

Turn-of-the-Century Imperialism in Transatlantic Context

As we noted earlier in the course, and as you know from your studies of American history, the nation of the “United States” emerged from a colonization process—one that initially positioned much of the eastern seaboard of North America as British colonies. In the political discourse of the American Revolution, and in much US literature circulating into the nineteenth century, writers often took on what today we might designate as a post-colonial perspective. By the turn into the twentieth century, however, the US was on the brink of acquiring an empire of its own, and many proponents of this effort used arguments about *shared* Anglo-American history, racial identity, and cultural values as elements in their discursive campaign. Geographically speaking, for the US this move to empire focused on the Caribbean (the taking of Cuba and the building of the Panama Canal, in particular) and on the Pacific (where the Philippines were acquired from Spain). Yet, side by side with these moves to extend American political power—and in many ways complementary to them—we can point to economic and cultural extensions into other regions beyond national borders and to ways in which this growing “expansionism” (echoing the language of Manifest Destiny) aligned the US with Britain and other European nations in shared enterprises, ranging from transnational missionary work to the acquisition of natural resources (e.g., chocolate and rubber from Africa), from the romantic (if actually quite dangerous) exploits of “discovery” and exploration (as in the journey of the English David Livingstone in Africa leading to the “rescue” hunt by Henry Morton Stanley) to the transnational marketing of publications about just such adventures.

While proponents of colonialism and imperialism often formed transatlantic alliances, there was also a transnational dimension to *anti*-imperialism. For instance, the exploitation of slave labor in African mines and the kidnapping and maiming of Africans resisting such practices drew investigative reporting and exposé publications on both sides of the Atlantic.

With this context in mind, for our final week of seminar reading, we will explore a range of texts participating in transatlantic discourse about imperialism at the close of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth. One of our goals will be to identify rhetorical strategies that positioned colonialism as a righteous enterprise re-connecting America to Europe (especially England). That is, we’ll note the ways that transatlantic writing envisioned America as joining a transnational “club” of colonial powers. Another goal for the week will be to examine ways in which campaigns *against* imperialism recycled some of the textual strategies that had been used in earlier transatlantic reform movements, such as abolition.

One strategy we’ll use to consider the tension between colonial and anti-colonial movements at the turn between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will be to focus on visual rhetoric’s role in each ongoing campaign. On the pro-imperial side, we’d like you to take a close look at illustrations in the very popular narrative *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa* (by the very cagey American self-marketer Henry Morton Stanley). Stanley, an American adventurer, made a name for himself in large part by extolling his own exploits during his search for the much-admired British missionary-explorer, Dr. David Livingstone. We’ll discuss two brief excerpts from Scribner’s 1891 edition of Stanley’s memoir, available online via google books. Read “Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?” and “Intercourse with Dr. Livingstone” on these pages: 407-419 and 420-474.

The full text is available on google books:

http://books.google.com/books?id=KWw4AAAAMAAJ&dq=Henry+Morton+Stanley&printsec=frontcover&source=an&hl=en&ei=I6iGS6-SJ5TSM9POlckM&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=12&ved=0CC4Q6AEwCw#v=onepage&q=&f=false

For a useful understanding of how Livingstone and Stanley functioned as transnational celebrity figures, we'll tap into a secondary essay positioning their story in the context of periodical print culture:

Matthew Rubery. "A Transatlantic Sensation: Stanley's Search for Livingstone and the Anglo-American Press." *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: US Popular Print Culture 1860-1920*. Ed. Christine Bold Vol 6. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 501-17. [This text is available in docsharing on e-College.]

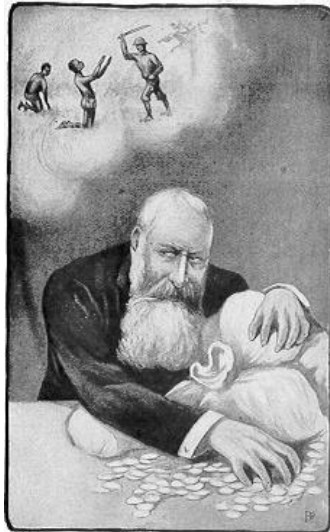
We'll also take a look at the way that visual rhetoric contributed to the competing claims of pro- and anti-imperialism arguments during this era. Using the 1891 Scribner's edition of Stanley's narrative, please identify at least 3 images beyond that of the cover art below that could be viewed as contributing to the construction of a shared transatlantic colonial enterprise linking the US and Europe, as embodied in part by the figures of Stanley and Livingstone themselves but as also expressed in other ways visually. (For some helpful interpretive frameworks, see the "Resources" discussions from David Seed and Sidonie Smith below.)



Henry M. Stanley

Be prepared to discuss specific elements in the images you selected in terms of their visual rhetoric. Please write down specific page numbers so that you can quickly call them up on one of the computers in the lab where we'll meet for the first part of class on December 4—Reed 120.

As a counterpoint to Stanley's narrative, during class we will also examine some of the powerful illustrations from Mark Twain's short but biting anti-imperial book, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*. The illustration below, which depicts King Leopold himself, will give you a taste of some of those we'll see in class:



After establishing a framework for discussion by contrasting imagery from the Stanley book with visuals from Twain's later text, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, we will devote a substantial amount of time to two primary texts at the heart of the debate about imperialism at the turn of the century, and continuing to stir debate today about their content: Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" and Twain's dark satire "To the Person Sitting in Darkness."

If you have not studied these two texts before, we recommend that you supplement a close reading of your own with examination of the contextualized presentations for both here: <http://www1.assumption.edu/users/mcclymer/His130/P-H/burden/default.html> A number of the questions embedded in the URL listed above can inform our work in class. For instance, you'll want to view the editorial cartoon included in the web presentation, and you'll want to ask yourself about the implications of Kipling's poem becoming a tool for US Congressional debate over the Philippines, on both sides of the issue about potential acquisition.

For publication history on the poem, go to this URL:
http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_burden1.htm

Some background on Kipling will be important to your reading of "The White Man's Burden" itself, as well as your consideration of the poem's transatlantic impact. In England, Kipling established fame with his *Barrack Room Ballads* and reprintings of *Plain Tales from the Hills*. These last stories were first issued in India (1888); and like some of the *Barrack Room Ballads* (especially "Loot"), these stories revealed pettiness and at time overt rapaciousness on

the part of British colonizers in India—not quite exemplars of the Great White Race that deserved to guide those less lucky in the birth-color of their skins.

Having already moved from India (his birthplace) to England (for childhood education), back to India (where he began as a journalist and fiction writer) and then again to England seemingly to settle, Kipling moved once more—and became, temporarily, an American. In 1892 Kipling wedded American Carrie Balestier and settled in Brattleboro, Vermont. There the Kiplings lived until 1896, when a quarrel with his brother-in-law drove Kipling back to England once more. The next year, however (1897), he published *Captains Courageous*, a tale of New England seagoing life, revealing his imaginative investment in (and exploitation of) American scenes and narratives. His own American sojourn and transatlantic marriage, then, can serve as yet another context for his 1899 poem “The White Man’s Burden.”

Though Patrick Brantlinger mentions this obliquely, it’s worth remembering to what degree emergent scientific discourses in the form of ethnology and anthropology, as well as Social Darwinism, helped underwrite the overt valuing of northern European races over all others. Herbert Spencer famously adapted Darwin’s principle of natural selection into the social doctrine of “survival of the fittest.” It was a short step to apply this to the ease with which advanced technologies (in armaments and ships as well as scientific instruments) enabled European colonizers to subdue the peoples they confronted in Africa, Asia, and parts beyond. This will help to explain the complacency with which Kipling and others spoke of racial superiority as a “natural” rather than constructed orientation on the world.

Besides drawing on Kipling’s biography and the historical context referenced above, our work on “The White Man’s Burden” will be enhanced by discussion of this secondary essay:

Patrick Brantlinger, “Kipling’s ‘The White Man’s Burden’ and Its Afterlives.” *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*. 50.2 (2007): 172-91. [available online via Project Muse]

This piece includes excerpts from parodies by African-American authors and historical analysis. It also reminds us that this poem, like several other texts we’ve discussed this semester (e.g., Longfellow’s poetry) was published simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic.

Brantlinger revisits some connections between Kipling’s poem and debates about the US presence in the Philippines. However, Brantlinger goes beyond that time period to demonstrate that Kipling’s poem has also had “Afterlives” ranging from parodies to other re-purposings of the text across successive decades. Much as Lord Fauntleroy’s figure took on different, expanded, and increasingly complex dimensions over time in US culture (with the 1936 film version, as we saw, depicting forceful embodiment of American self-image in the central character’s insistence—despite his accent—that he is “American”), we’ll want to think about how both recirculation of Kipling’s text and resistant riffs on it have allowed the poem to do continued cultural work over time.

Our final primary text will come from Twain:

Mark Twain, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." *The North American Review* 172.531 (February 1901): 161-176. [Available through archive.org or Project Muse at this stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25105120>]

Twain's case built in part upon links to British Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain's pro-imperialism leadership in England. See this URL for context on Chamberlain: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/empire/episodes/episode_77.shtml

Finally, we'll want to think about how examining themes and issues associated with imperialism shifts the map of transatlanticism that has dominated much of our work this semester to a broader transnational framing. What are the implications of such a re-mapping for transatlantic work in the future, both in scholarship and in the classroom?

Additional Resources on Travel and Imperialism in the Long 19th Century:

In the introduction to a special issue of *The Yearbook of English Studies* (volume 24 of 2004), which focused on travel writing, David Seed noted that "nineteenth-century travel writing was characterized by its self-consciousness and by its promotion of values (expedition, heroism, and so on) central to empire." He also echoed Sara Mills in observing that particular rhetorical strategies often mark distinctions between men's travel writing (which dominated the genre for many years, on into the twentieth century, due to men's greater access to mobility), and women's growing interventions into the genre across that century (1).

One of the most influential recent studies of gendered travel writing is by Sidonie Smith. Below, we provide some key passages from Smith's text (available as an e-book through the TCU library) to keep in mind as you read Stanley's account of his search for Livingstone—including the illustrations associated with the narrative.

Smith, Sidonie. *Moving Lives: Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2001

Smith contrasts "itinerant masculinity" (20) and stereotypes of feminine stasis that were, by the early twentieth century, sometimes being resisted in practice.

On links between masculinity and reports of travel experiences:

The anthropologist Victor Turner claims that the journey— as event, personal experience, and cultural symbol— accumulates all kinds of communal meanings. Prominent in the repertoire of meanings identified with journeying in the West have been the meanings attached to itinerant masculinity. The historian Eric J. Leed acknowledges the constitutive masculinity of travel when he argues that, "from the time of Gilgamesh," journeying has served as "the medium of traditional male immortalities," enabling

men to imagine escape from death by the “crossing” of space and the “record[ing]” of adventures “in bricks, books, and stories.” He even labels this travel, which provides men the opportunity to achieve notable distinction through self-defining experience far from home, “spermatic” travel (286).¹ Ever in the process of becoming “men,” travelers affirm their masculinity through purposes, activities, behaviors, dispositions, perspectives, and bodily movements displayed on the road, and through the narratives of travel that they return home to the sending culture. Thus, travel functions as a defining arena of agency (ix).

On accounts published by male explorers during the colonial era (whether missionaries or adventurers or a combination of both, as David Livingstone is sometimes considered to be):

Their accounts became cultural forms through which Europeans relocated themselves in an emerging natural history of the world. First through physical encounters with diverse indigenous peoples scattered across the globe, and then through the cultural work of describing those peoples and their cultures, early adventurers reimagined Europe as the most advanced civilization in the history of the world. In the differences they “discovered” between indigenous peoples and the peoples of Europe, adventurer-narrators and their reading publics projected what Mary Louise Pratt describes as “a European global or planetary subject,” a “male, secular, and lettered” subject who looked upon the expanding world around him through a “planetary consciousness” (Eyes 9, 29–30). As journeys of conquest and circumnavigation gradually gave way to journeys into the interior of continents, naturalists assigned to expeditions eagerly collected, described, named, and cataloged this vast natural world opened to Western travelers. (3)

Over time, masculinized travel took on a range of interconnected modes. For instance, in their travel narratives, male traveler figures committed to missionary conversions and those seeking to subdue native groups were joined by self-presentational reports from what Smith calls “naturalists,” who presented themselves as intrepid explorers studying formerly remote regions by way of travel:

Increasing the knowledge base of colonial and imperial frontiers also increased Europe’s capacity to transform natural and human resources into commodities. Surveying all aspects of the frontier increased the sophistication with which capitalist interests could transform local and makeshift organizations into a global system of extraction, transportation, production, exportation, and consumption. And so two masculine activities motivate such travels and narratives: the “impartial” pursuit of scientific knowledge and the aggressive pursuit of commercial opportunities. Enlightenment and imperial masculinities became mutually sustaining (4).

Smith’s commentary on how such accounts link mobility and travel to visions of masculinity:

These travelers returned with narratives that link mobilities to textual representations and in turn textual representations to identities. Of course, the narratives embody no universal expression of masculinity, because, as this elaboration suggests, versions of masculinity are plural, their expressions culturally and historically specific. Moreover, within specific locations—physical, cultural, and psychic—“disparate versions of masculinity,” as Judy Wajcman cautions, “reflect class division, as well as ethnic and

generational differences” (143). Yet, however various the subject of travel and his narratives, however plural the versions of masculinity that travel underwrites, “the traveler” has remained enduringly “masculine”—one who stands in awe, supplicates, survives, conquers, claims, penetrates, surveys, colonizes, studies, catalogs, organizes, civilizes, critiques, celebrates, absorbs, goes “native.” (10-11).

Supplemental Reading On Africa-oriented Transatlantic Travel in the Long 19th Century:

Chipenda, Eva Carvalho. *The Visitor: An African Woman’s Story of Travel and Discovery*.
World Council of Churches, 1996.

Livingstone, David. *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*. Philadelphia: J. W. Bradley, 1858. [with illustrations]
<http://books.google.com/books?id=2ywqAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=missionary+travels+livingstone&hl=en&sa=X&ei=0diPurTFIS02AW1uYGYAg&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=missionary%20travels%20livingstone&f=false>

Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women’s Travel Writing and Colonialism*.
London: Routledge, 1993.

Robbins, Sarah and Ann Pullen, editors. *Nellie Arnott’s Writings on Angola, 1905-1913: Missionary Narratives Linking Africa and America*. Anderson: Parlor Press, 2011.

Youngs, Tim, editor. *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces*.
London: Anthem, 2006.