorian boy acquainted with the British Empire, and with the need to preserve and expand it.

Of course, by the end of an adventure narrative, the Empire had somehow always been defended, expanded, or justified, and the glory of England always magnified. The Empire could not be denied, simply because geographic expansion always raised the possibility of mercantile or political advantages for someone. Even if most of the world had been visited by European travelers, and the valuable routes and trading centers were established by the late nineteenth century, exploration as a symbol of expansion—personal, if not geographic or economic—was still a powerful one. What Fergus Fleming describes as John Barrow's ambition for British exploration at the beginning of the nineteenth
century held true at its end: “that exploration would increase scientific knowledge, that it would be a boon to national commerce, and above all that it would be a terrible blow to national pride if other countries should open a globe over which Britain ruled supreme” (11). Geographic exploration was a primary means for asserting the security and stability of England’s holdings. Adventurers therefore not only stood to make a fortune—a fantasy Rhodes’ experience in Africa bore out—but they could return home as patriotic heroes whose actions had advanced or defended the Empire.

But back to George Mallory. For all the self-serving subtext, or the suggested colonial benefits, adventuring narratives declared their innocence by insisting that their heroes headed out for the sheer sake for going out and seeing a bit of the world. Though rescue missions were on the list of approved reasons—Quatermain’s party undertakes one in *King Solomon’s Mines*—escaping the evils of civilization (Tarzan), or playing the Great Game, as Kim does, were just as acceptable. That the British in *real* historical time had in fact already decided to “acquire” the explored territories, or at least that the territory was crucial enough to warrant investigation, is purely coincidental—and so is the fact that the geographic information adventurers gathered during their fictional exploits often turns out to be of material importance for the well being of the British nation. And yet, however unsubtle these stories might be, they managed to repress any absolute statements equating adventure with the imperial imperative. Too overt a link would threaten to rob the genre of its thumbing-its-nose, lone wolf allure. Readers who cherished counter-jumping would not wholeheartedly welcome a patriotic agenda shoved in their faces.

In another of its general contradictions, the adventure narrative simultaneously promoted this lifestyle as a means for obtaining fabulous wealth, while at the same time condemning abject greed. Financial gain never resulted
from direct exploitation. Though the desired end—riches—may have been the same as for earlier explorers, adventure narratives are somewhat self-conscious about how wealth is gained. Wealth tended to arrive in one of two ways: the discovery of new (raw) sources of revenue such as gold (Allen Quatermain), or the removal of treasure from inhabitants who did not value or were not worthy caretakers of what they possessed (Tarzan—particularly in the mines of Opar). Even if the actual acquisition of riches does in fact exploit people, animals, or land, commercialism and trade are still kept out. The endeavor can never be reduced to the ranks of a commercial venture.

Adventure novels preserved the myth that out in the colonies, and unlike at home, the Empire was an egalitarian organization that allowed the would-be adventurer to fulfill all of his deeply held personal fantasies once he embarked upon his quest. He could become a warrior even though he was a city dweller, and he would display impressive skills even if he wouldn’t know the working end of a battle-axe if he tripped over it. (Sir Henry is remarkably adept at fighting with a battle-axe, besting a trained and practiced warrior, even though his previous martial experience seems to have been confined to shooting partridges.) He could escape from whatever limited social and financial situation he was born into, and become brilliantly heroic and fantastic. As in Said’s “liminal land,” the British boy or man could break free from whatever restrictions English life or a white colony would have placed upon him. Away, he could grasp and rule his own little kingdom. Adventure promised constant excitement and the assurance that the British hero can always rise to the challenges posed by nature and the people in it. Adventure narratives showed readers that British heroics nobly translated across cultures, nationalities, races, or even political inclinations. Though mistaken at first for the representative of a hated foreign power, his noble nature soon led the natives to love, admire, and respect him. Improbable as it might seem, and despite
all the existing evidence that praise, flattery, and declarations of love might just be the means to an end, adventure narratives assured Englishmen they were so transcendentally lovable that only evil people could resist their charms. And these people can be killed.

Adventure attributed all increases in power and standing to personal merit and abilities—a message that appealed to readers who themselves had only assumed merit and ability to recommend them. This kind of egotistical belief in personal superiority allowed a Cecil Rhodes to see Ndebele submissiveness as a sign of respect, and the various appellations bestowed upon him as evidence of esteem. Robert MacDonald’s account of Rhodes’ *indaba* (meeting) with the Ndebele at Matopos show the imperial ego in full sail:

[The Ndebele] act of submission became the central feature in the story of Rhodes in the Matopos. . . . For the public it all could have come out of a Rider Haggard novel: the bold and daring confrontation, the white man paid obeisance by savage black warriors. Rhodes was addressed as “Chief”, “Great Hunter”, “Father”; he was called “Son of the Black Bull”, “Lion in Battle”, “Great Heart”, “He who says ‘Get up while I sit down’”. He had spoken to his children, he had seen that they came in peace. . . . They recognised the laws of conquest: You came. You conquered. The strongest takes the land. We understood. (137)

As MacDonald suggests, apocryphal as subsequent reports may have been, historical encounters such as Rhodes’ *indaba* were often indistinguishable from adventure narratives. All of India, for instance, loves Kim—his title is “Friend of all the world”—for as a conversation between Teshoo Lama and Mahbub Ali makes clear, he is irresistible:
"The Sahiba has a heart of gold," said the lama earnestly.

"She Looks upon him as her son."

"Hmph! Half Hind seems that-way disposed. . . ." (212)

Evil villains in the adventure story can resist the English adventurer's charms— but that is why they are evil. The good and the worthy never could. Such assurances sought to calm an increasingly anxious late-Victorian English public who had ample evidence that the natives in their colonies could be quite resistant to English charms—the Indian Rebellion, the Zulu Wars, the Boer War should have come to mind.

Perpetuating these myths required adventure narratives to obscure or ignore certain fundamental truths about the Empire's presence in foreign lands, and the actual limits of the adventurer's abilities and powers. As Memmi points out, the situation in the colony is always rigged, for the European always occupies a privileged position, regardless of his own personal abilities. It is "too easy to become a success without applying one's full capabilities" (48). Memmi writes,

I have seen many immigrants who, having recently arrived, timid and modest, suddenly provided with a wonderful title, see their obscurity illuminated by a prestige which surprises even them. Then, supported by the corset of their special role, they lift up their heads, and soon they assume such inordinate self-confidence that it makes them dizzy. (47)

The adventurer out and about also found himself in a similarly protected position, even as the narratives emphasized his vulnerability. Actual adventurers faced very real dangers, but never alone. As a European, he was almost always a representative of a greater power. As an Englishman, he was always a representative of a tremendous Empire, and natives could seldom ignore the fact
that the European had hidden resources that ensured not only his safety, but his eventual success. Take for example the fate of Kulonga’s tribe after they captured the Frenchman, D’Arnot. His avengers “spared the children and those of the women who they were not forced to kill in self-defense, but when at length they stopped, panting, blood covered and sweating, it was because here lived to oppose them no single warrior of all the savage village of Mbonga” (*Tarzan* 207-08).

From the distance of a century, it is hard to see how late-Victorian adventure narratives could be read as straightforward accounts of derring-do and adventure, and also as enticements to participate in expanding the Empire. As advertisements for a particular lifestyle, as reassurances that those participating in foreign adventures were indeed “doing the right thing,” as virtual travel excursions into the domains of the British Empire, as enticements to join the adventure that was imperial service, and finally as confirmation of the restorative power of macho exploits, these narratives energized readers with the fantasy of impossible yet accessible adventures. And while works such as the Tarzan chronicles couldn’t in and of themselves convince a reader that he could become king of the apes or of the Waziri, could fight a sabor bare-handed, or could convince a beautiful woman to accompany him into the jungle (the short list of Tarzan’s heroics), it could get the reader imaginatively pumped up about being linked to such adventures abroad.

Adventures narraties made the Empire relevant. They managed to make Britain’s imperial project appealing and attractive to a population of readers for whom the Empire had no significant personal resonance as a source of employment, investment, or politics. What outright patriotic indoctrination in the schools could not accomplish, the adventure narrative often could. It proved effective in attracting the English boy or man who felt disenfranchised by tradition, and the shortage of options that he faced through the arbitrary social and
financial circumstances of his birth. Though the lone wolves and renegades of society could fight and escape danger in these narratives, the stories also served as a conduit for conservative ideology. Ultimately, there was no escaping the Empire.
"Bad boys" and especially the emerging character of the adventurous secret agent, appealed to nineteenth century male and female readers. While this response may have reflected the way the secret agent “provided, and still provides, an imaginative compensation for a feeling of nationalistic frustration” (Sauerberg 5), it also arose from the vicarious thrill of watching illegal acts committed without any legal or moral condemnation. In the emerging genre of secret agent fiction, foreign lands were “liminal spaces,” freeing heroes from the action/consequence equation that applied in the metropole. Playing by different rules, these heroes were subject to a different jurisdiction. And yet, not only did these heroes do things that other men only dreamed of, but often on the government payroll. As servants of Empire, Burton investigated the wild world of oriental sex practices and secret religious ritual, Gordon was named Pasha of a country, and Kim knew secrets that no other white boy did.

By definition, undercover bad boys witnessed and participated in events forbidden to the average white European. These activities were more exotic and thrilling than the average adventurer’s because the agent risked detection, the work involved endless intrigue, and the results could affect global political balances. Unlike other imperial heroes, the secret agent felt he possessed the power to control the minds and actions of others without their knowing it. As the sole disguised European in a hostile mob, this ability was crucial. In fiction and memoirs, the undercover man appears as an invincible, undetectable creature who
slips beneath the radar of any suspicious nation or national, and discovers those secrets that the natives sought to hide from colonial eyes and ears. Only the agent knew what the native really thought of colonial officers and policies; only the agent could discover seditious native activities. Of course, it was also at least possible that such agents could learn that the English did not interest or concern natives, but the Empire’s narratives never lingered on this ego-deflating perspective, highlighting instead the agent’s prevention of imperial catastrophes.

The price required from this hero was high. Performing in colonial drag meant completely submerging his identity, and the line between official and private selves could blur. And the agent had to remember he was English, and that the Empire was allowing him the luxury of roaming about undisturbed. This state of affairs was typical of “a colonial fantasy that suggests an impossible origin for a new colonialist, one with a split sense of the constitution of self, who disavows difference from the native, yet knows otherwise” (Sullivan, 177). Scouting’s and Adventure’s narratives also advanced this fantasy. When boys signed on to the imperial program, they knew the Empire would be there guarding their adventuring, colonizing backsides. They could go out into foreign lands and often act with impunity, gathering a name, wealth, or a new social position for themselves—as long as they did not transgress certain unofficial rules of the Empire.

But some chafed at these restrictions, confident that they could succeed without nepotistic interference. By rejecting the leash of Empire, these men also refused to dedicate themselves to the imperial project, and shunned the gaze of hero worshipping masses at home. Such cheek was obviously galling, and imperial narratives were full of warnings to those contemplating such a move. The message, though, was simple. Imaginative and talented men who
remembered their place in the Empire would succeed; those who denied their ties or obligations would ultimately come to a miserable end.

In adventure narratives there comes a point when the reader must disengage from identifying with the hero, the situation, or both—that point when conflating fiction and reality would be suicidal. For while Empire adventure narratives definitely encouraged readers to believe that as Britons, they were physically, mentally, and morally gifted, the boys also needed to recognize that they did not have superhuman powers. If you leapt from a cataract, the odds were good that you would die, and imperial narratives did not generally encourage pointless suicide. In fact, such narratives exhorted would be heroes to avoid having to be rescued, or, even worse, revenged. Such unfortunate situations could be avoided simply by toeing the imperial line. As long as the boy recognized his symbiotic relationship with his nation, he would not be neglected or completely effaced. If, however, the future hero displayed a hubristic belief in his own power, he would be utterly abandoned and destroyed. A fine line separates taking one's job too seriously, and losing grasp of what it was entirely.

Despite these warnings, operating outside the official lines of command seemed enormously appealing to some readers—given the alternatives, it is easy to understand why. Scouting demanded complete obedience to the State's wishes, and even the most thrilling adventure stories expected that the hero would maintain or expand the Empire's holdings. But either way, the hero is above all a servant of the state. Undercover rogues seemed free from such restrictions. The fact that the state could and would disavow him if necessary unavoidably suggested to the hero himself that he could cut his ties to Empire if necessary. Such rogues and renegades were fascinating figures to Victorian readers—not only because of their tenuous and straining ties to Empire, but because their methods and mindset were so radically different from the other available hero models.
Masters of disguise, who dared to go where it would be death to be discovered, they were the invisible eyes and ears that saw, heard, and knew all. They were adventuring boys with a dangerous edge—so good, so cocky about dying, they almost seemed suicidal. But they also often amassed and wielded power and influence, changing policies because they alone knew the true score.

Transgressors yet preservers of Empire, rogues and renegades were alluring to those who did not relish a life subservient to State or supervisor. Not a large population of readers—and the number who were actually tempted to engage in such activities was infinitesimal—but enough to alarm the Empire.

Both the rogues—and their readership—gratified an unregulated desire for personal power—the fantasy of command without the backing of Britain. Such desire not only rejected the ideal of self-abnegation underlying the myth of the Empire as a united, powerful whole, but also revealed to the colonized population that Great Britain was not a monolith. By refusing to follow the dictates of Empire, and by being seen to do so, these rogues and renegades revealed to all that the political, economic, and military power was fragmenting. And when their actions as independent agents failed, the rogues showed native populations that Englishmen, and perhaps the Empire itself, could falter. Natives already knew that the power of the Englishman they encountered arose from the invisible but omnipresent force of Empire (Memmi’s configuration). To learn, therefore, that the English government would not guard or rescue certain renegades who had gone too far, as General Gordon did, revealed that the consequences of rebellion or assault were not certain. The renegades could therefore undermine the real colonial representative’s prestige and authority, leading to demands that the renegade submit or be subsumed. Rogue narratives laid this on with a heavy, didactic hand, assuring the reader that amazing abilities in themselves led to nothing but momentary brilliance, when compared with the enduring victories that
a hero could achieve with the support of the Empire. The moral? Undercover rogues succeeded because Britain allowed them to.

The first section of this chapter deals with the phenomenon of British passing, and in particular, the ways that the secret agent genre celebrated British men who could assume radically unnatural identities, becoming by force of will (and ego), replicas of the native, colonized other. This hubristic belief in the agent’s Power of disguise sustained the myth of English ingenuity and a belief in the Empire’s transformative power of foreign spaces. As Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, Richard Burton’s accounts of his *haj*, and Henry Pottinger’s account of his undercover survey of Baluchistan and Sindh all demonstrate, however, what allowed these men actually to succeed, was the British Empire’s powerful and protective reach. Such narratives fondly hoped that those viewing the disguised Englishman could not discern his true identity or perceive that he was *not one of them*.

The second section deals with the *shibboleth* of Empire: an imperial merit system that filtered out natives, and rewarded only British achievements. The Empire offered a field for rapid achievement. While certain British identities were taboo to assume—pretending to be superior to your actual social role, for instance—Englishmen were free to rise to the apex of any native society. This mobility was, however, profoundly one sided. Regardless of ability, a native could never adequately “pass” in English society, or into upper colonial employment. Of course, affirmative action had never been a goal, even though the Empire successfully used the lure of advancement to attract into its employ natives who believed that education and assimilation were the “open sesame” to recognition in their own country. Despite nearly two centuries of suppression, English opposition to the Ilbert Bill, and the founding of the Indian National Congress, rogue narratives still represented natives who could not see the glass
ceiling, or were sure that they could shatter it. The narratives themselves winked at this naiveté, assuring the reader that the native could only approximate, never replace. What is striking here is not simply that the Empire ran the scam for as long as it did, but that the British were blind to natives running one of their own. In Kipling’s *Kim*, Hurree Babu will provide the primary literary focus in this section.

The final section will examine how rogue and renegade narratives reigned in or destroyed its own heroes to support the cause of Empire. The rogue who thought he knew better than the admittedly ignorant Empire ultimately became the scapegoat for the failure of the mission and any apparent decline of the English Empire. Anyone who questioned the Empire’s right to overrule and intrude lost the perks that corporately sponsored, mainstream adventurers expected—rescue by the Empire’s forces, the psychologically stabilizing company of other Englishmen. The wrath of the spurned Empire fell hard upon those who refused to obey. The ultra rebels, those rogues who envisioned themselves as the real nation makers and demi-gods, and who even became conic heroes for the age (General Gordon), represented to a skittish Empire the disintegration of control necessary to maintain such a huge bureaucratic organization. The Empire despised heroes with cults, and crushed any attempts at constructing minor fiefdoms, after abandoning, however dangerous that might be, such heroes to the colonized. General Charles George Gordon, the War Poets, and Lytton Strachey supply my examples here.
Looking at something seems easy enough. All a person needs is the physical ability to see, the mental ability to comprehend, and the life experience to provide a frame of reference. But looking at something or someone cannot be an innocent act, for the expectations of the viewer and the circumstances of the object influence and burden the act of gazing. "Everything that the eye falls on has some momentary interest and possible use," James Elkins writes: "there is no looking without thoughts of using, possessing, repossessing, owning, fixing, appropriating, keeping, remembering and commemorating, cherishing, borrowing and stealing" (19). Espionage requires perceiving and possessing—taking in images, making connections, filing things away for a later report. Even the professional viewer, however, may not be seeing and storing what he thinks he is, and the notion that what is really there might not be what the person looking thinks is there lies at the heart of early British undercover narratives. Though these narratives dedicated to celebrating the undercover agents' success frequently worry that the disguise had failed, or that the reports are inaccurate, the Empire's cross-dressing, undercover agents were intriguing figures who stood as viewers as well as the objects being viewed.

In undercover adventure, the racially disguised agent was a collector of new knowledge who paradoxically could not discover things until first he had studied the language, customs, and culture of the people he mimicked. New knowledge therefore followed old. The all-seeing, all-knowing hidden eye of the Empire, he traveled where no other European could, and saw and heard the secrets of the natives, uncovering in the process the "real" truth behind the colonized's careful facade. The cross-dressed agent was therefore both a cultural informant and a political and military agent who sustained and expanded the Empire's influence.
Or at least, he was in the narratives; in actuality, the invisible cross-dressed English agent was a self-gratifying myth.

In this section, I will consider the representation of racial cross-dressing in the adventure narratives and travel memoirs of Richard Burton, Henry Pottinger, and Rudyard Kipling. The fiction of the cross-dressed agent’s successful passing granted authority to such accounts as influences on colonial policy and on readers’ confidence in the Empire’s success. Although the terms “cross-dressing” and “drag” are most commonly found in queer or gender theory, as Beth Tobin points out, “cross-dressing” is a useful concept for analyzing the representation of cultural identities and affinities. It implies that identity is a matter of performance, rather than something that emanates from within our bodies (88). Thought of in this way, cross-dressing refers to the adoption of a specific foreign outward appearance for the performance of an alien identity. For my purposes, cross-dressing will refer to the use of native garb to disguise the wearer’s racial and national “true” identity. But further, though the undercover agents were not trying to pass as women, but as native men, in the minds of British observers these two identities were often conflated. Since drag invokes the “performance and parody of gendered identity” (Tobin 88), I will also at times note how wearing Oriental clothing gendered the agent as well.

Fergus Fleming jokingly observes that British travelers adopted native dress wherever they traveled, “wearing ghastly costumes that aped the local style” (Killing 98). The ease with which tourists appropriated national costumes often reflected the trickle-down arrogance of the Empire. Privileged with a stable and flourishing economy and backed by imperial might, the British often treated colonial possessions as private touring grounds, with the natives serving as props in a tableau prepared for an expected visitor. The situation of the inhabitants, or
the political, economic, and historical circumstances that granted the British the freedom to travel so freely, were usually ignored. As Fabricant explains:

Foreign travel, along with the literature... that recorded it, allowed the English to indulge their appetite for the bizarre and the primitive in a “safe” manner, without its having any necessary effect upon the internal workings of English government and society; it encouraged the illusion of cultural diversity while permitting—indeed, reinforcing—the continued ethnocentricity of English culture. (256-57)

Since English travelers divorced natives from their historical situation, other than geography, what remained to a native was his appearance. All that was needed to become like the native, therefore, was to dress like one, and British appropriation of national costumes turned them into de-nationalized, de-politicized souvenirs.

Undercover agent narratives also tend to ignore the complex cultural implications of dress and native traditions, instead presenting “dragging” as an attractive game that in turn suggested to British boys and men that undercover adventure was all glamour, with no responsibilities. To understand why cross-racially dressed agents felt safe infiltrating hostile populaces, and also why they simply assumed success—often right up to the moment of death—requires a broader understanding of British imperial beliefs. According to Edward Said, “colonial territories” were “realms of possibility” (64), where the “fallen” Englishman could redeem himself morally and/or financially. Away was a dream space, where the laws governing physics or anatomy were suspended, and the colonial could envision himself the star of foreign intrigue.

And yet, these supposedly liminal spaces were susceptible to undercover activities because of the ever present threat of British military intervention. A
secret agent might trust in his own abilities, but imperial power’s always well-known willingness to flex and bully contributed significantly to the success of early players like Charles Christie, Henry Pottinger, or Arthur Connolly, and of later counterparts such as Richard Burton or T. E. Lawrence. The threat of British punitive action pervades Empire fiction as well. Even in the most remote locations, agents like Kim or Warburton (not officially undercover, but all civil servants could potentially be), regularly encountered imperial presence. Still, such protection wasn’t airtight, and while military or colonial agents were immediately recognizable by their uniforms, spies did have to accept the potentially deadly consequences of having their “true” identities revealed. Even agents knew that their disguises required effort: throwing on a djellaba or burnoose would not “fool” the natives. As Mahbub Ali points out to Colonel Creighton in Kim, to succeed, a disguised agent needed to know where he was, who he was supposed to be, what he should be thinking: “When [Kim] comes to the Great Game he must go alone-alone, and at peril of his head. Then, if he sits, or sneezes, or sits down other than as the people do whom he watches, he may be slain . . .” (96). The cross-dressed agent had to efface his “true” self so entirely that the infiltrated populace never suspected that someone might be “passing” in their midst. But simply escaping notice—presumably the ideal for an agent—was apparently not enough. In English cross-dressing narratives, the agent not only convinces onlookers of his authenticity, but proves to be a better version of the native than the native himself. Confident of his deceit, the undercover Empire man was often emboldened to explore all parts of native life, no matter how secret—flaunting himself before the natives as if daring them to penetrate his disguise. Richard Burton embodied this fantasy. He would boldly walk through the door of a house filled with music and guests, and would generally be welcomed,” then sit “for hours debating the finer points of the faith with the local mullah” (Farwell 45). In
Burton’s real life and Kim’s fictional adventures, the cross-dressed Englishman is always welcomed and never suspected. Burton and Kim recognize and almost celebrate the dangers of their missions, delighting in their powers of dissimulating and their hoodwinking of any suspicious lookers-on.

Burton in particular exulted in his powers of disguise, boasting of the freedom and safety his talents afford him. For Burton, the Orient became a zone that he could conquer through his powers of self-command. Although his appearance has been described as “gypsy-ish,” and he matured into a dark featured adult, his “red hair, blue eyes and . . . fair complexion” (Farwell 8) required constant maintenance to appear convincing. Moslems are not racially identifiable, and Burton could have perhaps made a passable Turkish gentleman—he does in fact begin his haj as a Darwaysh (dervish), since “No character in the Moslem world is so proper for disguise as that of the Darwaysh. It is assumed by all ranks, ages, and creeds” (Burton 14). But ultimately he elects to take on a more difficult role. A certificate issued by H. B. M.’s Consul at Alexandria declares Burton to be “an Indo-British subject named Abdullah,” an identity assumed because it was better to “appear as a born believer” (Burton 19, 23). As usual, his disguise was very complicated, perhaps needlessly, apparently chosen to show off the adventurer’s range of knowledge. “He decided to become a wandering Pathan from Afghanistan; at the same time, he retained his pose as a doctor and a dervish. To support the character required a knowledge of Persian, Hindustani and Arabic.”

Byron Farwell Burton’s biographer further calls it “curious” that “in his disguises Burton always pretended to be from a place” where “he had never visited” (68).

And yet, the linguistic and behavioral parts of his costumes were not the most flawed parts of his cross-dressing adventure. The basic problem was that the imperial ego blinded the performer himself to his own flaws. Evidence suggests that agents were largely mistaken about the impenetrability of their disguises:
natives recognized them as Englishmen wandering amongst them. In his account of his *haj*, Burton never indicates that his disguises may have been penetrated by the natives, but his invisibility seems largely an authorial invention. At the onset of his journey, Burton couldn’t even fool other Englishmen. During the voyage to Alexandria, for instance, “an officer of the Indian Army” who saw him asked, “What on earth is he up to now dressed like that? . . . Anyone can see that it is Burton” (Farwell 64). How then did Burton successfully complete his trip without being outed by his fellow Arab travelers? Considering the many slips that Burton admits to in his memoirs, it is no surprise that several travelers suspected him. I would argue that they were too gracious, canny, or wary to voice their thoughts. The first that the reader hears of these suspicions is when Burton’s gift giving, having made him a “person of consequence” (166), forces him to allow his fellows to go through his belongings. They discover a sextant, a tool used by chainmen to measure distance, and while Burton “imagined they would think little about a sextant,” since they had “seen a compass at Constantinople,” he later admits this was a mistake:

Nothing was said at the time, but as soon as Burton left the room Mohammed declared his belief that this Abdulluh [Burton] was an infidel. The case was discussed. Omar Effedi, who had previously talked religion with Burton, felt himself well qualified to judge. He announced that Mohammed was wrong.

Another member of the group, Hamid al-Samman. . . . who looked forward to the lucrative task of being Burton’s guide in Medina, agreed with the verdict of Omar. (Farwell 74)

Omar Effedi’s gracious gesture of friendship and Hamid al-Samman’s anticipation of future business save Burton from exposure, leaving him blithely unaware of his
close call, and therefore free to revel in his good opinion of his abilities as the chameleon hero of his personal narrative. Even when he finally discloses that Effedi and al-Samman had been on to him, this information appears in a footnote—and even there, he accounts for the two men’s silence in self-flattering terms. Omar Effedi supposedly remained silent because he truly believed that the Englishman was a devout believer and scholar, convinced by Burton’s “categorical replies to certain questions in high theology.” As for Shaykh Hamid, greed was second to admiration as a motive: “he looked forward to being my host, guide, and debtor in general,” swearing “that the light of Al-Islam was upon my countenance” (Burton 167).

Given such information, that Burton should retain such confidence in his disguises is questionable. And yet he did, despite all self-provided evidence to the contrary. “Burton was familiar with the Arab proverb, ‘Conceal thy travels, thy tents and thy treasures,’” Farwell notes, but he also notes that “knowledge of wisdom does not make a man wise” (56). Incorrectly believing that “a badly dressed man is a pauper,” as in England, or even a “scoundrel,” he “attached a star sapphire to his costume to elicit ‘reverential awe’ from those around him” (Farwell 66). As he later discovered, Burton had not only seriously misjudged Arab traveling customs, but also had himself frequently been duped. He had, for instance, thought that Shaykh Hamid al-Samman was a vulgar, common Arab traveler. Upon reaching the Shaykh’s home in al-Medinah, however, he watches al-Samman transform himself into the perfect Arab gentleman. Burton’s bare foot travelling companion had “goatee straggles untrimmed,” and his only garment was “an exceedingly unclean ochre-coloured blouse” (Burton 163-64). At home, al-Samman emerges dressed in “a fine shirt of cotton and silk, a light pink outer cloak, a plaid sash, pantaloons with ‘tasteful edgings about the ankles’, and lemon-coloured slippers of the most fashionable . . . cut . . . He was clean and his beard
was neatly trimmed” (Burton 83). al-Samman was a dandy, but a shrewd one; in fact so were all of Burton’s traveling companions, who have similar “transformations” once in town: “as men of sense they appeared in tatters where they were, or when they wished to be, unknown, and in fine linen where and when the world judged their prosperity by their attire” (Farwell 83).

Such lessons did not, however, shake Burton’s belief in his own mastery of Arab-ness, leading to the most revealing blunders. Though Burton considered his mission a cultural and anthropological one, he constantly records his refusal—often unconscious—to follow the very customs that he observed. Here, for instance, is Burton at Hamid al-Samman’s home. When visitors come to welcome back his host:

Scarcely had I taken my place at the cool windowsill,—

It was the best in the room,—when the visitors began
to pour in. . . . The little men entered the assembly, after
an accolade at the door, noiselessly squatted upon the
worst seats with polite conges to the rest of the assembly;
smoked, took their coffee, as it were, under protest, and
glided out of the room as quietly as they crept in. (Burton 291)

Burton unavoidably stands out in this scene. Although he had assumed an air of consequence when traveling, he has no claim in al-Samman’s house to “the best seat in the room”—and Burton was wrong in assuming that access to a cool breeze made his place a seat of honor. His refusal to follow social custom by sitting with guests of his supposed social standing was rude, and even provocative. No response, however, ever came. Whether al-Samman’s guests thought Burton stupid, gross, or dangerously English, they left him believing that his disguise was perfectly secure.
Continuing to go against the grain of courtesy—which he acknowledges—Burton then disrupts the occasion to have his needs met:

At last I so far broke through the laws of Arab politeness as to inform my host in plain words—how inconceivably wretched the boy Mohammed was... that I was hungry, thirsty, and sleepy, and that I wanted to be alone... The good-natured Shaykh... immediately brought me breakfast; lighted a pipe, spread a bed, darkened the room, turned out the children, and left me to the society I most desired—my own. (Burton 294)

Perhaps Burton's biggest slip, however, was his obliviousness to the feelings of a traveler returning from a long trip away. As his traveling group approached Al-Madinah, "All around [him] were hurrying their camels, regardless of the rough ground, and not a soul spoke a word to his neighbour. 'Are there robbers in sight?' was the natural question. 'No!' replied Mohammed; 'they are walking with their eyes, they will presently see their homes!'" (Burton 278). Even in the third edition of Personal Narrative, Burton continues to represent his disguise as impenetrable, and his performance flawless, even while he describes himself, when faced with the joys of return, calling out, "Are there robbers in sight?"—the "natural question."

Burton's many slips, and the failure of his disguise at times, even with non-natives, suggests that the colonized's apparent inability to identify him was not entirely due to the British agent's skill. A viewer's inability to recognize glaringly obvious objects can also be explained as "deflected seeing" (Elkins 119). In such cases, a viewer feels it inappropriate to view, or to acknowledge that he has seen an object, and censors himself. Guilt at viewing a taboo or sacrilegious object, or simple embarrassment might encourage "deflected seeing." In any case, the
viewer deliberately chooses blindness. It is therefore likely that others besides Hamid al-Samman, Omar Effedi, and Mohammed knew that Burton was other than he claimed, but Burton’s fellow travelers would also realize the potential ramifications of outing or challenging the man. While Burton’s personal safety was imperiled during his haj—he might well have been killed if his identity were revealed in a crowd—the Empire’s response to his death could have been brutal and encompassing. “How could a handful of often arrogant colonizers,” Albert Memmi asks, “live in the midst of a multitude of colonized?” Because colonizers “know very well that if they were in danger, their lonely position would quickly be changed.”

For each colonizer killed, hundreds or thousands of the colonized have been or would be exterminated. That experience has occurred often enough . . . for the colonized to be convinced of the inevitable and heinous punishment. (93)

Even those countries not under England’s colonial influence—Saudi Arabia, for instance, through which Burton traveled—recognized the long military reach of the Empire. Whether or not the English government even wanted to back up undercover agents was irrelevant. What mattered was that native governments and peoples thought they might.

Potential military intervention acted as a shield for cross-dressing Englishmen. Undercover agent memoirs make clear the value of being identifiably British. During his first expedition, Lieutenant Arthur Connolly was hijacked on his way to Khiva. Although mistaken for a Russian agent acting under Persian direction, Connolly’s status as a foreign operative was obvious—and it saved his life:
The men could not agree among themselves about what to do with him. The choice lay between robbing and murdering him, or selling him into slavery. But aware that he had wealthy and influential friends across the frontier in Persia, the men hesitated to dispose of him there and then. Instead, in order to test reaction, they sent back word that he had been murdered. If no retribution followed, then they would know that they could safely proceed with their plan. (Hopkirk 128)

Even when threats of military reprisals did not prevent attacks or murders of agents, they were still powerful deterrents, because native governments did not want to be linked to the disappearances of Englishmen. Although Charles Stoddart and Arthur Connolly were ultimately executed in Bokhara, their status as Empire employees helped delay their deaths—by three years in Stoddart’s case. Or as Peter Hopkirk put it, though Stoddart’s “day-to-day fortunes were seemingly determined by Nasrullah’s [Bokhara’s Emir] capricious moods,” the greatest influence was the Emir’s “current estimate of British power in Asia” (Hopkirk 230).

The threat of retribution loomed large in many encounters between disguised operatives and natives. And even when natives did kill Englishmen—Sir Alexander Burnes and Sir William Macnaghten in Kabul, for instance—the Afghan leaders “braced themselves for the vengeance they expected from the British, the destructive power of whose artillery they still greatly feared,” especially since only three years earlier “[Mohammed Akbar] had seen the effectiveness of British troops properly led” (Hopkirk 257). As twenty-first century readers know, the British did indeed make a revenge strike on Kabul. Although unwilling to send in forces again to Afghanistan to avenge the
executions of Stoddart and Connolly in Bokhara, the nation could not ignore the massacre of so many English soldiers, wives and families, and camp followers at the Khyber Pass. Imperial revenge was formidable. In a letter to Prime Minister Peel, Lord Ellenborough “proposed to restore Britain’s honour and pride by teaching the Afghans a lesson they would not forget in a hurry” (Hopkirk 271), and although Pollock’s troops did not reach the level of brutality that followed the Indian Rebellion, British soldiers razed the covered bazaar of Kabul, “celebrated throughout Central Asia” (Hopkirk 276). In this way, England reminded the world that actions against its agents, its citizens, or its honor would never go unanswered.

It therefore did not matter if undercover operatives were recognized by natives, for the Empire’s willingness to play the cavalry granted safe passage for most. Although Richard Burton claimed to feel safe traveling because his route of the haj was not regularly traveled by Europeans, fears of the Empire’s long reach also offered protection, for when Burton began his journey in 1853, Arabs were encountering European travelers and undercover agents fairly regularly. His choice to start in the Suez presented him as a known commodity. Since Napoleon’s invasion of 1798, those Egyptians living along the Gulf of Suez, Burton’s principal water route, had become accustomed to European faces, customs, and manners. Inland routes had their own dangers, and Burton risked exposure there as well, but he banked on being rare issue wherever he traveled—and also on most native towns being backwaters with easily duped inhabitants. But Europe’s many inroads had made the natives more cosmopolitan than he had anticipated. Everywhere Henry Pottinger and Charles Christie went, as they made their undercover expedition through Baluchistan and Sind in 1809, almost fifty years before, natives in supposed “virgin” colonial territory had recognized them as Europeans. It also seems that it rarely occurred to British agents that the natives
themselves were not rooted permanently in place. Just as Kim and the Lama run into the same characters again and again in their travels, so too did cross-dressing agents find themselves dogged by too few degrees of separation. In Ootul, Pottinger and Christie were surprised when the “chief man of the village came to us, before we had alighted from the camels, with a goat, as a present”:

we afterwards ascertained that this attention, on the [chief’s] part, originated in Captain Christie and myself being recognized by a man who had been a water-carrier to the mission to Sinde (to which we were both attached) the preceding year, and this discovery he instantly made public. (Pottinger 14)

By Burton’s relatively late expedition date, then, ongoing wars with most of the great Western and Eastern powers had made Afghanis, Persians, and Turks acutely aware of disguised operatives traipsing through borders. The pride in disguise and role-playing found in the memoirs of early cross dressed operatives like Burton was therefore probably ill founded. As Hopkirk explains, even early players of the Game such as Arthur Connolly felt that however well “a European spoke the native tongue,” it would be “extremely difficult when traveling among Asiatics to escape detection” (125).

“His mode of delivery, his manner of sitting, walking, or riding . . . is different from that of the Asiatic.” The more self-conscious he became in trying to imitate the latter, the more likely he was to attract unwelcome attention. (126)

Connolly recommended abandoning all “native disguises,” and suggested impersonating a European from a “neutral” or “friendly” country such as Switzerland, which had no known designs upon Arab regions. Connolly himself liked being “a doctor, preferably French or Italian,” since “a doctor, even an
infidel one, was ever welcome among a people constantly at the mercy of sickness" (Hopkirk 126). Other seasoned players agreed. When returning from India, Alexander Burnes and his English companions “made no attempt to conceal the fact that they were Europeans”:

“I adopted this resolution”, Burnes explained, “in an utter hopelessness of supporting the disguise of a native, and from having observed that no European traveller has ever journeyed in such countries without suspicion and seldom without discovery.” (Hopkirk 141)

Burnes’ astute observation explains why removing the disguise actually made things easier for undercover agents like Henry Pottinger. When a boy cried out that “‘If he did not himself say he is a Peerzaduh, I would swear that this is the brother of Grant the Firingee (or European) who was at Bunpoor last year,’” Pottinger “endeavored to let the lad’s remark pass unnoticed”:

but the confusion of my looks betrayed me, and the Khan immediately told me, in the most good humoured manner, if it was so, not to disguise the truth, as no person should offer me the least degree of insult or hindrance; upon which assurance, seeing there was no advantage in further prevarication, I admitted I was a European. (Pottinger 162-63)

In fact, had Burton or the other agents actually succeeded in passing, they would have been in greater danger. It would be much easier to dispose discreetly of some nameless wandering Arab than an obvious European. Mahbub Ali cannily realizes that Kim is a good errand boy precisely because this sahib masquerades as a native born boy. If successful, Kim can slip in and out of bazaars and travel abroad unnoticed, but if “the worst came to the worst, and the boy came to harm, the paper would incriminate nobody” (17).
Of course, declaring one’s identity made unobserved surveillance difficult, leading such agents to play the Game imaginatively. Baden-Powell passed himself off in South Africa as a tourist on a sketching holiday. (He drew pictures of forts onto the designs of insects) Baden-Powell’s cover held remarkably well: on-lookers saw the common sight of an eccentric Englishman enjoying the scenery. Stupidity also provided an effective cover. As he meticulously surveyed India and its surroundings, Creighton managed to convince the natives that he was “only Creighton Sahib—a very foolish Sahib, who is a Colonel Sahib without a regiment” (Kim 87). To preserve this cover, Creighton codes his language when speaking to Mahbub about Kim. When a groom appeared, “Colonel Creighton raised his voice, speaking in Urdu. ‘Very good, Mahbub Ali, but what is the use of telling me all those stories about the pony. Not one pie more than three hundred and fifty rupees will I give’” (Kim 82). When Kim later inquires after the Colonel, he finds that the ruse has worked. His informants tell him that Creighton “is always buying horses which he cannot ride”: “the dealers call him the father of fools, because he is so easily cheated about a horse. Mahbub Ali says he is madder than all other Sahibs” (Kim 87). Creighton is in fact the master of the Game:

Kim pretended at first to understand perhaps one word in three of this talk. Then the Colonel, seeing his mistake, turned to fluent and picturesque Urdu and Kim was contented. No man could be a fool who knew the language so intimately, who moved so gently and silently, and whose eyes were so different from the dull fat eyes of the other Sahibs. (Kim 88)

But if even real cross-dressing agents were largely fictions, what was the source of their appeal as narrative subjects? I would suggest the answer lies in the
nature of Empire. Imperial texts did more than entertain; they informed and influenced. Undercover operative narratives brought the adventure story’s thrilling exploits together with supposed insider information about previously unknown spaces on the map. But more than simple geography or ethnography lessons, these stories affirmed the extent of the Empire’s influence. Cross-dressing adventurers had gone where no white man had gone before—or so the narratives always began—and discovered hitherto unknown—at least to Western Europe—species, geographic features, peoples, and cultural practices, all of which contributed to Eurocentric knowledge. And furthermore, the fact that these British agents were boldly exploring unknown geography led English readers to see these new territories as future colonial possessions. For when is an exploration not a forerunner of expansion?

And even if immediate colonization was not planned, readers took these travel narratives as insider guides as to how foreign spaces operated. Memoirs such as Richard Burton’s were supposedly revealing native secrets, even though the field work more closely resembled the National Inquirer than detailed ethnographic description. These myopic visions captured the imagination of readers and policymakers alike, shaping inappropriate and harmful colonial legislation, and determining the ways which diplomatic relations were mishandled. All too often, the powerful drew their knowledge of “colored peoples” from “childhood books,” and “the fact remained that those men belonged to the realms of imagination, books, or the theatre.” As Albert Memmi observes, the colonizer’s concern with the colonized came indirectly—through images which were common to his entire nation, through military epics or vague strategic considerations” (7).

Since it was never in British interest to represent the colonized as deserving of self-determination and independence, even when attempting to showcase colonial culture, travel memoirs and journals all pointed to the need for British intervention
and rule. Take for instance the Wonder House, “the scientific project to organize a vast array of ‘facts’ about India within a total, unified body of knowledge”:

This imperial archive purported to represent India “as it is” but in reality portrayed it as the British wished to see it: a land fundamentally and irredeemably barbaric, requiring the steady hand of British civilization to preserve order and promote prosperity. (McBratney 113-14)

Burton in particular produced pseudo-ethnological narratives that alienated native culture from British sympathy. Even though “Burton remained a Victorian Englishman, and there was never a thought of seriously going native” (Farwell 45), having gone “jungli” made readers assume his sympathies lay with native culture. Take for example his fascination with Hinduism, Sikhism, Sufism, and the Tantric sect of Hinduism. His initial ethnological reports were critical of native practices. At the very least, he perpetuated beliefs that natives were deviants, and their beliefs freakish and perverse. Burton described his own initiation as a Nagar Brahmin—a sect of Hinduism which celebrated snakes—in graphic, imaginative detail. The ceremony of initiation, the upanaya, stresses such purification rituals as the cleansing and perfuming of the body, and shaving of the head. Burton’s version in Vikram and the Vampire, however, tends to focus on a hunchback ‘sitting nude upon a dead body” (Rice 66). As for his translation of Vikram, a collection of Sanskrit folk tales, Burton himself admits, he has “ventured to remedy the conciseness of their language, and to clothe the skeleton with flesh and blood” (Rice 65). The fantastic results can be seen in passages like the account of Nagar rites:

[The devotee] was clad in the ochre-coloured lion-wrap of his class; from his head streamed long tangled locks of hair like horsehair; his black body was striped with
lines of chalk, and a girdle of thigh bones encircled his waist. His face was smeared with ashes from a funeral pyre, and his eyes . . . gleamed from this mask with an infernal light of hate. . . . He was playing on a human skull with two shank bones, making music for the horrid revelry. (Rice 67)

Yikes. Even the most liberal reader would find it difficult to believe that Indians like these were ready for the vote.

That Burton’s veracity was largely unquestioned, even by those who considered him a pariah, was primarily because “he had gone behind the veil.” As described, his methods seemed unimpeachable. Arriving in a new town, he “would open a shop and sit amid the flies and gossip of the bazaar before his trays.” But “he only sold his goods when he had to,” instead asking “a thousand questions concerning the market and the local customs.” Adding a touch of the romantic to the mix, Farwell notes that “The prettiest girls were made steady customers of the Persian merchant by his polite manners and handsome face as well as his generous portions. They did not mind his questions” (43). Neither was Burton’s industry an issue. Already conversant in Hindustani before arriving in India, he immersed himself in whatever piqued his interest, studying under Dosabhai Sohrabji, a munshi, who taught him Gujarati and Persian. An apt pupil, Burton “spent twelve hours [a day] on his language studies” (Farwell 31), becoming proficient in a fairly short time. But he also learned such native customs as swordsmanship, wrestling, riding, and snake charming, learning “under a professional snake charmer until he had mastered the art” (Farwell 31). Although Burton’s bubu, “that invaluable aide to the anthropologist, the linguist and the lonely soldier: a native mistress” (Farwell 31), might actually have provided him with the comprehensive education he got in India, he immersed
himself in Indian language and customs enough to earn the title of “White Nigger” (Farwell 32). An auspicious start for the future cross-dressing hero.

Burton’s unquestioned energy and application, however, led to the fallacy that his reports must therefore be accurate. In the event, his accounts of Indian culture and native behavior primarily reinforced grotesque stereotypes. His focus on native sex lives and radical superstitions, often to the exclusion of other aspects of daily life, created the impression that there was nothing but erotic perversion and weird rituals going on in the streets of Karachi and Delhi. Allegedly commissioned by Sir Charles Napier, Burton’s first official report on pederasty supplied evidence for what many Britains already “knew”: natives were deviants. “There were three brothels in which eunuchs and boys were for hire,” Farwell reports: and “Burton was intrigued. He went back evening after evening until he had learned all, including such details as the fact that the price of boys was double the price of eunuchs” (35). As we’ve seen, such reports could have been filed about London. But “ethnological” accounts like these originating in India proved that the depraved inhabitants needed England’s presence and guidance.

What’s especially significant about cross-dressed narratives by writers such as Pottinger, Burton, and Kipling is that they “demonstrate” native incompetence by having the colonizing figures display these traits as part of their Oriental drag. While tricked out, these men behave atrociously and repulsively, in a supposed imitation of typical native behavior. Poor work ethics, cheating instincts, vicious natures, superstitious minds, and cowardly reactions—these make up the costume of the colonizer. When for instance Kim masquerades as an Indian, he becomes faithless, opportunistic, and avaricious. His religion is for purchase:

> “Then in God’s Name take blue for red,” said Mahbub,

alluding to the Hindu colour of Kim’s disreputable turban.
Kim countered with the old proverb, “I will change my faith and my bedding, but thou must pay for it.” (98)

His Indian manner is fawning and ingratiating. After “dropping into his most caressing and confidential tone—the one, he well knew that few could resist,” Kim then asks, “Is—is there any need of a son in thy family? Speak freely, for we priests—” (52). As readers, we of course are supposed to absolve the cross-dressing hero of all crimes or deceptions committed while play acting. In fact, we are to enjoy and admire the performance. When Kim is recognizably sahib, his swindling is delightful cheek, with the natives as dupes. For instance, by deftly tricking a naive letter writer, Kim manages to write to Mahbub Ali. Although suspicious that Kim will not pay for his services, the scribe is taken in by Kim’s assurances that he will not run away, and agrees to write Kim’s letter. Kim concludes his dictation with:

“Come then and help me, Mahbub Ali, or send me some money, for I have not sufficient to pay the writer who writes this. “Who writes this. It is my own fault that I was tricked.” (76)

But good Englishman at heart, once he comes into money, Kim does pay the writer. Nor does he cheat the courtesan who aids his first escape from St. Xavier’s—even though he pretends that he will:

She shook with laughter till her bracelets and anklets jinged.

“But who is to pay me for this? Huneefa herself could not have given thee better stuff.”

“Trust in the Gods, my sister,” said Kim gravely screwing his face round as the stain dried. “Besides, hast thou ever helped to paint a Sahib thus before?”
“Never indeed. But a jest is not money.”

“It is worth much more.” (95)

This entire episode is significant for several reasons. First, it eventually demonstrates the integrity of the Englishman. Although the courtesan seems inclined to aid Kim for free, he eventually does pay her for her services. Second, the courtesan herself confirms English faith in the power of their roguish British charms: “Child, thou art beyond all dispute the most shameless son of Shaitan that I have ever known to take up a poor girl’s time with this play, and then to say: ‘Is not the jest enough?’ Thou wilt go very far in this world.’ She gave the dancing-girls’ salutation in mockery” (95). And finally, Kim’s enlistment of the native to help perpetuates the British fantasy of impenetrable disguise. Though only meant to fool a white Englishman, “a certain schoolmaster of a regiment in the cantonments,” the narrative insists on the perfection of the illusion. Kim “ran down the stairs in the likeness of a low-caste Hindu boy—perfect in every detail” (94, 95). But rents later appear in the veil. In the hills, Kim meets the Woman of Shamlegh, “the legendary Lisbeth” who had been “seduced and abandoned by her English lover” (Sullivan 175). Having lived intimately with the British, she instantly recognizes Kim as one: “Thy face and thy walk and thy fashion of speech put me in mind of my Sahib” (197). His cover blown, Kim falls back on British charm by outing himself. Placing “his arm round her waist,” he “kissed her on the cheek, adding in English: Thank you verree much, my dear.” He follows with the jaunty warning that “you must not be so sure of your heathen priests,” and concludes by holding “out his hand English fashion,” and saying, “Goodbye, my dear” (199). A discovery story thus turns into proof of English charm. No native could resist an Englishman who “smiled ravishingly” (191). Of course, gender and class have an effect here as well. Kim can safely disclose his “true” identity to natives of a certain social rank, and whatever he actually reveals cannot harm
him. All he leaks to the courtesan and the Woman of Shamlegh is flirtatious nonsense.

And in any case, the fantasy of successful cross-dressing actually diverts attention from the far less exciting or admirable, but far more effective structure for maintaining power: the recruitment of native spies. In the early days of the Game, British operatives did disguise themselves to gather military, political, and topographical information. But as McBratney explains, “the use of white agents proved risky, even deadly, in regions where one slip of the tongue or error of dress was liable to betray the agent’s ethnic and national identity.” As a result, the British established “a secret school at Dehra Dun,” designed “to train native employees of the Survey.” The graduates became “the Pundits” who were “by all accounts a brave, talented, and resourceful band of agents” (112). Yet for all the risks they took, “they were identified by number or cryptogram only” (McBratney 112), denied a place in the pantheon of heroes in British imperial narratives, and still mistrusted. Of all the Pundits, only Sarat Chandra Das, “a highly educated Hindu Bengali,” was ever “entrusted to gather military and political intelligence in addition to topographical data” (McBratney 112). Yet his fictional counterpart, Hurree Chundar Mookerjee (In *Kim*, Hurree Babu) could never be a figure of emulation for British readers. That honor was reserved for English players, however limited their cross-dressing skills, for the fantasy of chameleon power suited the Empire’s vision of itself. The English agent could ape the native, and even believe he had succeeded in passing, but the native agent could only pass as another native. No native could mimic an Englishman and escape detection: the very idea was absurd to the imperial organization. As a result, although readers can imagine Kim mimicking “perfectly the diverse vernaculars he hears in his adventures,” it is impossible to imagine Hurree Chundar Mookerjee passing as an
Englishman of any caste. And this was entirely the point. The colonial glass ceiling could only allow light to turn into dark.

In fact, the more impressive the skills of disguise a native might have, the more suspect and potentially dangerous he becomes, even when working for the Empire. An accomplished shape-shifter, Hurree’s talents also raise the threat of double agency. Though the notion that Asian powers might be running their own undercover operations was never seriously considered by the British, Hurree’s skills still caused discomfort. His girth, for instance, would seem to make him far less able to disguise himself than the nimble Kim, but Hurree is astonishingly slippery. Even Kim is continually surprised by his teacher. He tracks Kim throughout the novel—and always catches him unawares, as he does at the Sahiba’s house. Resting there, Kim socializes with a traveling hakim, only realizing at the end of the evening his mistake:

Said the hakim, hardly more than shaping the words with his lips: “How do you do, Mr. O’Hara? I am jolly glad to see you again.” Kim’s hand clenched about the pipe-stem. Anywhere on the open road, perhaps, he would not have been astonished; but here, in this quiet back-water of life, he was not prepared for Hurree Babu. (164)

Nor is Hurree simply “an efficient stalker,” as he himself claims at the end of the evening. (Some colonizers never seemed to consider this possibility, assuming that any re-encounter with a native could only be by chance.) Hurree’s talents seem endless. A skilled physician, he can perform surgery and effect minor cures. He is also a seasoned agent, who can bluff his way out of “dam tight situations.” Faced with such evidence, Kim’s thoughts move to the edge of illumination:

“He robbed them,” thought Kim, forgetting his own share in the game. “He tricked them. He lied to them like a
Bengali. They gave him a chit (a testimonial). He makes them a mock at the risk of his own life—I never would have gone down to them after the pistol-shots—and then he says he is a fearful man.” (211)

Ultimately, Kim and the reader stop short of admiration. Hurree’s courage looks more like folly. But the tests required by the proposed Ilbert Bill, which would have given “various classes of native officials in the colonial administrative services limited criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects living in the mofussil, or country towns of India” (Sinha 33), ensured that overly able natives would not score high on any imperial popularity poll. Although few believed that natives could replace colonials entirely, the potential for them to have any power was unsettling.

In consequence, the brilliant and skilled Hurree also serves as Kim’s comic, native fool. The frightful stereotypes found in this Hindu gentleman reinforced all of the Empire’s prejudice against Bengalis. He is ingratiating and sycophantic, effeminate and silly. Upon entering Kim’s sickroom, “exuding joy and salutations,” Hurree receives the contents of the kilta and falls to “skipping elephantinely” (208). As this image suggests, Hurree is also physically grotesque: “hulking obese Babu whose stockinged legs shook with fat,” walked with “the gait of a bogged cow” (119). His speech, often a tortured pastiche of upper class twit and malapropisms, alienates him from the reader and from Kim: “[Colonel Creighton] found me at a loose string, and I had to go down to Chitor to find that beastly letter. I do not like the South—too much railway travel; but I drew good traveling allowance. Ha! Ha! . . . I tell our mutual friend that you take the bally bun, by Jove! It was splendid. I came to tell you so” (165). Kim’s blunt British response to Hurree—“why talk like an ape up a tree? . . . Talk Hindi and let us get to the yolk of the egg. . . . Why art thou here? Give a straight answer” (166)—
implicitly suggests that an incapacity for English straight talk disqualifies even a first rate Bengali from governing the nation.

As if these character flaws were not damaging enough, Hurree’s declarations of cowardice entirely separate him from his colonial superiors. For English readers, who thanks to newspapers, articles, and eye-witness accounts were already convinced that Bengalis were fainthearted, Hurree’s indisputable bravery in dealing with the French gets undercut by his constant reminders to Kim that heroism was not in his true nature. After Huneefa’s enchantment of Kim, Hurree speaks to him with bravado: “I hope you were not frightened... I superintended entire operation.” Yet during the dawut, Hurree’s “hand shook” and Mahbub must tell him, “Do not be afraid” (135). Fearing “all the Power of Darkness” is one thing; refusing to behave manfully is another. Anxious to retrieve the papers that Kim carries, Hurree deliberates robbing the Sahiba, but lacks the resolve to carry it through himself, and calls Mahbub Ali for reinforcements. Unbowed by Kim’s and Mahbub’s rebukes for contemplating the dacoity of his host, “The Babu looked shyly down his nose. ‘Well, you see, I am a fearful man, and I do not like responsibility. You were sick... and I did not know where deuce-an’-all the papers were” (210). Of course, the imperial ego that saw supposed Bengali timidity as the antithesis of British stoutheartedness overlooked the fact that native compliance did not necessarily indicate cowardice, but insight. “How else can one explain how a garrison of a few men can hold out in a mountain post,” Memmi asks: “How a handful of often arrogant colonizers can live in the midst of a multitude of colonized?”

The colonizers themselves are amazed, and it follows that they accuse the colonized of cowardice. Actually, the accusation is too easy; they know very well that if they were in danger, their lonely position would quickly
be changed. All the resources of science—telephone, telegraph, and airplane—would be placed at their disposal and, within a few minutes, terrible weapons of defense and destruction. (Memmi 93)

Despite these circumstances, the British invested heavily in the belief that Indians were cowards. The threat of a clever Bengali turning on the Empire raised the specter of insurrection—a particularly raw nerve after 1857. As a result, while *Kim* celebrates the chameleon qualities of its hero, it is uneasy about them in Hurree. In a huge country, whose native populace vastly outnumbered its British residents, natives who can appear out of nowhere and disappear just as suddenly could be unnerving to an English reader. They certainly were to Kim, and Kipling undercuts the threat of the double-cross in several ways. First, Kipling makes the reports of Hurree’s prowess too fantastic to believe. However clever, how could anyone miss such a large man carrying a big blue and white striped parasol? *Kim* also diminishes Hurree by denying him individuality. A variant of the “they all look the same” stereotype, Hurree’s ability to disappear into a crowd of other natives is no great feat, even though Kim was impressed when “Hurree Babu stepped back a pace or two into the crowd at the entrance of Lucknow station and—was gone” (138). This apparent skill, however, is also tied to British racism. “Another sign of the colonized depersonalization is what one might call the mark of the plural,” Albert Memmi writes: “The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity. ‘They are this.’ ‘They are all the same’” (85). Thus Kim simultaneously celebrates Hurree’s disappearance as proof of the native agent’s skill, while undercutting the achievement by reaffirming that one native looked very much like another.
Finally, the narrative makes Hurree less threatening by painting him as an Anglophilic, would-be Fellow of the Royal Society (F. R. S.). John McBratney correctly identifies the accomplished Bengali as a source of anxiety, noting that “the English-educated Indian threatened to collapse the psychological, cultural, and political differences between Briton and Indian upon which the British founded their prestige” (130). Yet Kim still quells imperial fears of potential insurrection. Leaving Hurree’s obliviousness to one side, his rejection of non-Empire forms of government suggests the Bengali has no tricks up his sleeve. And although his attachment to Herbert Spencer and all manner of English customs and idioms could perhaps grant him “the potential of the colonized to turn the colonizer’s words against him” (McBratney 132), Hurree’s scientific aspirations rule out the possibility. “He wants to be made a member of the Royal Society by taking ethnological notes,” says one of his colleagues, “He likes better to collect manners and customs information” (Kim 130). Hurree finds a sympathetic supporter in Creighton, another man with an ambition to write “F. R. S.” after his name, and who therefore “smiled and thought the better of Hurree Babu, moved by like desires” (Kim 131). If the Game’s principal strategist trusted and relied upon Hurree, then the reader could as well. And in any case, a shibboleth is firmly in place to sift out Bengali chaff—whether a Creighton, or a Royal Society which “rejected notes to Asiatic Quarterly Review” by ambitious Hindu gentlemen (Kim, 136).

Contrary to historical evidence and popular fears, Kipling’s narrative agrees that educated Bengalis always saw themselves as fundamentally English. Referring to the Russian agents’ plan to cement their disguises by bringing their game to a taxidermist, Hurree remarks that “They are exclusively sporting gentlemen, and they are allowed special faceelities by the Government. Of course, we always do that. It is our British pride” (167). Ultimately, Hurree desires to be
included, not to replace. As Mrinalini Sinha points out, upper Bengali society tried to disassociate itself from Hindu stereotypes, and W. W. Hunter, correspondent for *The Times* wrote that "native officials in the elite Indian civil service were perhaps even 'more English in thought and feeling than the Englishmen themselves'" (Sinha 46). England was not the enemy for Hurree Babu: it bestowed approbation and reward, and set the standard for how to live and behave. In this way, the native who imitated the Englishman was ultimately effectively imprisoned by his aspiration.

Mollified by narratives that assured readers there was nothing to fear from uppity natives, Englishmen were then free to explore memoirs, journals, novels, and the like for ways of understanding their Empire, part of "the relentless will of the British to master their Indian subjects thoroughly" (McBratney 113). Twenty-first century readers may understand that ethnography "does not speak for others, but about them" (Comaroff 9); Victorian readers, however, assumed that it did. By reading ethnological studies and travel memoirs, an Englishman sought to learn the "true" natures of natives. And it was tempting to believe that Burton's or Kipling's writings contained accurate descriptions. After all, who could make this stuff up? Thus, the British "knew" that the men of the Orient and Arabia were sexually deviant, and the women were lascivious and forward, because no one could doubt the veracity of a man who had "gone behind the veil." Kipling's writings were also read as insider information. Here, childhood experiences served as qualifications for speaking authoritatively about the native. "From early on," McBratney writes, Kipling "behaved as a typical Indian-born boy. He spoke the Hindustani of his parents' servants as his familiar tongue, and when his ayah and bearer sent him to see his parents, they cautioned him, 'Speak English'" (6). Kipling also saw sights forbidden adult Englishmen and women. As a child, he was "in a state of temporary castelessness. Being 'below the age of caste,' an
English child would not be yet considered fully as ‘white’” (McBratney xix). In this state of liminality, Kipling had at times a more intimate vision of Indian life:

With Meeta, his Hindu bearer, he ‘would sometimes go into little Hindu temples where, being below the age of caste, I held his hand and looked at the dimly-seen, friendly Gods’. Although his parents, as adult Anglo-Indians, were considered mlecchas, or non-Hindus, and were therefore barred from Hindu shrines, the young Kipling . . . benefited from a suspension of caste rules that allowed him access to the sacred. (McBratney 6)

Like Burton, Kipling also investigated native life as it occurred in bazaars and towns:

he sometimes roamed the native bazaar to interview Indian contacts. . . . [and] he wandered outside the Lahore station “in all manner of odd places—liquor-shops, gambling-and opium dens, which are not a bit mysterious, wayside entertainments such as puppet-shows, native dances; or in and about the narrow gullies under the Mosque of Wazir Khan for the sheer sake of looking.” (McBratney 7)

Finally, like Burton, Kipling’s peregrinations did not go unnoticed, leading eventually to the author’s further alienation from the English community in India. This extended to the ultimate rejection: “There were even rumors (false, of course) that he had ‘a touch of the tarbrush’—a trace of the Indian in his otherwise British blood” (McBratney 7).

Though Kipling’s personal habits raised eyebrows and discouraged familiarity with him, these traits reinforced the general belief that Kipling had
special, even unique access to the Indian people. And that is precisely the problem. In Kipling, all of India parades before the eyes of the reader. Kim and his Lama’s search for the River brings them in contact with Sikh artisans and soldiers, Hindu money-lenders, Hindu-Jat cultivators and their wives, courtesans from Amritzar (now Amritsar), hillmen and women from Northern India, and minor maharanees. The characters are vibrant, and often generous, compassionate, indulgent, tolerant, and good-natured. Yet all to some degree contribute to creating negative stereotypes of the Indian native. How could the Empire take Indian agitation for more autonomy and self-determination seriously when its individual components were exposed in these narratives as being so idiosyncratic? Although Kipling is at pains to represent a pluralistic society, the Indians in Kim are all in their own personal worlds. Allegiances across character lines seem impossible in a world of flat characters.

Which is just what the late Victorian and Edwardian reader wanted to know. Faced with a crisis of confidence in existing forms and practices of colonial rule,” colonial administrators took on the “task of accommodating a growing number of Western educated Indians within the existing colonial administrative and political structures without threatening the exclusive rights and privileges to which generations of colonial officials and non-officials in India had grown accustomed” (Sinha 3, 4). Though all signs signaled changing times in the Empire, denial was often the most attractive strategy. It was easier to ignore the formation of the Indian National Congress and native volunteer forces, or to turn a blind eye to the surge of native candidates testing for positions within the revised public service commission. Imperial narratives often served to support the unofficial policy of imagining the problem away, by representing an Empire that was still young, powerful, clever, adaptable, immune to disturbances from within, and untouched by history.
To return to my first observations on the act of looking, if to see is to want is to have, then the observing British agent in his Arab costume was often the advance scout for Western imperial desires for, and designs on, territory and influence in the Middle East and Asia. To survive this gaze, the native object often concealed resistance by allowing the gazer to see whatever he wanted, regardless of accuracy. Many of the cross-dressed agents of Empire therefore never knew their disguises had been penetrated—or that their idiosyncratic ramblings would lead to invasion and colonization. Though dedicated to discovering the real foreign site, they saw little: their gaze was too quick, too filtered, too uncomprehending.

Not that it mattered. For the reading public at home, and for the communities they observed, the agent’s and author’s impressions became a political reality, and their subjects, though declining to stare back, found themselves fixed objects in the subject eye of the Western observer.
He’s Not Evil, He’s Just Misunderstood: Making the Unknown Spaces of the Globe Just Like Home

Like the literature of Scouting and Adventure, rogue narratives responded to the pressures of an aging Empire. Rogue narratives also fully anticipated that colonial challenges, from the minor to the monumental, would test Britain. But these texts were more likely to be brutally honest about what had to be done to sustain the Empire through precarious times, and did not shy away from admitting that ugly acts would ensure continued imperial control. Rogue narratives anticipated what would follow when official diplomatic solutions or traditional imperial posturing and threats had failed. Adventure narratives supplied “fairytale” characters and events—John Buchan’s superman heroes, or Edgar Rice Burroughs’ fantasy Oparian cities of gold waiting to be plundered. But these heroes presented the “clean” side of adventure. Rogue narratives keep looking when the adventure narrative eye discreetly turns away—the point when Gordon authorizes the execution of two suspected informants, or the nightmare time when Warburton waits for, and tacitly sanctions Cooper’s murder. In rogue narratives the dirty business of Empire goes down.

The heroes of such narratives were not going to look like Baden-Powell’s Scout administrator, or the type of civil servant Forster skewers in Ronny Heaslop. The rogue more commonly fulfilled the stereotype of the “white nigger”—the white man who went native, even though he might still wear the uniform of the British officer, or the crisp attire of the self-disciplined civil servant. While “going native” entailed a supposed loss of reason and humanity, rogue narratives acknowledged that sometimes the villain looked just like the hero. And yet, though objects of fascination, these characters were ultimately disposable. The Englishman who has snapped his tether is always disposed of—usually in a
heinous, but fitting, manner. As for the operative, after he accomplishes his particularly distasteful task, he generally fades back into a dim, morally relative world. This is in keeping with his value as the Empire's ace in a literal hole. Skillful, ruthless, and perhaps most importantly, morally flexible, he accomplishes what sanctioned methods and traditional heroics could not.

But, activating the rogue signaled that the Empire was desperate. His methods are considered barbaric because they too closely resemble the savage and irrational behavior of natives. His appearance almost always implies the failure of British nerve, and even though sanctioned to act autonomously, the authorities in rogue narratives constantly exert pressure on these free-wheeling heroes to acknowledge their imperial masters. And inevitably, the renegade operative at some point becomes too well informed, too dangerous, too insane. Even when admiring their ability, readers should not ultimately be tempted to emulate or endorse them. For all their thrilling out-of-bounds adventures, rogue narratives resolve themselves as cautionary tales.

This is a consequence of the very nature of Empire. Contrary to Hannah Arendt's argument that an empire is "driven by the specific appetite for a specific country," in "an endless process in which every country would serve only as a stepping-stone for further expansion" (215), an empire is a fundamentally bureaucratic, often virtually static organism. By the mid-eighteenth century, the British Empire's size and bureaucratic structure had already made it a sluggish behemoth, unable to travel quickly or lightly. Though history primers, adventure fiction, and travel memoirs, may have presented—and continue to present—the Empire as an unstoppable juggernaut, moving forward with a sense of righteousness, it actually tends to operate in fits and starts, requiring sometimes violent prodding to come to a decision. Unless backed into a corner, or sure of a favorable outcome (at least in the short term), the British government refused to
act without a commissioned study—and there was still a good chance that the Empire would refuse to follow the recommendations if a way out presented itself.

At the end of the nineteenth century, this inertia seemed most obvious in the Empire’s reluctance to support its field operatives, or to launch rescue or revenge missions. Take the case of William Moorcroft, a veterinary surgeon with the East India Company who arrived in India as “superintendent of its stud.” A conscientious employee, Moorcroft believed that native horses could revitalize the Company’s stock. What began, however, as a search for better breeding stock became a quest to establish trade relationships with Northern Indian provinces and Tibet, and to stop Russian incursion into British holdings in India. But as often happens to employees who seek departmental revitalization and revolution, Moorcroft was shut down at every turn. He made three separate journeys into Tibet and Afghanistan in search of horses. But permission to proceed was given grudgingly, and he “was given no official status, so that he could be disowned if he got into difficulties, or if his visit to a city so far beyond India’s frontiers were to lead to protests from St. Petersburg” (Hopkirk 91).

Determined to follow a policy of conciliation, England ignored what this field agent reported. Although Moorcroft provided evidence of Russian incursion into Northern Indian territories and Tibet, his superiors would not pursue new trade agreements, or oppose these advances into remote parts of English colonial possessions. Alarmed by what he saw, and convinced that decisive trade and political action was necessary, Moorcroft brokered an unauthorized political alliance between England and the independent state of Ladakh. For his pains, he was censured, and threatened with termination. The logic was thorny:

Not only were [Company officials] unconvinced of Russia’s designs on Central Asia, let alone India, but they were also anxious to avoid doing anything likely to offend
Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Punjab, whom they regarded as a most valuable friend and neighbour. The very last thing they wanted was to have him, and his powerful, well-trained army of Sikhs, as a foe. And it was no secret in Calcutta that Ranjit Singh, following his earlier annexation of Kashmir, jealously viewed Ladakh as lying within his own sphere of influence. (Hopkirk 96)

As was often the case with the sudden rogue, Moorcroft’s hasty actions did not fully take England’s political situation into consideration—Singh’s domains shielded India from invasion. But Moorcroft’s spot-on assessment proved accurate: in less than fifty years, Russia would begin a serious push into India. Unfortunately for Moorcroft, his warnings were ill-timed, and “disowned by his chiefs,” he finished up “in a lonely, unmarked grave beside the Oxus” (Hopkirk 88).

Moorcroft’s fate was a typical outcome of the Empire’s policy of containment. Like any large bureaucratic body, the British Empire aspired to the appearance of a seamless homogeneity. Individual components rolled as one; conscious or unconscious deviation from ideology or job description was discouraged; even far flung agents were expected to comply. Agents like Moorcroft who not only told the Empire that it was mistaken, but identified the specific problem and the solution, were not always popular. To begin with, the messenger is always blamed. Pointing to cracks in the Empire’s armor and prophesying doom were not welcome reminders that the British could go the way of the Romans. Furthermore, the agent who thought he knew better was a bad model for the Empire’s citizens. His conduct suggested not only that the imperial code of conduct—self-abnegation and sacrifice—should be optional, but that the Empire’s official representatives were fallible, and that the way the Empire was
run was often wrong. Especially when the rogue agent began raising these doubts publicly, he became a dangerous liability. Though the majority of a nation’s citizens almost never seem to decide that its current course is self-destructive and immoral, letting individuals exercise the right to question and doubt allowed others to at least entertain the idea that such behavior was possible. And in the colonies themselves, such public displays of British ideological rebellion aided and supported those natives who were objecting to rule by someone else’s empire.

For all of the Empire’s recruiting promises that men could recreate themselves in the colonies, as the century came to a close, the “blank space of delightful mystery” presented “to dream gloriously over” was filled “with rivers and lakes and names” (Conrad 22). Geographic distances between countries, colonial offices and outposts, and the metropole also essentially shrank, as telegraph wires granted London more control of its agents in the field, and more information about situations before they became fait accompli. Although recruiters and scout masters preserved the illusion that outpost agents were still relatively autonomous, colonial representatives were now seldom left to shift for themselves, jury rigging solutions to contain explosions. Since even minor functionaries in obscure backwaters could be watched and regulated, the days of creating a personal sub-fiefdom, largely independent of the Empire, were over, and those who had tried to impose their own will on the colonial landscape, or who resisted the Empire’s control, were disowned, thrown off, or destroyed.

And yet though technological advances were altering the way the business of Empire was conducted, they could not entirely replace imperial and colonial traditions. Ironically enough, the agent devoted to bringing the Empire “up to date” often ended up the outcast or the victim. Selective efficiency was acceptable, but resisting the way things were could be suicide. No literary work sets this paradox out more clearly than W. Somerset Maugham’s short story, “The
Outstation.” The station’s longtime Resident, Mr. Warburton, is one of Said’s and Memmi’s stereotypic colonizers. “When a man of [Warburton’s] set had run through his money he went out to the colonies,” Maugham writes, and as Memmi notes, such men “imported and imposed the way of life of their own country,” that distant nation which provides “administrative, political and cultural inspiration,” and upon which the agent’s “eyes are constantly fixed” (Memmi 5). Warburton copes with his exile by maintaining an appearance and daily routine that ignores Malaysia:

He went into his room where his things were neatly laid out as if he had an English valet. . . . The only concession he made to the climate was to wear a white dinner jacket; but otherwise, in a boiled shirt and a high collar, silk socks and patent-leather shoes, he dressed as formally as though he were dining at his club in Pall Mall. (905)

The newly arrived agent, Allen Cooper is nothing of the sort. “I didn’t know you were going to do that,” Cooper says when Warburton appears dressed for dinner, “I very nearly put on a sarong,” and he falls back on his soiled traveling outfit for proper dinner attire. Given Warburton’s smothering snobbery, Cooper’s relaxed attitude and contempt for the rigid rules of English social hierarchy trick the reader into believing that the young colonial will bring modernity to the Outstation. This is a short lived impression, but the point of the story is not that Cooper is an ass—although he is. Instead, Maugham describes the frequent fate of those who choose to abandon rules of imperial conduct supposedly governing English civil servants abroad—and not just at the hands of “the natives,” but from the agent’s colleagues and superiors.

In his study of ex-patriate society in the colonies, David Cannadine makes the often observed point that
the British Empire, in both its settlement dominions and colonies of conquest, was generally built around the principles of replicating and supporting a hierarchical social structure modeled on, or likened to, and tied in with, that which it was thought existed (or had once existed) in Britain itself. (13)

In South Asia, and India in particular, "the social arrangements" established by colonists "seemed easily recognizable and comfortingly familiar" (16). London actively supported "this layered vision of the empire" creating that "association between crown and empire" (21) which pervaded the relationships between English civil servants and their colonial cousins. Yet replicating "home" in India or Malaysia seemed at odds with the entire idea of "starting over" that colonial service promised those with few or limited options at home. As a result, it often came as a shock to some bureaucratic immigrants that to those officials already in the colonies, the newcomers' social standing remained the same. In response, the newcomers still deferred both to their "legitimate" betters in England, and to the colonial administrative hierarchies, but set out to establish other societies in which they were the apex. As Cannadine explains, underpinning the "imported social hierarchies" of "all those mid-century settler regimes" was a belief in the necessity of a "graded, layered society":

That . . . was what they were seeking to establish in these new, far distant realms: in part by the export of authentic British aristocrats overseas, who would set the social tone and the social standard; in part by the emulative creation of their own indigenous landed gentry. (30)
For those like Maugham’s Warburton, who as they “watched the coast of England recede into the mist” felt they were leaving behind what “made life worth living” (910), mimicking in Malaysia the structures of the metropole was comforting.

But by the end of the century, such aping and kowtowing was not to everyone’s tastes. This was in part because a second or even third generation colonial hierarchy with a sense of entitlement through occupation was growing up with decided suspicions of new administrative imports. These colonizers favored colony-born nepotism and ingenious dynastic arrangements. They also thought they were smarter and more prepared for authority. The balance was a tricky one. Kim’s colony-born classmates never forgot that they were English: “St. Xavier’s looks down on boys who ‘go native altogether.’ One must never forget that one is a Sahib, and that some day, when examinations are passed, one will command natives” (93). But such a “country born has his own manners and customs which do not resemble those of any other land”:

They were sons of subordinate officials in the Railway, Telegraph, and Canal services; of warrant-officers . . . of captains of the Indian Marine, Government pensioners, planters, Presidency shopkeepers, and missionaries. A few were cadets of the old Eurasian houses. . . . Their parents could well have educated them in England, but they loved the school that had served their own youth, and generation followed sallow-hued generation at St. Xavier’s (92).

At the end of the nineteenth century, those advocating more frankly utilitarian policies still valued administrators well versed in native languages and customs—but now, these individuals could be produced by the colonies themselves: After all (went the thinking), who better to rule Indians than one raised, in part, as Indian” (McBratney xvii). But these talents of the colonial born and bred were also a taint,
derived from intimate association with natives. Those in the metropole, and those still sent out from it, were often suspicious of men too comfortable in the colonies. Such behavior not only suggested possible miscegenist backgrounds, but also raised the possibility of a rejection of English values. And of course, since the system of class privilege and preferment was still firmly in place, a colonial thoroughly familiar with native methods of operation, and brilliantly skilled at administrating, was still not guaranteed any reward or recognition for his labors.

In “The Outstation” the clash between Cooper and Warburton arises out of these circumstances. Though “painstaking and competent,” Cooper does not receive the rewards that the incompetent but well-connected receive. During their first dinner together, Cooper and Warburton discuss a common acquaintance, Hennerly, a civil servant new to Kuala Solor. Warburton predicts that Hennerly, the nephew of a lord, will be “a great success.” Actual experience, however, leads Cooper to denounce him as a “rotten bounder” and a “damned prig.” What Warburton sees as Hennerly’s merits—his good relations, his schooling at Eton, his being a “first-rate sportsman”—damns him in Cooper’s eyes. The ease with which the man receives appointments and positions—things denied to colonials or those without connections—makes him a symbol of the preferential treatment that the well-placed expected as a matter of course. “I heard he was related to somebody or other,” Cooper bitterly remarks, “I suppose that’s how he got his job” (906). Cooper attributes his own lack of upward movement to his colonial origins. Born and educated in Barbadoes (now Barbados), Cooper resents and dismisses English hierarchical values. “I haven’t got much use for the first-rate sportsman myself,” he declares, “What does it amount to in the long run that a man can play golf and tennis better than other people?” He not surprisingly feels that “They attach a damned sight too much importance to that sort of thing in England” (907), and blames his own career frustrations on similar prejudices. “A
fat chance I had of getting a commission,” he complained, “I was what was called
a Colonial. I hadn’t been to a public school and I had no influence. I was in the
ranks the whole damned time” (907).

Though Cooper’s odious personality might have also been a factor, the fact
remains that his destruction, while inevitable, was hastened by his refusal to adapt
to the place in the hierarchy of the Empire offered him. Warburton displays the
“alternative” course. His pedigree is hardly impeccable either: “never a word did
he say of the honest Liverpool manufacturer from whom, through his mother, a
Miss Gubbins, he had come by his fortune” (909). But for all his posturing,
Warburton still knew what his assigned role in the Empire was, and his least
attractive traits paradoxically ensure his success and survival in Borneo. In short,
Warburton is a “naked, unadulterated common snob who dearly loved a lord”
(908). These notables in turn “laughed at him, but in their hearts felt his adoration
not unnatural” (909), and Warburton’s willing submissiveness receives the reward
of a post after the loss of his fortune. With neither the connections to recommend
him, nor the funds to purchase a grander position, he will never be more than a
mid-level colonial functionary, but unlike “counter-jumpers” like Cooper,
Warburton knows what is within his grasp, and does not bemoan his career’s
limits. And therein lies the secret to his “success.” Warburton does not begrudge
his betters their privileged lives, nor does he challenge the system. Instead, he
seeks to replicate it whenever possible, and in the process, claims his own
privileges from those below him. Cooper, and others like him—colonial born,
lower class, or even educated natives—obviously threatened the stratified status
quo. Take for example the romantic fiction of Empire, which suggests that
imperial administration is the modern equivalent of chivalric quest adventures
(Allen Quatermain, Kim). Despite his now portly figure, Mr. Warburton plays his
part to the hilt. “Looking very sharp in his spotless ducks and white shoes” (903),
he counters the alien landscape and culture by demanding his British creature comforts. He trained two Malay boys to serve—and right on time, they “came in, one bearing gin pahits, and the other a tray on which were olives and anchovies” (906). Such dandyish behavior of course stems from snobbishness, and seems even prissy, but his stereotypic response to the challenges of his isolated situation embodies that chin-up behavior that British readers value in their adventuring heroes.

By contrast, Cooper appears boorish. In colonial iconography, new, fancy gear and outfits mark the neophytes, and spotless attire and unsoiled hands betray the armchair operative. But looking ragged—constantly—indicates a lack of self-possession. His initial appearance in “shabby and soiled” khaki shorts and shirt, and a “battered topee [that] had not been cleaned for days,” may be the result of “a week on a coasting steamer” and “the last forty-eight hours lying in the bottom of a prahu” (Maugham 905), but it still suggests character: “Cooper was untidy and none too clean. His face and hands were covered with little red blotches where mosquitoes had bitten him and he had scratched himself till the blood came” (923). Hardly an imperial hero, and especially when the native Malays at the Station are so presentable. Abas, Cooper’s boy, looks “very neat in his sarong, a little white coat, and a fez . . . of plum-coloured velvet” (912). Ability should of course trump appearance, but looking shabbier than the natives at least suggested that if the Englishman could be roughed up by a foreign environment, then the world might not need to bend to English will after all.

In this and in other ways, Cooper’s insistence on rebelling against expectations of manner and feeling doom him to oblivion. Cooper does not romanticize the imperial mission. The Empire is not for him a benevolent power bestowing light to the colonies, but a corporation concerned only with results. Of course, many men enlist in the Empire for economic reasons; in fact, Warburton
had. But civil servants were supposed to develop a more sentimental attachment to the mission. Warburton had predictably “conceived a deep love for the Malays,” and “wished his body to be brought back to Sembulu and buried among the people he loved within sound of the softly flowing river” (910, 911). Cooper sees the native population only in terms of their ability to perform set tasks. “All I ask is that he should do what I tell him and look sharp about it” (912), he declares, and sees the native as an inferior to be disciplined. “They tried to blackmail me,” he reports, “They had the damned cheek to run away . . . but I just sat tight. They’ve all come to heel again” (918).

Warburton embodies the sentimentality inherent to fantasies or possession of imperial power:

The position he found himself in flattered his vanity, he was no longer the sycophant craving the smiles of the great, he was the master whose word was law. He was gratified by the guard of Dyak soldiers who presented arms as he passed. (910)

Yet he also seems to have a measure of the natives’ respect, and they do appeal to him. Like his more dashing brothers in the imperial romance genre, Warburton has also formed a blood pact with a native. This boy “was not afraid of him, they had gone through too much together, once in the jungle the Resident had saved his life and once, upset in some rapids, but for him the Resident would have drowned” (917). Cooper represents the imperial technocrat’s attitude. When Warburton rebukes him for treating the Malays rudely, Cooper asks, “Aren’t they niggers?” (911). Cooper’s increasingly common and explicit English attitude reflects a belief that the civil service is simply a job, and not a noble mission to improve the lives of natives, and to make the world a better place. Warburton sees his role as advisory and contributory; Cooper sees English colonies as branch offices required
to produce, and therefore to be run without sentimentality or compassion. "What we want is a business government by business men" (914), he declares, but this attitude is too honest, too unflattering an image for Empire to show.

For heroic behavior still has its attractions. In imperial romances, the protagonist instinctively responds to injustice with brave actions, inspiring and making readers proud of the imperial values he represents. Warburton takes this responsibility seriously:

> When the head-hunters were troublesome in the old days
> he set out to chastise them with a thrill of pride in his own
> behaviour . . . and a pretty story was told of his coolness
> in adventuring single-handed into a stockaded village and
> demanding the surrender of a bloodthirsty pirate. (910)

Although his motivation is decidedly unromantic, "He was too vain not to be of dauntless courage" (910), Warburton's outward appearance of heroism is impressive, lending credibility to both the Empire and its representatives.

Moreover, his actions flatter both the reader's and the Empire's assumptions that an English presence was welcome. Cooper on the other hand may be a brave individual (he apparently conducted himself well during the War), but he abuses, bullies, and cheats his servants, justifying his ill treatment of Abas by saying, "I don't choose that he should leave me. I am holding back his wages as a pledge of his good behaviour" (924). Not a good showing at all.

Cooper's worst offense, however, is his failure to maintain the imperial order of things. First he fails to recognize that its hierarchical system did more than simply flatter the egos of colonial administrators. It also ensured that the links to the ultimate authority of England remained unbroken. Cooper's bitter accusation of Warburton—"You've done everything you could to make the place impossible for me because I wouldn't lick your boots for you. You got your knife
into me because I wouldn’t flatter you” is partly accurate (921). But Warburton primarily hates Cooper because his type threatens the Empire itself. If Cooper’s demands for a complete leveling of the playing fields were fulfilled, such equality would have to be extended to all—including natives in the colonies. And while British administrators often recognized their native counterparts as hereditary rulers, and accorded them honors, elevating a “common” native to the rank of English colonial civil servant was another thing entirely—no less uncomfortable than having a “common” English working class man walking amongst the lords. Recognizing the worth of a Cooper would only strengthen the native’s argument that he also deserved the same kinds of rewards. Cooper’s complaints against favoritism, for instance, echo those of Indians applying for admission into the Public Service Commission. Rejecting native applicants with successful test scores was an action similar in spirit to keeping “counterjumpers” like Cooper in lower administrative positions. Theodore Beck, principal of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, for instance, claimed “his real fears” were that “the most patriotic Englishman . . . would not risk heavy stakes on John Bull beating the Bengali Babu in a competitive examination” (Sinha 116). Rejecting a merit based system kept in place institutionalized inequality; were the posts gained solely on merit, as Cooper desires for colonial applicants, then ultimately natives could claim as much right of advancement as any white colonial.

Finally, Cooper’s refusal to play the game endangers the lives of British operatives and representatives by threatening that delicate balance between foreign intruder and benevolent benefactor which imperial administrators struggled to maintain in relation to the natives. Warburton for instance may believe that “connection with a native” was “not only shocking but undignified” (911), but treating natives contemptuously or tyrannically was not an option either. Although a snob, Warburton’s comfort with imbalances in power and privileges
between men makes him gentle, attentive, and even heroic rather than mean and
difficult: "with the Malays he had a happy mixture of condescension and
kindliness. He stood in the place of the Sultan. He knew perfectly how to
preserve his own dignity, and at the same time put a native at his ease" (912).
Unused to a position of influence, Cooper lacks the grace expected of an imperial
representative. When for instance, he “had charge of the prisoners,” he “kept them
hard at it”:

He liked to see them work. He took pleasure in devising
tasks for them; and seeing quickly enough that they were
being made to do useless things the prisoners worked
badly. He punished them by lengthening their hours.
This was contrary to regulations. (920)

While everyone has a horror story about a bad boss, the situation of imperial civil
servants in lonely outposts makes Cooper’s behavior not only obnoxious, but
dangerous. “You had no power to give the order you did,” Warburton tells him, “I
countermanded it because it was harsh and tyrannical. Believe me, I have not
made half a damned fool of you as you have made of yourself” (920). Cooper’s
provocation of Abas and the other Malays heightens the extreme vulnerability of
the two British representatives many miles from English succour. How easy it
would be for an accident to happen, and how difficult it would be for a relief party
to do anything but conduct an investigation. As Warburton recognizes, the only
solution is to eliminate the problem:

Cooper did his work very well. . . . He had done nothing
for which he could be taken to task. But Mr. Warburton
watched him. One day perhaps he would go too far.
None knew better than Mr. Warburton how irritable the
incessant heat could make a man and how difficult it was
to keep one's self-control after a sleepless night. He smiled softly to himself. Sooner or later Cooper would deliver himself into his hand. (919-20)

By ignoring the good of all colonial civil servants, Cooper unknowingly makes them his executioners. An agent could therefore become a rogue simply by doing his job.
Agents like Cooper never knew what hit them. Agents who simply snapped their imperial tether and disappeared were happily forgotten. It was not so simple to deal with operatives whose arguments for going their own way made a lot of sense—and next to impossible to eliminate the popular oddballs. Those who refused to go quietly made their handlers in England most anxious, because it became difficult to pull the imperial fat out of the fire when the inevitable flare up came. What often made these rogue operatives so difficult was their habit of carrying the mythos of imperial romance to the nth degree. More imperial than even the most abstract, jingoistic stereotype of Empire, these rogues’ refusal to bow to demands that violated their principles made characters like Kipling’s Kim look like yes men. Kim may be innovative and imaginative in “dam tight situations,” but this free spirited player still follows orders like a corporate goon.

For above all, Empire relied on obedience to the point of self-sacrifice. Paul Fussell observes that the English were socialized to see a world in which “values appeared stable” and where even “the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable” (21). Unfortunately, this meant that stupidity often could (and did) look a lot like bravery. Take this celebrated sporting maneuver in World War I, performed by a Captain Nevill:

He offered a prize to the platoon which . . . first kicked its football up to the German front line. . . . his little sporting contest did have the effect of persuading his men that the attack was going to be, as the staff had been insisting, a walkover. . . . Captain Nevill was killed instantly. Two of the footballs . . . are preserved today in English museums. (Fussell 27)
Readers of Victorian literature recognize that such appeals to a soldier’s sporting instinct were common; in fact, Fussell sees Captain Nevill’s sacrifice and heroic behavior as “derived from the literary inspiration of Newbolt’s poem about the cricket-boy hero” (27). For reading—as this dissertation suggests—often did provide the script for imperial and heroic acts. As Fussell explains, for many officers and officials, romantic literature supplied the model for “seeing” the world, and in turn completed a circle: “The experiences of a man going up the line to his destiny cannot help seeming to him like those of a hero of medieval romance if his imagination has been steeped in actual literary romances or their equivalent” (135).

This state of affairs could even engulf those who became imperial apostates. Even those utterly unwilling to martyr themselves for the imperial cause found that convincing or coercing a man into dying for the Empire was often easier than dealing with his objections to a bureaucratic structure he no longer believed in, or felt was fundamentally corrupt. Even the most irritating agent would eventually die, and dead, the rogue could no longer embarrass the Empire, but could be depended on to behave himself and serve a useful purpose as an appropriated icon and model. Perhaps the Empire’s most famous rogue, General Charles George Gordon, was a supreme irritant to Gladstone by refusing to withdraw from the Sudan, but his death made him a useful tool of the state which stayed serviceable for a long time. The Victorian public was encouraged to recognize Gordon as a hero of the most traditional kind—an objective not hurt by his cause of death. The most graphic image haunting Victorians was an “English head displayed as a trophy. . . . It appears in reports of the Indian Mutiny, and is the central image in accounts of the death of General Gordon.” Jonathan Peck’s argument that such a displayed head symbolized the “idea of savagery defeating rationality” works on two levels (127). For the English observer, the image
captures the acts of natives betraying the Empire which had sought to improve their lives. But the often unacknowledged fact that the Empire reacted to such deaths with vicious reprisals that often repeated the instigating act meant that savagery often displaced rationality in the colonies themselves. But no matter. To the Victorian observer, all that mattered was that English lives had been lost.

Reports of a white head hanging from a meat hook in a butcher's shop in Kabul, as Sir William Macnaghten's was, horrified and galvanized public opinion in ways that reports of black heads (or Malay or Dyak ones) stuck on the pickets of a fence by British soldiers never could.

Once sanitized, the martyr of Sudan had all the components necessary for imperial sainthood. "Gordon was a Hero," MacDonald notes, "and the story of his betrayal, death, and revenge stayed fresh until well into the new century" (95). In the romanticized visual depictions of Gordon's death in Khartoum—most notably George William Joy's *The Death of General Gordon* which inspired Madame Tussaud's "Mahdi Group"—Gordon stands above the charging Mahdi's forces. His stern, unflinching, and brave demeanor rebukes the frantic hordes. Or as Robert MacDonald reads the Tussaud tableau, "as Gordon towers over the Madhists, so civilisation rises above savagery" (97). This vivid representation of Gordon's last stand reassured readers/viewers that the Empire stood firm against the dark things menacing its stability.

Alive Gordon was a thorn in the side of the Empire. As a host of contemporaries, Lytton Strachey, and future commentators have made abundantly clear, the problem was not so much that he was erratic, impetuous, Thanatostic, and given to tantrums and emotional outbursts. Many in the Empire business were. Doubts about Gordon's mental stability were never enough to deny him a prime place in imperial business—and doubts there were:
Gladstone’s secretary probably echoed the Prime Minister’s opinions when he accused the general of not being “clothed in the rightest of minds.” Sir Charles Dilke thought Gordon “insane.” The grand old imperialist Disraeli used the word “lunatic.” Foreign Minister Granville was more charitable and confined himself to the observation that Gordon had “a small bee in his bonnet.” (Waller 324)

What made Gordon so irritating to his handlers was not that he saw imperial mandates as inconsequential and irrelevant to his own personal vision of how things should be done, or that he insisted he knew better than the Empire. Such figures could be made to disappear, as Gordon found out himself during his career. It was his public criticism and rebukes that troubled officials. To achieve his ends, Gordon was willing to air dirty linen, and force the Government’s hand by manipulating the media and popular opinion.

Always rejecting and pursuing fame and public adulation, his arrival in Khartoum—“He was given an hysterical welcome. The town was illuminated, the streets packed with cheering people” (Hanson 206)—could only encourage his belief that not responding to this audience was a far greater crime than disobeying bureaucrats without the stomach for a fight. Such immediate acclaim seems to have encouraged his vision of himself as the savior of Khartoum, becoming “so fascinated with the role of architect of a new Sudan that evacuation seemed to be relegated to second place” (Waller 336). In this, Gordon embodied the most naive and destructive aspects of imperialism. Now certain of his position as personal savior of the realm, Gordon decided not to relinquish his position of influence to anyone—neither the Mahdi, nor Whitehall. As governor-general, Gordon “had favoured Sudanese independence under native rulers,” and abhorred “the
placement of English officers in command of Egyptian troops” (Waller 289). He had dismissed “officials who abused the population and ignored the law in preference to their own private interests,” and the communications system service “were available for all” (235). “Domestic trade and exports grew” during his term, and “Long-term investments in the infrastructure and in basic means of production could also be observed” (Moore-Hare 235). For the fact was that financial success could be found in the colonies, and that allowing the people to follow their own course made the colony even more successful. And yet, “One of the most conspicuous aspects of [his] behaviour in the Sudan was his attitude towards the country as his own private latifundia, defending it from any western involvement” (Moore-Hare 233). Gordon knew best, and while he did not ultimately conform to the stereotype of the grasping imperialist, and rejected English rule as necessary everywhere, he still saw himself as the savior of the Sudan, leading the people to independence from Egypt, from England, and from the Mahdi—but not from himself.

Gordon’s decision to remain in Khartoum was also complicated. Loyalty and a sense of responsibility certainly were factors, although his claim in his journal that “even if [the people] had been willing for me to go, I would not have gone and left them in their misery” also displays the egotist who is confident that “the people would not have been such fools as to have let me go” (Gordon 57). Moreover, Gordon saw retreat as a threat to his status as savior and icon-to-be. “How,” he asks in a telegram to Sir Evelyn Baring, “could I look the world in the face if I abandoned them and fled? Could you, as a gentleman, advise this course?” (Hanson 210)

Though keeping the Sudan free from Mahdist forces was certainly in Britain’s interest, by refusing to obey his English superiors, Gordon made resisting his recommendations the Gladstone administration’s prime objective. Gladstone
soon decided “that Gordon had deceived them and had never had any intention of evacuating the Egyptian garrisons.” and that “contrary to policy, he had all along harbored schemes to save the Sudan” (Waller 336). Gordon’s subsequent actions hardly suggested that the Empire still had control of the situation or their operative. Acting as if his governing power were without boundaries, Gordon implemented many polices that struck his superiors as wrong—most notably his tolerance for slavery. Gordon’s most dangerous tendency, however, was to behave as if, in the daily running of a colonial government, imperial oversight was utterly unnecessary, but that its total support in times of trouble could be expected and demanded. Gordon for instance felt no gratitude whatever for the supposedly impending rescue, writing that “the projected expedition” must “come to SAVE OUR NATIONAL HONOUR in extricating the garrisons” because they occupy “a position our action in Egypt has placed these garrisons” (Gordon 93).

Nor did Gordon ever seem to recognize that the Empire’s real power lay in its ability to exert overwhelming force. Faced with the Mahdi’s impending attack, Gordon still sanguinely insisted that the smallest display of imperial power would return stability to the Sudan. “All that is absolutely necessary is, for fifty of the Expeditionary Force to get on board a steamer and . . . let their presence be felt,” he wrote, selling short the Mahdist forces, and overvaluing the reputation of the English army simply because he believed in his divine sanction as an Englishman to rule. In fact, the lower the numbers needed to repel the forces of darkness, the greater the glory, as Gordon’s keen insights and charismatic moral authority virtually by themselves would save the day. (The Alamo, the Little Big Horn, and Seven against Thebes spring immediately to mind.) In setting himself up as the imperial hero who would all but single-handedly save all, Gordon appealed to the Victorian tendency to worship at the shrine of the adventure hero. The glowing accounts of Gordon’s handling of the situation written by Frank Power, the Times’
correspondent in Khartoum, expanded the general’s mythic status, and in the process undermined the Empire’s role as savior by focusing the spotlight solely on its wayward operative. Now obviously, Gordon alone could not hold back the Mahdi’s forces, and if effort, money, and British lives were to be devoted to rescuing Gordon, those who sent them expected to receive some credit. This, of course, Gordon absolutely refused to do. By declining to be a good team player, and by demanding support as his due, Gordon shattered the illusion of an unified Empire whose sons obeyed without question.

As this entire dissertation documents, this was the kind of selfish individualism that the imperial program wanted to quash. And while Gordon’s insistence on hogging all the credit might have been dealt with, his wielding of public opinion as a weapon for openly criticizing government policies and practices, and for forcing it to give him his way, was as welcome as any form of blackmail or extortion usually is. From the beginning, national opinion played a role in Gordon’s last assignment to the Sudan. Since Gordon’s thoughts on British policies in Egypt and the Sudan were at odds with many in government and in finance, without W. T. Stead’s active public campaign to have Gordon appointed to the post of observer, he never would have been seriously considered for the job. The problem was at bottom, economic. The British government felt that Egypt’s debt to Britain—almost one hundred million pounds sterling—was too large to forgive, making independence from British rule an impossibility. Once the Pall Mall Gazette published Stead’s interview under the title, “Gordon for the Sudan,” however, the public’s clamor for his appointment overrode the Prime Minister’s private conviction that Gordon was not the right man: “Politics prevailed. Gladstone could not ignore public opinion that the jingoistic press had aroused” (Waller 324).
Once on his way, Gordon became that oddly modern anomaly—a very loose cannon, manipulating public opinion to gain the leverage necessary to force the Empire to approve his various schemes. Access to telegraph lines and a newspaper correspondent was crucial, because it allowed him to put immediate and constant public pressure on his government. Frank Power produced not only glowing reports of Gordon on the job, but of his popularity with the natives: “It is wonderful that one man could have such influence on twenty thousand people” (Waller 357). Such reports kept Gordon’s name alive at home, and attracted public support—a fact that Gordon admitted himself. “I would never muzzle the press or its correspondents,” he writes in his journal, “they are most useful, and one cannot be too grateful to them (I own this more than any one)” (62). It is significant that Gordon’s willingness to criticize government policy publicly increased his popularity at home, even as it alienated him from Imperial officials. In Power’s reports, Gordon demanded government accountability, openly accusing his supposed superiors of mismanagement, short-sightedness, and outright cowardice. Clearly, Gordon’s apparent refusal to play the role of corporate monkey appealed to a populace continually exhorted to obey rigid social codes—to stoically suck it up. This is a striking phenomenon—the Imperial agent who becomes a role model by rejecting the current administration of Empire. Already a heroic figure from the Taiping Rebellion, and known for going his own way, Gordon became increasingly popular because “People reveled in his criticism of the government and in his scathing lampoons and satirical sketches” (Waller 448). Gordon’s journals kept him a thorn in the Empire’s side, even after death. In them he not only questioned the “rightness” of England’s actions towards Egypt and the Sudan, but admires the canny insights of Empire’s enemies:

What have we done in Lower Egypt to make them like us?

Not a single thing. We have foisted Europeans on them
to the extent of 450,000 a year; we have not reduced taxes, only improved the way of extorting those taxes. The Mahdi says, "I will take one-tenth of your produce and I will rid you of the 'dogs'—a most captivating programme! . . ."

From a professional military point of view, and speaking materially, I wish I was the Mahdi, and I would laugh at all Europe. (Gordon 45)

This sustained if self-contradictory critique was ultimately Gordon's strongest appeal to his British supporters. His ability to convince his audience that corruption within the Empire's administration was not only the cause of all British difficulties, but a problem whose solution was to go against the government's own convictions, and to save the mission of its most annoying critic, suggests that at the very least the British people were deeply conflicted about the professions and practice of Empire. After all, one of the readers who demanded that the Government ensure Gordon's safety was Queen Victoria.

And the immediacy was the telling factor. While not a war happening in the parlor via television, newspaper accounts were making the Mahdist assaults in the Sudan impossible to ignore. British deaths were not taking place in an amorphous, vague "over there," but here and now. The combination of Power's reports from Khartoum, Gordon's status as a cult figure, and other laudatory newspaper write-ups made him a problem that would not go away. Whitehall could not pass the buck or ignore him; the Empire had to unwillingly take responsibility for its wayward operative, and for its own role in getting him in to the jam.
Things Fall Apart: Imperial Meltdowns

By the end of World War I, the British Empire was effectively over. It would limp along half-heartedly—though with more pomp and circumstance to make up for the lack of enthusiasm—for another four decades or so, but by 1918, the allure of the Empire was greatly diminished. Not only was Britain physically depleted (the number of lives lost was staggering), but those who survived were forced to see that the tenets upon which the Empire was founded were lies.

Or so the story goes. But the bottom had in fact been falling out even before the Great War completely smashed the pantomime, because even the Empire’s greatest heroes did not emerge unscathed from their adventures, and many of the brightest stars were notoriously unstable, since the very strengths for which they were lauded became the things which sent them over the edge. Finally, the war only made it crystal clear to the average soldier that the Empire had never improved their lives in any significant way. Why then, Englishmen and their colonial cousins had to ask themselves, were they killing and dying? And how could they believe that Empire had a meliorist mission, when so many were destroyed?

It is difficult to find literate English children growing up during the Empire’s apogee who did not read imperial adventures in some form. Everyone knew what the stereotypic adventurer was like. Obviously, the appeal was not exclusively scientific discovery, treasure hunting, exotic sightseeing, or chivalric quests, and only the most naive assumed that adventure was undertaken solely for noble and heroic ends. As Martin Green points out in The Adventurous Male, violence is an intrinsic and attractive part of adventure, which is usually initiated by “a series of events that outrage civilized or domestic morality and that challenge those to whom these events happen to make use of powers that civil life
forbids to the ordinary citizen, powers restricted . . . to the police, the secret services, the army” (4). Except perhaps for Dr. Livingstone, short-term adventurers (as opposed to those who went abroad to settle) expected to kill a significant number of savages and to slaughter a bunch of wild animals. It was part of the script, and when they left for home, they would do so knowing they had put to rights some of what was wrong in the world, had dispensed invaluable imperial justice—and had gathered some nifty trophies as well. But for adventurers who lingered in the world’s dark places, charged with preserving the cause of Empire single-handedly, without benefit of extended British or even European contact, the strain was enormous.

The appeal of a James Bond-like character was obvious. Physically gifted and well trained, with confidence and swagger to match, the virile Bond figure got what he wanted and finished what he set out to do. While technically a civil servant, the Bond agent was also left to his own devices without supervision, and beyond the rules and regulations. He employed seduction, sabotage, and murder, all without any legal or moral consequences. Only results mattered, which is why the Bond operative could tell his superiors where to go if they disapproved of his actions, something definitely out of bounds to normal civil servants. The unmoored operative’s experience was seldom so exhilarating. As Bivona explains, there was indisputably real power:

The “responsibility system” is based, at least in theory, on the premise that the “man on the ground” is the one best equipped to judge what needs to be done. He is therefore given great leeway to improvise a way of accomplishing the ends of imperial administration by circumventing the rigidities of bureaucratic process. In the event
he is invested with symbolic powers far beyond those of mortal men... and charged with duties ordinarily felt to be beyond the scope of individual action. (100)

The actual downside, however, was isolation in a foreign country far from aid, which often forced compromises running contrary to his official and personal beliefs. As the on-site operative, the Bond pseudo agent was supposed to have his finger on the native pulse, to diffuse explosive situations as they arose. But knowing that he was the only one holding things together was not always good for his mental health. And in many instances, the only way for him to leave was by dying. For this reason, the Empire's most celebrated heroes often came back dangerously unmoored and unreliable. While their alarming behavior could for a time be enlisted into shows that supported imperial ends, it became increasingly difficult to do so.

Nevertheless, members of the reading public and of the British government still generally agreed that the charismatic self-reliant individual was the key to maintaining or restoring order in the most dismal colonial situations. Part of this belief stemmed from the Victorian obsession with heroes and hero-worship. Walter Houghton states that "hero worship is a nineteenth-century phenomenon": "In no other age were men so often told to take 'the great ones of the earth' as models for imitation." Nor was strict accuracy crucial: "Heroic myth was as popular as heroic biography" (305). Paradoxically then, heroism, and especially renegade heroism, was highly valued at the same time that institutional authority was becoming undercut. Technological advances, and quick press reports of foreign events in particular, allowed arm chair operatives to praise and damn vicariously the adventures of imperial agents as they happened. Further, the immediately reported Crimean War disasters often undermined the public's belief in the competence of traditional military leaders. Even Tennyson, as he furiously
tried to spin the disastrous “Charge of the Light Brigade” into an emblem of valor, had to acknowledge that some aristocratic bureaucrat had blundered—and that the heroic horsemen knew it. Or as William Howard Russell, correspondent for *The Times*, revealed, the Crimean War was “a miserable, unheroic, ramshackle campaign presided over by old men” (*Victorians* 179) For this reason, anyone who showed heroic promise was celebrated immediately by the general public—and the bungling of those far from the field of action led to an idealizing of the field operative who supposedly knew the lay of the land, and the inclinations of the local native. Though the aristocratic leader may therefore have inspired a crisis in confidence during the years before World War I, the public still loved a dashing, rebellious winner.

Like Gordon. Prior to Khartoum, he had been an Empire functionary famous for his unorthodox and brash behavior when dealing with difficult situations. In China, Gordon established a reputation for brilliantly pragmatic leadership and military planning while leading the “Ever Victorious” army over the Taipings. Although the Taipings were hardly tacticians, Gordon’s ability to take advantage of an opponent’s weakness was indisputable:

> Arrived before the town, Gordon pursued his usual plan:
> he surveyed the defences exactly, then, moving always by night, tore up the stakes driven by the Taipings into the creek surrounding the town, bridged it in several places, disposed his guns undercover, and blocked all entrances into the town except one which he guarded. (Hanson 63)

He also behaved with remarkable aplomb under fire. During one reconnaissance mission, “Gordon advanced on foot to within range of rebel fire,” where he “sketched in meticulous detail” the fortifications and “town walls which would have to be breached” (Waller 66). By leading the charge against the Taipings
while holding a cigar and brandishing a rattan cane, Gordon also stood in stark
counter to the inept aristocratic generals conducting war from a safe distance. His
decisive leadership during his previous tenure in Khartoum also promised on-the-
job experience, for in addition to supplying substantial geographic information
about Egypt’s Equatoria Province, Gordon had put a temporary dent in the slave
trade. Together, these qualities shored up Gordon’s breezy assurances that the
latest Sudan difficulties—the Mahdi’s native insurrection, for instance—would be
dealt with right quick. Gordon’s optimism, his previous triumphs, and his
reduction of the variables of military success to simple equations, therefore found
willing British ears for his promises. Many had done far worse with more
advantages.

In Lytton Strachey’s scathing and justly famous portrait in *Eminent
Victorians*, Gordon emerges as a religious fanatic driven by personal demons to
seek self-martyrdom. But many of General George Gordon’s contemporaries
would have agreed with his convictions, and the circumstances Gordon had often
had to deal with as a field operative could hardly be imagined by anyone not
personally involved. It was (and still is) easy for observers safe at home to pass
judgment on behavior deviating from socially acceptable responses or shaped by
foreign cultural elements. For all his single-mindedness, then, Gordon’s behavior
often actively arose out of compromises (moral, legal, physical) necessary for
survival. As a soldier who served in one of the world’s most vicious wars (the
Taiping Rebellion), and who had dealt with human cruelty as a daily part of his
job, Gordon’s “strange” reactions were often firmly grounded in unknown
circumstances.

A martyr of the Empire, Gordon was idolized after his spectacular death.
The British press celebrated his courage and heroism, his intense loyalty, and his
absolute sense of right and wrong. Ironically, though, these qualities were
inseparable from his instability. Though I cannot say that Gordon was clinically disturbed, his official behavior often could only be described as demented. At the end of the Taiping Rebellion, for instance, he secured a guarantee of mercy from Governor Li Hung-Chang to the surrendering Wangs and their followers. Expecting a peaceful, ceremonial exchange of power, and “Believing that it should be an all-Chinese event” (Waller 98), Gordon declined to attend. Accounts of the event differ, but the surrendering Wangs were executed. After hearing Lar Wang’s son’s report, Gordon “leaped to the conclusion that Governor Li was the culprit and set out to find him, clutching the Lar Wang’s severed head as though he needed it as evidence” (100). Li fled, and “Gordon retreated to Quinsan on his steamer with the Lar Wang’s now-orphaned sixteen-year-old son, whom he took pity on and promised to adopt. The Lar Wang’s head, not improving with time, was still in Gordon’s custody” (100). He wrote to Li, and “Knowing the hysterical tenor of Gordon’s letter” (101), Halliday Macartney, Governor Li’s military secretary on loan, diplomatically declined to translate it. Just as diplomatically, Li declined to insist. Though Gordon was enraged, Li still valued his services, and sent Macartney to smooth things over. He “found Gordon in his room, sobbing.” The general then “reached under his bed and produced the bloody bundle he had brought from Soochow” (Waller 101).

Although Gordon soon buried both Wang’s head and body, his insistence on dragging it around could be described as eccentric26. British press accounts sensationalized the event, publishing grossly inaccurate reports that Li commanded “a wholesale massacre—men, women, and children,” that Gordon himself had supposedly witnessed. Gordon’s revenge was to kill all the mandarins.

26 Fetishizing severed heads was a common occurrence in the imperial mythopeia, and readers could find many examples of such behavior in both fiction and non-fiction. Besides Gordon, Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan also dutifully—and insanely—carries about Dravot’s head in “The Man Who Would Be King”: “He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag . . . and shook therewith on to my table—the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot!” (“Man” 587).
that he met—an obvious lie—but the press did not mention the English general’s
new totem (Waller 101). Gordon’s overwhelming grief and anger could be a
consequence of the “psychological trauma of living with what one has done to
one’s fellow man” (Grossman 222), and Waller suggests that Gordon’s “near­
breakdown over this matter might also have been due to his sense of his own
culpability” (103). But the severed head seems to have served as a tangible
reminder of his part in the tragedy, and as a man who had chose the military as a
career, who had shown extreme coolness in battle and in executing insubordinate
soldiers, and who should have known that atrocities were a part of colonial war,
Gordon’s odd behavior suggests other forces are shaping his actions.

The Taiping Rebellion also led him to distrust Empire-sanctioned
assistance. Convinced that only he knew how to conduct the colonial mission, he
came to suspect all other colonial officers, whether officially or unofficially
attached to him. By insisting on centralizing command instead of allowing
provisional governments to respond quickly with their own armies—which was
what the Ever Victorious was—the political maneuverings of Gordon’s superiors
undermined China’s stability. In Equatoria, Gordon encountered a legacy of the
treachery and ignorance that his own Empire was capable of from Sir Samuel
Baker’s term there. Gordon always found able and loyal assistants, such as
Romolo Gessi, but they were generally irregulars. But the more time he spent
serving his Empire, the less he trusted its directions or motives, and increasingly
Gordon became known for paranoid accusations against virtually all British and
native colonial officials. The central question here is what replaces the Empire in
the colonial servant’s mind. Like many of these officials, Gordon could quite
reasonably argue that relying totally upon his own judgment could do no more
harm than following official instructions. But high colonial officials themselves
knew that the apostate field operative would look for some other authority, and
often find it in convictions or delusions of electedness or religious devotion. Or as Baring so pointedly noted to Lord Granville, Gordon was “a man who habitually consults the Prophet Isaiah when he is in difficulty, is not apt to obey the orders of any one” (Waller 337). And though no persuasive rationale for following “mystic feelings” could be offered, they seemed to gleam even behind Gordon’s efforts at real politik. His appointment of al-Zubayr in the Sudan made sense as a marshaling of powerful political support, but could the British government really trust a former slaver to support its cause instead of allying himself with the Mahdi’s forces? Ultimately Gordon’s personal faith that al-Zubayr could be trusted—a conviction devoid of common sense or obvious fact—seems like a grotesque parody of the ruthless results-oriented pragmatism, often driven by almost messianic claims of a mission of salvation, that marked the Empire he no longer could believe in or obey.

But a country so enamored with and desperate for decisive heroes was reluctant to face, or kept from facing, that those who seemed to embody British virtues were often fundamentally damaged—dislocated from the original source of their power. Part of this dislocation could be a response to the role as sanctioned killer that the military servant of Empire was forced to play. Gordon, for instance, displayed the fatigue, the confused states, the anxiety, and the possibility of Ganzer syndrome that Grossman identifies as the common psychological aftermath of soldiers socialized to kill. I have been focusing on Gordon, but I would argue that he is simply one of the more prominent cases of the psychological damage imperial agents set loose to “do what was necessary” often suffered. And yet, the Empire, and its literature, made a virtue of stoic service in radically alien environments, even as mental collapse or recognition of a meaningless life approached. Take Kipling’s short story, “At the End of the Passage,” or the character Warburton in Maugham’s “The Outstation.” The
professionals serve out their terms facing down the pointlessness of their service without complaint or relief.
The Horror, the Horror: The Englishman's Loss of Faith in the Empire

The rigid self-control that held these operatives together crumbled in the face of the atrocities of World War I. Nineteenth century imperial operatives saw little advantage in criticizing their employment or their superiors. Those serving in the early twentieth were often willing to criticize the Great Game, and its movers and shakers. This change reflects a corresponding change in information and scale. Gordon’s experiences suggest the kind of permanent psychological damage imperial adventures could do to individual agents. The war poets, Sassoon and Owen among them, report that hundreds of thousands of men kill each other, and watch themselves doing it—a personal and national overload. This generation of imperial operatives found dying young (whether gassed, bombed, entombed, shot at, or stabbed) was neither beautiful nor good, regardless of what scouting manuals, adventure stories, or the old men of England might suggest.

Of course, England’s lost generation was not the first group of young men to find this out. But the Great War represented a whole different kind of awakening. How could a war that cost the lives of over 8,700,000 military men—over 780,000 of them English—not administer a new level of shock? But beyond the revelation that nations were willing to use nightmarish weapons of mass destruction against human beings, the soldiers soon realized—often just before they died—that the Empire had not simply failed to prepare people for what was to come, but also neglected to identify any meliorist end that would justify the sacrifice demanded.

There was actually little that Empire’s mythmakers could have done to prepare people for the coming atrocities. Many sensationalist novelists had represented brutal and duplicitous German conduct, but poison gas, trench
warfare, tanks, and perhaps worst of all, a state of perpetual stalemate and attrition, seem not to have been anticipated. In fact, even in the beginning stages of World War I, those texts still supported expectations of "gentlemanly" war. Despite English experience with guerrilla tactics in the Sudan or during the Boer War, the public still believed this war could be won with stiff resolve and determined action. "All imagined that it would be an affair of great marches and great battles, quickly decided." In this earlier, "different world," Paul Fussell writes, "The certainties were intact" (21). Men who went willingly and innocently to their deaths in World War I generally believed in a "seamless, purposeful 'history'" (21)—a world that "believed in Progress and Art and in no way doubted the benignity even of technology" (24). These English boys, and their colonial and colonized counterparts—every bit as weaned on imperial fiction—were set to see things in romantic absolutes. Britain's colonial population eagerly enlisted to fight for the just cause. Even as it agitated for increased autonomy, India readily volunteered soldiers for the Empire: "Indians were not reluctant conscripts; they were in fact all volunteers, and enthusiastic volunteers at that" (Ferguson 303). "We are, above all, British citizens," Mohandas Gandhi exhorted his fellow countrymen in 1914, fighting "as the British are at present in a righteous cause for the good and glory of human dignity and civilisation" (Ferguson 303).

The tension between a world of honor and duty and the world that appeared on the battlefield, was excruciating. On the eve of war in 1914, "One read Hardy and Kipling and Conrad and frequented worlds of traditional moral action delineated into traditional moral language" (Fussell 23). As I have been showing, the Empire's youth journals followed these courses. The Boy's Own Paper "pushed the idea that the outside world was an exciting adventure playground . . . and projected the armed forces as an almost inevitable career for its readers." Articles addressing "the practicalities of military life" still played up "the glamour
and excitement of the services.” Indeed, “it was a poetic and a glorious thing to
die for one’s country” (18).

This idealized, romanticized dying, kept separate from the gory details,
paralleled a similar gap between the horrible reality of service in the first World
War’s trenches, and the official cheerful stance at home. Rupert Brooke and John
Henry Newbolt were the usual, and future protesters like Rosenberg and Sassoon
initially stood behind the decision to go to war. As late as November 1915,
Sassoon was criticizing Robert Graves’s realistic representation of war, and
writing poems like “To Victory”:

Return to greet me, colours that were my joy,
Not in the woeful crimson of men slain,
But shining as a garden; come with the streaming
Banners of dawn and sundown after rain.

Return, musical, gay with blossom and fleetness,
Days when my sight shall be clear and my heart rejoice;
Come from the sea with breadth of approaching brightness,
When the blithe wind laughs on the hills with uplifted voice.

“Siegfried had not yet been in the trenches,” Robert Graves responded, telling
him, “in my old-soldier manner, that he would soon change his style” (War 71).
And yet, although innocence and enthusiasm had a short shelf life after being
exposed to the realities of trench life, since before 1914 there had been little at
home to test the faith of the Empire’s believers, just as the model trenches created
for Kensington Garden exhibits bore little similarity to the real ones on the front
(3), the official myth of Great War did not match the depressing, squalid reality of
the front lines. Not however that it mattered at first. Aided by “Newspapers,
popular entertainment, postcards, comics and other ephemera [which] constantly marinated the Victorian consciousness in the idea of war as something irresistibly glamorous and fascinating which happened a long way away” (Giddings 18), the existing ideology of empire inflamed initial feelings that the war would be a grand, brief, and distant adventure for Britain’s young men.

Evidence for this state of affairs ranges from Rupert Brooke’s claim that “It’s all great fun” (Fussell 25), to the familiar patriotic emotionalism of poems such as W. N. Hodgson’s “England to Her Sons”:

Sons of mine, I hear you thrilling
To the trumpet call of war;
Gird ye then, I give you freely
As I gave your sire before,
All the noblest of the children I in love and anguish bore.

Go, and may the God of battles
You in His good guidance keep:
And if He in wisdom giveth
Unto His beloved sleep,
I accept it nothing asking, save a little space to weep.

Such ripe feelings soon rotted—the numbers on the casualty lists saw to that. “Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected,” Paul Fussell writes, “Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends” (7). But Fussell also notes that “the Great War was more ironic than any other in that its beginning was more innocent” (18). At first people “assumed that Britain could win the war with the armed forces as they existed at the time—it would all be over by Christmas” (War 19). By 1916, though, the losses had become virtually unimaginable.
According to some accounts, “even in the quietest of times, some 7000 British men and officers were killed and wounded daily, just as a matter of course. ‘Wastage,’ the Staff called it” (Fussell 41).

True to form, the leading military strategists and generals attributed these disasters to a lack of natural fibre in the soldiers. After the disaster of the first Somme offensive, Haig “chose to think that some of his battalion had refused to fight, an impression he retained despite the final casualty list” (Farrar-Hockley 113). And as the battle plans of the Somme show—the Somme accounted for 60,000 dead or injured—for all the public celebration of individual ingenuity and survival training, “The planners assumed that [recruited troops]—burdened for the assault with 66 pounds of equipment—were too simple and animal to cross the space between the opposing trenches in any way except in full daylight and aligned in rows or ‘waves’” (Fussell 13). Despite the Somme, British Expeditionary Forces kept using the same strategies of attack, and with the same results. The first Ypres Attack cost 160,000 killed or wounded; the third, a horrific 300,000 killed, wounded or frozen to death (Fussell 15-16). “These who die as cattle”—Owen’s likening of soldiers to doomed livestock was appropriate, and the supposed individual agency of Britons made it even insulting.

Technological and chemical warfare also changed notions of death in battle. Bombs thrown from aircraft blew up soldiers outright, or entombed them in the spray of earth thrown up by the explosion. Tanks and machine guns multiplied an individual’s capacity for destruction, and the use of chlorine gas by the Germans in 1915 at the Second Ypres alone led to 60,000 British casualties. Since it made a heroic death of any kind impossible, gas figured prominently in the writings of many debunking poets and writers, though Wilfred Owen’s account from “Dulce Et Decorum Est” is the most famous:
Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime... 
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

Owen’s poem is an indictment of heroism mongers. No one who saw a victim’s “white eyes writhing in his face, / His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin,” or heard “the blood / Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, / Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud / Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues” (War 119) could ever again trumpet the beauty of self-sacrifice. Given such conditions, the soldiers’ dogged refusal to shirk their duty is the only impulse approaching admirable, as in Blunden’s “Third Ypres”:

Runner, stand by a second. Your message.—He’s gone,
Falls on a knee, and his right hand uplifted
Claws his last message from his ghostly enemy,
Turns stone-like. Well I liked him, that young runner,
But there’s no time for that. O now for the word
To order us flash from these drowning roaring traps
And even hurl upon that startling wire? (War, 123)

As the war dragged on, more and more individuals denied that England and Empire were worth dying for. Not necessarily cowards or afraid of dying per se, they objected to being sold cheap. The film version of Gallipoli catches the dynamic perfectly. Archie chooses to obey the order to go over the top; in what is clearly a suicidal attack. Frank opts out, rejecting a pointless death and the needless sacrifice of their Australian unit, clearly designated expendable. Refusing to “play the game” became increasingly common among men whose
confidence in their leaders had collapsed. The Somme created “weary and shaken battalions whose men did not universally follow their officers out of the trenches into some of the manifestly pointless local attacks or raids” (Farrar-Hockley 113). As the war slogged on, mental breakdowns were also treated more compassionately by the soldiers who knew how shell shock or psychological damage could cripple a man, inside and out. Sassoon’s “Lamentations” records such a breakdown:

he howled and beat his chest.
And, all because his brother had gone west,
Raved at the bleeding war; his rampant grief
Moaned, shouted, sobbed, and choked, while he was kneeling
Half-naked on the floor. (War 140)

And yet, even though British leaders were forced to recognize that psychological damage rendered soldiers unfit for service, they still court martialed many for dereliction of duty. Such attitudes die hard. In 1998, British courts upheld the guilty sentences of almost ninety World War I soldiers charged with and executed for cowardice. Though likely suffering from shell shock, and therefore unable rather than unwilling to serve, their public punishments showed that Empire could still demand heroic behavior even in the face of horrors those at home never encountered—and even when the Empire no longer existed.

Robert Graves’ prediction that Sassoon’s attitude would change proved true for virtually all involved, and although the War Poets did not represent the sum of English feeling, their break from Empire ideology was a major event. Many writers, Henry Newbolt among them, stopped short of criticizing English policies, but few even attempted to draw a veil across the ugly face of war, or by extension, of the brutality that empires and empire building brought. As early as 1915, soldier poets were speaking directly about their deepening despair about the war,
and their contempt for the "grand old men" who had sent them there. In "Gone, Gone Again," Edward Thomas rejects all idealization when he writes, "when the war began / To turn young men to dung." By 1916, many soldier writers recognized that their worlds had changed utterly. "I’m thinking of England, and summer evening after cricket matches, and sunset above the tall trees," Siegfried Sassoon writes: "So things went three years ago; and it’s all dead and done with. I’ll never be there again" (War 73). In "To His Love," Ivor Gurney enacts the entire process, beginning with the familiar pastoral refrain of sentimental regret, "We’ll walk no more on the Cotswold / Where the sheep feed," proceeding to the lauding of noble sacrifice, "But still he died / Nobly, so cover him over / With violets of pride / Purple from Severn side," but ending with a realistic, shocking nightmare: "Cover him, cover him soon! . . . Hide that red wet / Thing that I must somehow forget" (War 82). By 1917, poets at home and at the front were protesting the senseless eradication of an entire generation. Wildred Owen’s famous indictment of those who romanticized war can stand for all. One sight of the actual war, and:

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori. (War 119)

Poems not only openly criticized the imbecility and callousness of their country’s leaders, but placed blame for the slaughter squarely at their feet. Even Kipling, the "poet of Empire," joined this group after the death of his son:

They shall not return to us, the resolute, the young,
The eager and whole-hearted whom we gave;
But the men who left them thriftily to die in their own dung,
Shall they come with years and honour to the grave?
Our dead shall not return to us while Day and Night divide—
Never while the bars of sunset hold.
But the idle-minded overlings who quibbled while they died,
Shall they thrust for high employments as of old? (War 131)

For what then? What good came out of the war? And by extension, of the whole program of the Empire? Were the English any better for having believed in their betters? Vera Brittain's poem, "The Lament of the Demobilised" records the bitter awakening of World War I veterans after the massacres of Ypres, the Somme, and other major offensives:

And no one talked heroics now, and we
Must just go back and start again once more.
"You threw four years into the melting-pot—
Did you indeed!" these others cry. "Oh well,
The more fool you!"

And we're beginning to agree with them. (War 166)

This general collapse was not solely a creation of the war. As the necessary corollary of imperial ideology, it had been there and been observed by some all along, as a return to the Empire's great hero and martyr, Charles George Gordon, now accompanied by his biographer and notorious pariah, Lytton Strachey, makes clear.

Above and beyond the financial rewards that could be gained from performing an Englishman's duty to the Empire, a sincere faith that the cause was a meliorist one indisputably existed. Anti-slavery groups, religious organizations, and even commercial interests all believed that native societies benefited from the Empire's largesse and compassion. This flattering conviction that a "society that conscientiously carried out its imperial mandate was a morally better society, and
the improved morality contributed to success in a potentially hostile world” (Kitzan 10), was sustained by literature. Englishmen congratulated themselves on helping to eradicate the slave trade in Africa, on outlawing the practice of *sati* in India, and on improving the economy and infrastructure of all of their possessions. On paper, and from far way, the English Empire could look like it was civilizing dark, wild places, bringing native peoples into the light of rational thinking.

Here I return to Gordon. Though he died in 1885, his experiences and crisis of faith anticipate the war poets. Through death he came to embody the ideal of imperial sacrifice, yet his last days were spent viciously criticizing his superiors and his government in journals clearly intended for publication, denouncing those at home for irresponsible behavior towards Empire, and their refusal to guarantee the safety and welfare of natives. Gordon also fought this battle with himself, as the military officer and official was often at odds with the man of principles. In Khartoum, he orders two officers who had betrayed him executed, “which was done Turkish-style—dismemberment and mutilation, culminating in decapitation” (Waller 366). But even before their bodies were cold, Gordon was lamenting the deaths, and drawing up plans for supporting financially the families left behind. While he often resorted to brutality to achieve ends he assumed to be synonymous with Empire, his conscience therefore kept attacking. He wrestled with it daily in Khartoum.

But he had been wrestling a long time. During his first tenure as Governor General of the Sudan (1877-80), Gordon had sympathized with the Sudanese suffering under Turco-Egyptian rule, and his administration tried to stop bribery or other common corrupt practices. Although he dismisses speculation that Gordon actively encouraged Sudanese separation from Egypt, biographer Moore-Harell does note that it was in Britain’s, rather than the Sudan’s, interests to stay linked to Egypt, since Sudan’s financial contributions helped Egypt pay her debts to her
European creditors. Always going his own way, Gordon “did not assist British interests,” nor did he “benefit from any support, encouragement or protection from the British government,” instead doing his best to “prevent British or other European official involvement in the Sudan’s domestic affairs and its relations with Egypt” (Moore-Harell 231). Naturally this refusal to forward British aims alienated him politically from his superiors, and it also exposed the gap between government policy and its willingness to practice it. Take for example, slavery:

The British government and public opinion had indeed expressed their outrage regarding the slave trade and slavery in the Ottoman Empire in general, and in the Sudan in particular. However, when it came to implementation of this policy, the steps taken amounted only to a formal demand to abolish the slave trade through an Anglo-Egyptian convention. Britain refrained from offering any substantial help in the struggle. (Moore-Harell 232)

Such administration could literally turn colonial servants into their opponents. Prior to his appointment, Gordon had learned how woven slavery was into the fabric of daily life. After establishing a new garrison,

A Shilluk tribesman brought him two children, ages twelve and nine, explaining that they were too great a burden. Rather than see them sold into the slave market, Gordon bought them for a small basket of dhoora—sorghum cereal—and gave them both away to staff members as servants. Here was Gordon, the anti-slavery crusader, buying slaves himself, though the circumstances were extenuating. It was a rude lesson in Gordon’s education on the slave issue. (Waller 165)
The point? Slavery was not simply an established practice, but the only way inhabitants of Equatoria could participate in anything beyond a subsistence economy. Gordon himself observed that “there can be no trade for they have nothing to exchange for goods” (Waller 165), and his own attempt to impose a rudimentary capitalist system, complete with currency, failed spectacularly. Moreover, freed slaves were almost worse off, since they had no form of “employment,” and no means by which to support themselves. Return home? “Even if a slave’s village had not been burned to the ground,” chances were “the slave would only be captured the next time a slaver came through” (165-66). It was one thing for England to condemn slavery, another to establish a viable economic alternative.

To Gordon, such errors by omission were moral failings, and his bitter outbursts to Baring about the cowardice and stupidity of the British government seemed both deserved and substantiated. Gordon saw his second coming in Khartoum as an obligation, not a political move, precisely because his superiors could care less. Gordon’s sympathy, however flawed, led to his death. He could have evacuated the garrison, as he was ordered, but doing so meant leaving the civilian population defenseless and at the mercy of the tribes and Mahdist forces waiting to invade the town. (Gordon also knew that those not slaughtered would become slaves) As he indignantly wrote Baring, he could not do this in good conscience, and in his journal on 29 September 1884, he declares, government was responsible for the “extrication of all peoples or garrisons” (Waller 402). But significantly, his belief that his government could be “shamed into action” (Waller 410) proved to be wide of the mark—or rather, the government could only be “shamed” into finding it necessary to save Gordon. The motives involved could not have been more distinct. The Mahdi “fought to rid the Sudan of the corrupt ‘Turk,’ and to purify the soul of all Islam,” and “Gordon struggled to save the
Egyptian garrisons from extinction as a matter of personal honor and the honor of England.” The Empire itself sought good public relations, fighting “to save Gordon alone and thus for political motives [to] appease an incensed public” (431).

Part of what makes Gordon’s death in Khartoum so emblematic is that Britain seems to have had no interest in north-central Africa. Until the mid-1870s, Britain “was content with indirect influence there, and satisfied with defending its strategic interests through its representatives in Cairo” (Moore-Harell 232). Only Egypt’s financial crisis in the late 1870s and France’s conquest of Tunisia spurred the British into establishing a stronger presence in the region. Of course, no matter how an empire spins its conquest of a region, its own gain is paramount. No invasion has ever been for the sole benefit of the native inhabitants. Unlike in India, England did not even pretend to implement programs to benefit the Sudanese population. This is what Gordon came to see in his government’s international policies, forcing him to conclude that Imperial expansion always came at the cost of the native populace. Willing at the beginning of his career to sacrifice entire Chinese towns for his Empire, at the end, he freely offered his life in defense of Khartoum knowing that England felt no moral responsibility to the colonies—or ultimately to the servants and soldiers who administered it.

As a member of the next generation, Lytton Strachey embodies the attitude that the Empire itself could never have intended to do any good. Strachey completely confounds his national and personal pedigree. His father, Richard Strachey, had a distinguished career in India, with a long and varied list of achievements. A motivated civil administrator, he systematically extended railways and canals, decentralized administration, established an Indian forestry service, and reorganized the public works department. An amateur painter and scientist, he also twice served as the President of the Royal Geographical Society.
In short, he was the epitome of the dedicated imperial go getter (Hurree Chundar Mookerjee would have swooned over him.) Although as a child, Lytton "longed for a time when he too could play some part in these active, masculine spheres of life," (Holroyd 64), his physical frailties, his inclinations, and his temperament made the adventurous life he read and heard about at home an impossibility. From the get go, Lytton failed to meet the responsibility of the landed—and as his family's fortunes declined, the middle—classes, to provide vigorous, masculine, sporting young men who would serve, defend, and forward the Empire. Lytton Strachey would have been the worst Scout in history. At Abbotsholme and at Leamington he was a dismal physical failure. Abbotsholme’s combined program of athletics and agrarian education soon demonstrated that “the physical toughness needed to stand up to such a sentence of hard labour proved altogether beyond him” (Holroyd 89). And yet, though “Lytton must have seemed poor material” for the “grandiose plan of social reconstruction” that Dr. Reddie, the headmaster of Abbotsholme, proposed, he was still a member of that class which Reddie, Baden-Powell, and Arnold expected to “rescue late Victorian England from degeneracy” (Holroyd 82).

Lytton’s alienation from national expectations is famously on display in his imperial anti-hagiography, *Eminent Victorians*. No apologist or celebrator of Empire, Lytton’s intensely critical character studies of Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Doctor Arnold, and General Charles Gordon all in some way attacked the imperial project. In each essay Lytton sets the popular memory of these notables against their psychological and moral deficiencies. In his hands, these selfless heroes became self-serving, self-promoting, delusional egoists, and his portrait of General Gordon at times shows readers a man’s struggle to serve his conscience in the face of imperial institutional evil, and at other times, an egocentric, religious fanatic obsessed with having his own demented way. In
Lytton’s hands, Gordon is a loose cannon who deliberately manipulates the Khartoum situation to extort his desired political end for the Sudan regions, and if that failed, to gain a martyr’s immortal fame. Lytton deftly inverts Gordon’s usual praises, dismissing his loyalty to the Sudan as self-promotion, and his bravery as a death wish. Strachey’s Gordon is openly dismissive of his contemptible superiors—that’s good—but only because he was unbalanced, basing his decisions on ignorant interpretations of Scripture. Strachey also suggests that Gordon’s “selfless” death led to the slaughter of tens of thousands of Arabs. Gladstone’s and Gordon’s game of chicken ultimately led to direct British rule in the Sudan, at the cost of many British and Arab lives. Each great man had insisted on having his own way.

In pillorying the two men, however, Strachey was dissecting the harm both ultimately did to the Empire itself—and at horrible cost. Gordon’s presence in China, Equatoria, the Sudan, and Mauritius had obviously not been necessary for the continued existence of any country. As its agent, though, Gordon pursued the Empire’s self-interest. During his first tenure in Central Africa, he is the only European and Christian for miles, with only a few European aides to help him. The obvious question is why he was there at all; the answer is that his presence came to serve the needs of the Imperial project nicely. Gordon’s employer, the Khedive Isma‘il, “dreamt strange dreams of glory and empire. Those dim tracts of swamp and forest in Central Africa were... to receive the blessings of civilisation, they were to become a source of eternal honour to himself and Egypt” (Strachey 255). Deep in debt to European creditors, Isma‘il’s conquests could pay the bills. “England, with her passion for extraneous philanthropy, was not averse,” and by declaring a government monopoly on the ivory trade, Gordon made the place a “paying concern” (256). That the ultimate price of holding on would be
“the glorious slaughter of twenty thousand Arabs” did not change the fact that “it had all ended very happily” in “a vast addition to the British Empire” (341).

The man who wrote *Eminent Victorians* had carefully avoided playing any role in the imperial corporation. Unlike his paternal ancestors, he refused to work for the Civil or the Colonial Service. He seems to have complied with his mother’s wishes that he apply for work with the Board of Education, and even gathered letters of testimony, but his interview with Sir Robert Morant ended the scheme. Nor was he interested in withering away in the colonies like so many of his Cambridge fellows—Leonard Woolf and Maynard Keynes among them—chose at first to do. Strachey was no Kim—or a Warburton. Though in many ways as intellectually energetic as his father was, he displayed no interest in the practical application of government in colonial service. Duty was a trap. “The generation of Keynes and Lytton,” Michael Holroyd writes, unapologetically sought “a life of retirement among fine shades and nice feelings, and conceived of the good as consisting in the passionate mutual admirations of a clique of the elite” (238). Not actually so different a sentiment from that of his father and his class; the difference lay in a complete lack of any sense of moral obligation to *do his duty*. Lytton did not even pretend to care.

Lytton’s application for exemption from military service on the grounds that he was a conscientious objector in some ways defines the gulf between him and his fellow Englishmen. His immediate family supported his decision, and attended his hearings before the Tribunal, but the irony of the situation was evident to all. Lytton’s pedigree was inextricable from imperial service. He was refusing on moral grounds to do the job he was born to do. Although Strachey skillfully indicted newspapers and journals for inciting fear, encouraging xenophobia, and fanning nationalistic prejudice, his private thoughts and his legal defense identify him as the embodiment of precisely what Dr. Arnold, Baden-
Powell, and other social critics had feared would come to pass: the Englishman who neither would nor could defend his country. Nor can Strachey's tactics for avoiding service exactly be mistaken as heroic, or entirely principled. In the war's early stages, his strategy of non-involvement largely consisted of the "fade into the background" approach. Writing to his brother James about more vocal objectors, Lytton notes that attacking the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, would prove disastrous. "Can't [the anti-Greys] see that they do nothing . . . if they appear as pro-Germans?", "Lytton asked: "The only hope is to appear anti-German and also pro-peace. The more they worry Grey the more rigid he'll become" (Holroyd 573). As Michael Holroyd points out, Lytton's critique of the pacifists has more to do with survival tactics than with disagreements over their position. Lytton's personal thoughts on conscription are also infuriatingly honest. Though he argued that sending anyone to a needless death was unconscionable, he also argued that intellectuals should be the last in line. "We're all far too weak physically to be of any use at all," he writes to James, and "If we weren't we'd still be too intelligent to be thrown away in some really not essential expedition." In short, "It's no good pretending one isn't a special case" (570).

Lytton denounced the horrors of war, and was truly disturbed by the casualties. He rejected outright the heroic propaganda and recruitment campaigns that played on hysteria and bigotry. Yet his personal behavior often showed no signs of discretion. Though he did not travel to the continent, "his perpetual oscillation between Wiltshire and the metropolis went on much as before":

In London, there were still the Thursday evening parties at Bedford Square, where the pressure of worry and unhappiness could be relieved for a few hours in the company of other sympathetic artists and writers. . . . to liberate them from themselves and from their cares,
the guests at these parties would robe up in fancy dress
and . . . throw themselves into fantastic dances. (Holroyd 575-76)

Such pursuits of Lytton and others could certainly be seen as the kind of behavior
that Vera Brittain skewers in “Lament of the Demobilised”:

And they forget
How others stayed behind and just got on—
Got on better since we were away.
And we came home and found
They had achieved, and men revered their names,
But never mentioned ours. (War 166)

Yet Lytton did feel the “faint vibration of war fever” (Holroyd 574), though this
son of the Empire contributed to the war effort in a very different way than his
forebears would have. Offering an alternative to wartime propaganda and
government policies, he wrote tracts for both the National Council against
Conscription and the No Conscription Fellowship. Outside of his circle, Lytton
was condemned for anti-patriotic sentiments and seditious comments, and his
writings were certainly accusatory, as Leaflet No. 3 shows.

THEY SAY THEY WANT IT to punish the slackers
THEY WANT IT to punish the strikers.
THEY SAY THEY WANT IT to crush Germany
THEY WANT IT to crush labour.
THEY SAY THEY WANT IT to free Europe
THEY WANT IT to enslave England. (Holroyd 614-15)

Written in England in 1916, this bit of anti-war propagandizing is nothing short of
a declaration of class warfare. Such critiques showed that at least one of the
Empire’s attempts to solve the crisis of a degenerated race had not created a hardy
race willing to go to their deaths because the Empire wished it to. In Lytton, it had
failed spectacularly, for not only did he refuse to do the job that he had been bred to do, but openly exposed the Empire’s self-serving nature to the censure of the public. Not stopping to criticize what war did to human beings, or to remonstrate old men for sending young ones off to die, Strachey denounced the entire imperial project.
Epilogue

When It All Came to an End

When I began writing this dissertation, its boundaries seemed safely rigid, and I thought—naïvely—that the imperialist attitudes driving the literature and ideologies of the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods were safely contained by the end of World War I. However, following September 11, the hubristic behavior of many western nations, and the United States in particular (and who here stands as the heir to England’s imperial hubris and idiocy), proved again that the old imperialist assumptions are still intact. And even though the stakes and the players of the Game have changed, the belief in the necessity of playing it remains unchallenged. As the numbers of injured and dead rise on both sides (although exponentially higher for Iraqis), it is increasingly clear that the west’s strategic retreat to the past—in terms of response (the British invasion of Kabul following the murder of Macnaghten for example), the denial of native individuality, and the belief in the west’s superior powers of character and ability—has helped to create replicas of the same arrogant policies of threat and invasion used over a hundred years ago. Oblivious to the devastation that it is leaving in its wake, the United States continues to behave as if there should be no consequences from the large scale destruction of native lives.

In many ways, the policies and beliefs practiced by those American men and women conducting the current “war on terror” continue to reflect the masculinist and adventuring ideology and mythology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth period—that native hordes are innumerable, that native government is corrupt, that natives themselves are treacherous, but also that westerners should retain the right of free access throughout former colonial
Moreover, the United States has continued to operate under the standard imperial assumption that the perfidious native attempting to pass himself as a model western citizen will ultimately fail in his attempt to pass—witness the former Department of Immigration and Naturalization Service's registration requirement, as well as the number of men held at Guantanamo. The influence of both masculine and adventuring assumptions can also be seen in the deeply entrenched convictions that all will be right as soon as natives recognize what is good for them, while paradoxically and xenophobically dismissing natives and their concerns out of hand. But without a radical paradigm shift, there is no other way in which the West/US can envision the non-western world. Because adventure novels and fantasies are ultimately fantastic visions celebrating the author's and his culture's monoglossic understanding of the world, the narratives can project only the preferred, successful end to an adventurous episode. And by continuing to privilege adventure and the "adventurous spirit" in the populace's cultural imagination, the west has encouraged its adventurers to continue to treat former colonies as their own playgrounds.

Not surprisingly, modern adventurers like climbers and kayakers have continued to flock to dangerous regions spurred on by the assurance that either a rescue or revenge (preferably the former) party would be at their flank. In fact, despite the 2000 kidnapping of four American campers by Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan forces, the Raid Gauloises was held in Kyrgyzstan this year. Of course, this confidence is, no doubt, at least partly based on the fact that since 2002, the U.S. has maintained roughly 1,500 military personnel in Bishkek. I

27 Although an adventurer may not be a citizen of the nation to whom the geographic region formerly "belonged," the region's status as a former colonized space and the adventurer's status as a westerner grants him the right of access. Witness the number of climbers and kayaker who, prior to September 11, routinely entered Afghanistan, Nepal, and other countries hoping to "bag" a first ascent on a mountain or drop on a river.
would like to point out that while no sane government would consider sending in a retaliatory force to avenge the hostage taking of four tourists, the US' invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq following September 11 and the subsequent killing of thousands of civilians is the same knee-jerk response with which England responded to the First Indian Rebellion and killing of Lord Elphinstone's forces in the Kabul Passes, and bears out again Memmi's depressing equation. As President George W. Bush defines it, vengeance is justice, and in his Address to the Joint Session of Congress and the American People on September 20, 2001, he declares: "Tonight we are . . . called to defend our freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done" (836). It is a sentiment soundly echoed by many in the United States. This dissertation, and this epilogue in particular, was not written to criticize the US' current foreign policies. It is disheartening, however, to find that the same imperial hubris exhibited by the British Government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century continues in a reinvigorated form in 2004. Thus, there continues today a policy of deliberate blindness on the part of the colonizer, and westerners continue to demand the right to see and experience native life—even when assured that they are most unwelcome.

In "Passing for White, Passing for Black," Adrian Piper considers the animosity she faces as a light-skinned black woman routinely mistaken for white. . . . to have extended [friendship] to someone who then turns out to be black is instinctively felt as a betrayal, a violation. It is though one had been seduced into dropping one's drawers in the presence of the enemy. . . . The complaint goes much deeper. It is that she has been lured under false pretenses into dropping her guard with me,
into revealing certain intimacies and vulnerabilities that are simply unthinkable to expose in the presence of someone of another race. (263)

Piper’s experience here most immediately reflects American racial tensions and dynamics, but they also point to a more general deep mistrust and even hatred of individuals who turn out to be other than what the viewer assumed them to be. The ability to dissimulate was and still is a celebrated skill, one that also suggested a bifurcated identity. To the native, the imperial undercover operative, or even the concerned official, was a dangerous adversary—a spy. Unwelcome yet also untouchable. For officials back home, the morphing operative, while a welcome fount of information, was also suspect. The imperial handlers were never certain if the colonial servant would snap the loose leash, passing over in sympathy, as well as conduct, to the other side. All who dealt with the operative were therefore anxious about his "real agenda" and how best to handle him. But like Piper’s audience, those watching the morpher seemed unable to deal with the possibility that whoever they were looking at was who they had to deal with.

As long as operatives were working on the Empire’s behalf, secret agent narratives willingly imagined and portrayed them as superheroes. Because these operatives could mimic any racial, ethnic, or religious identity, undetected by any of these groups, they supposedly witnessed things that other Europeans only fantasized about. For readers inclined towards material about “life on the edge,” there could be no subject more riveting than such an undercover agent. Though natives routinely saw through the disguises of secret operatives traipsing about the countryside, English narratives persisted in celebrating their agents’ ability to remain unsuspected. Agents often shared this belief. Even in the face of evidence that natives were fully cognizant of British plans, the travel journals, memoirs, and fiction of the late-Victorian age celebrated the agent’s ability to go behind the veil.
“Alas, Sind is now gone,” a holy man says as he watched a disguised Lieutenant Alexander Burnes and his party sail up the Indus: “The English have seen the river which is the road to our conquest” (Hopkirk 135). Such native discernment rarely made it into the stories, and if it did, it appeared as the paranoia inherent to fanatics. How else to explain native suspicion? The agent’s disguise was far too good to penetrate.

Yet exciting plots were not restricted to undercover agents. Lone wolf operatives were another popular variant of the rogue hero. These filed agents, who knew the lay of the land better than any administrator sitting safe in a colonial capitol or (worse) far away in London, also knew intimately the politics and customs of native life. Routinely presented in such narratives as the “real” experts who should have final authority to decide on any course of action, their solutions were at odds with those of their superiors. But this conflict only added to their imaginative appeal as men who ignored official orders as a matter of course, or whose recommendations were always right. While any agent with a rebellious attitude technically qualified as a rogue operative, those who dramatically chose to go their own way were even more fascinating. To readers at home, the adventures and attitudes of rogue operatives were an attractive alternative to the endless deference to superiors and rules required of the English. But fantasizing about such rebellion was one thing and actually doing it was another. The number of men who chose to be loose cannons was small, and fewer still actually survived. But there they were, and rogue narratives were in part a containing response to this dangerous potential, for they provided a release for readers disenchanted with the status quo, while at the same time discouraging any emulation of the stories’ heroes. Careful readings show that the most admirable rogues were always those who actually towed the line. Kim, for example, always seems ready and able to snap his imperial tether. His frequent threat, “I will go out of that madrissah in
Nucklao and, and—once gone, who is to find me again” (*Kim* 108) is corroborated by Mahbub Ali: “He was born in the land. He has friends. He goes where he chooses . . . It needs only to change his clothing, and in a twinkling he would be a low-caste Hindu boy” (*Kim* 81). Yet Kim’s triumph is his endurance as the ideal company man, dedicated to the mission.

This acquiesce was important, for rogue operatives undermined the Empire’s position among natives, who saw such insubordination as evidence of imperial instability. As a result, fictive narratives routinely destroyed rogue agents who refused to return. Allen Cooper’s murder by Abas showed what happened to imperial representatives who bucked authority, and the fates of real life renegades were even more sobering. Though he became a heroic martyr, General Gordon ended up quite badly, and Richard Burton was denied his dearest desire—recognition—during his lifetime. Imperial narratives warned those cherishing rogue ambitions that the renegade lifestyle was built on obedience to the Empire.

Yet British hubris will out itself. While proud of the accomplishments of its rogues-in-drag, the Empire faced overwhelming evidence that natives easily recognized English operatives scoping the territory, and the agents’ success depended on the possible arrival of Imperial troops. Undercover operatives flourished when native rulers feared British military strength and temperament. While British agents undeniably surveyed large tracts of previously unknown (to the West) territory, adding to the Empire’s ability to invade and control new realms, the romantic fiction of the daring spy insulted natives, as it undeservedly congratulated itself on British ability, ingenuity, and cheek.

However enjoyable it was to watch rogue operatives playing high-spirited games in native settings, plots like these reinforced imperial stereotypes in ways that were ultimately disastrous. These skilled English mimics easily hoodwinked native hucksters, while always avoiding victimization themselves. Kim’s romps
through India’s underclass neighborhoods, countryside, rail system, and hill
country are joyous excursions. And yet, natives he meets are often attacked and
ridiculed for presuming to desire the same abilities. Attempts at integration are
crudely ridiculous. Their language skills and application of English rational
thought are invariably flawed; Hurree Chundar Mookerjee’s rhetorical prowess is
denied even as it is floridly displayed. The native’s clumsy attempts to ape
Englishmen are only tolerated when accompanied by admiration and adulation of
English customs, literature, and scholastic organizations, since such wise
recognition of British superiority rules out any wish for self-determination. The
logic here is that if natives simply admitted that British institutions and customs
were superior to their own, they would be English guidance and rule much less
burdensome. For all their supposed rebelliousness then, they flattered potential
colonial recruits into believing that their abilities were more than adequate for the
tough jobs ahead; in fact, the whole dangerous affair would prove to be a real bit
of fun. Or at least it would be for the British boy. As in all good class and
colonial fairy tales, the glass ceiling remained firmly below the colonial officials’
feet.

This fairy tale was fraying at the edges in the later years of the nineteenth
century, and tore apart in World War I. Nothing could convince the Englishman
that getting shot, gassed, buried alive, or blown up was a lark, and when officials
turned to their neglected field operatives to get England out of “dam tight”
situations, these agents had already lost their faith. General Gordon had
encountered his superiors’ fondness for political machination over responsibility
during his first tour of the Sudan. He already knew the Empire could never
“solve” the problems of the world, and was in fact only marginally interested in
doing so—and acted only if pressed. The defining clash came in Khartoum.
Though his government was ready to abandon its responsibilities to the people
there, Gordon would not—even when ordered to. Fictional rogues always had sentimentalized loyalties to their native friends, but the Empire itself was not so naive. Real life operatives were to behave efficiently and ruthlessly. Real men on the ground should know that duty precluded all attachment, and when operatives resisted orders to abandon their charges, the Empire often left the agent, and the people, to shift for themselves.

General Gordon’s narrative was famously spun into a national myth, but the Empire found it increasingly difficult to rehabilitate men who turned apostate. Sometime midway through World War I, Britain had run out of enough writers to sustain the old lie. Writers looked in vain for a grand purpose that would give their sacrifice some meaning, and they held responsible the imperial lies and liars who had intimated that dying would be “an awfully big adventure” (Barrie 101). Technology destroyed would-be romantic notions about war and empires. Scouts and adventure heroes soon learned that pluck and campcraft skills could not defend them against a Gatling gun or mustard gas.

The Empire had a nasty awakening. What is surprising is that such an inherently paranoid institution as the English Empire, which reflected endlessly on its global status, could be caught so unaware. Did the old men somehow believe that young men would go to pointless deaths merely because they had been programmed to as boys? Or put another way, does an empire still exist if there is no one left who will die for it? The answer, regrettably, is yes, not only because new generations are born who are taught to venerate the romantic myths of adventure and nationalism that are so central to empire making, but also because empires have proven to be remarkably phoenix like, rising from the ashes of their own destructive impulses and poor choices and feeding off inherited stereotypes of the other and grand assumptions of themselves. Of course, no two empires are ever entirely the same, but they inevitably follow the same ideological blueprints
as their predecessors. In the summer of 2004, as I wrote the introduction to my dissertation, the similarities between what I had been writing about for the past six years and what was being approved of as public policy by my country were overwhelming. It was the same old horror, the same old nightmare beginning again.

When Baden-Powell published *Scouting for Boys* in 1908, his projected primary audience was English boys. However, international response to his program of youth improvement and rejuvenation was overwhelming, and Baden-Powell’s program of earnest preparedness and moral surety found adherents worldwide, often in nations in which and with whom England had played the Great Game. In fact, the youth organization was so popular in the Arab world that in 1954, the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), Scouting’s authorizing body, established an official Arab Scouting Region. So popular is Baden-Powell’s message that even in 2004, “one-third of the world’s 38 million scouts and guides are Muslims—residents of Libya, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia” (Graham 66).

Iraqi boys were similarly smitten with Scouting’s programs, and by 1921, Iraq had established an official program. However, when Saddam seized power in 1979, “One by one, youth groups were retooled to serve the state,” and instead of learning orienteering or other outdoor skills, teen boys “endured 14-hour days filled with hand-to-hand fighting drills” (Graham 66). The ease with which Scouting can make such a lateral shift is not entirely unreasonable, given the movement’s inherent militarist inclinations. But the fact that Scouting’s structure can be easily molded into a military prep program has always been anathema to the organization—at least officially—and in 1999, WOSM expelled Iraq.

Following the official end of hostilities in the Iraq War, Chip Beck, a former CIA operative, proposed that reviving the Iraqi Scouting program would
rejuvenate the nation—and perhaps the entire Muslim world. Scouting’s reputation as a physical and spiritual restorative was powerful and persuasive enough to convince Iraq’s Coalition Provisional Authority to donate the former training center of Saddam Hussein’s secret police to the Iraqi Scouting Initiative—a choice that was made, perhaps, with some bitter humor, considering that many of Scouting’s leaders in Iraq went missing under the former Iraqi leader. More importantly, by sanctioning the start of a new Iraqi Scouting movement, the governing powers signaled their belief that Baden-Powell was still right—both about the nature of boys, and how power is, and should be, divided.

In my close to Chapter One, I recounted my friend’s belief in the authority granted to him by his rank as an Eagle Scout, and his ancillary belief in the system that produced him. My friend has never been in a war nor lived in a country torn apart by an invading force, and while he is not naive, his life experiences (or lack thereof) allow him to maintain an idealistic, innocent perspective on Scouting. And probably because of the deep divide between Scouting’s set agenda of wholesome youthful pursuits and the perverted program forced upon them by their country’s regime, former Iraqi Scouts continue to think fondly of the organization of their youth. But it is a reverence tempered with gritty pragmatism: “An Iraqi friend—a guy who . . . killed two [looters]—tells me over drinks, ‘Of course I was a scout!’ and pours himself another Jim Beam” (Graham 69). Another former Scout passes around pictures taken during a Scout orienteering trip in Kurdistan. His other photos include some secretly taken in Abu Ghraib during the eight years he was held there as a political prisoner under Saddam Hussein. The behavior and sentiments of these men remind the reader that the great youth reformer thought that man really was the most interesting prey. It is also testimony that “being prepared” in the real world also means being prepared to get one’s hands dirty. If western Scouting officials believe otherwise, then they are setting in place the
wrong program entirely. It is obvious that Iraqis who are willing to embrace Baden-Powell’s program of Scouting are also willing to make Scouting perform to its limits.

Nevertheless, a firm believer in pluck—that famous Scouting trait—Beck (like Baden-Powell) believes that Scouting is the secret to the country’s revitalization. Because the program “crosses religious and national values. It’s a belief system in something higher than yourself,” providing a “common ground with Arabs and people in Islamic and Third World societies” (Graham 64). Plans for Scouting in Iraq include the construction of headquarters in Baghdad that house a “dormitory, mess hall, restaurant, leave-no-trace campground, nature preserve, and jamboree area” (66). It will, Beck claims, “turn a camp for killers into a camp for kids,” and if sufficient funding is found, will “change the face of the Middle East” (66).

What Beck neglects to clarify, because it is so obvious, is that ideally such a change would return the Middle East to a time and state where it had virtually no world power or influence and could only mimic the west in admiration, fear, or resignation (or some combination of the three). The fact that Beck’s plans for a Baghdad Scouting Headquarters fails utterly to take into account the very reality of the situation—a leave-no-trace campground?—betrays on a micro level the same wistful retreat to the past that Western nations (with the United States at the fore) long for regarding twenty-first century Iraq and the rest of the Arab world. Moreover, by recruiting former Scouting leaders to lead the revived organization, Beck again replicated class assumptions. Many of these former Scouting masters were “current and past officials with the Iraqi Ministry of Education” (66); Beck’s liaison with these men, Nima Motashar, is a civil engineer. Like their British predecessors, these men are educated, solidly of the Iraqi middle class. And also like their British predecessors, many of the boys that the Iraqi Scouting movement
hopes to recruit are from the working classes. The problem with Beck’s program is that in current day Iraq, class divisions are no longer stable, and many boys of the lower classes are already part of fundamentalist resistance movements such as the Mehdi Army. It is difficult to imagine in any way that the “few dozen teenage fighters blown apart by [American] explosive rounds” (69) would find Baden-Powell’s message relevant or transformative.
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