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Imperial Impulses: The Influence of War and Death on the Writings of Rudyard Kipling

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IMPERIAL IMPULSES: THE INFLUENCE OF WAR AND
DEATH ON THE WRITINGS OF RUDYARD KIPLING

by

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Abstract

This historical inquiry will focus on Rudyard Kipling's life, his works, and their relationship to British Imperialism. More specifically it will demonstrate how Kipling's attitude changed after World War One through his works. To understand Kipling and his place in the British Empire it is essential to understand the framework of imperialism at the time. Once an understanding of imperialism is formed it is possible to get to know Kipling and the world he grew into. The circumstances of Kipling's upbringing were undoubtedly what drove him into his passion for empire, while his later experiences were what drove him to reconsider. Kipling was known as the staunch imperialist, and he certainly was, even his children's literature had undertones of empire, and an establishment of superiority over the rest of the world.

After World War One and the death of his son however there was a difference in attitude, not a reversal, but a change. A newfound distrust of government permeated his works. It is important not to judge a book by its cover or a man by his dogma. Everyone has a life filled with significant events and to understand a person one must take time to look at the persons past. The same can be said for imperialism, to judge the ideology from a modern perspective does not allow the entire truth to be told.

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Imperial Impulses:
The Influence of War and Death on the Writings of Rudyard Kipling

“Take up the white man's burden - Send forth the best ye breed - Go bind your sons to exile To serve your captives' need.”¹ This was the plea of the Indian-born British writer, Rudyard Kipling. He urged all countries of wealth and whiteness, though specifically the United States as a growing imperialist entity, to take up the white man's burden. This late nineteenth, and early twentieth century author believed it was the responsibility of all “civilized” people to bring indigenous people out of “darkness” and into the age of empire. Rudyard Kipling was renowned for his literature. Although for some, his imperialistic outlook was too brash. He used poems like “The White Man's Burden” to rationalize and justify colonialism not only in Britain, but also in the United States. His works spanned many different styles, including novels for both adults and children as well as a great number of poems. Kipling embodied his works, his essence lived within them, and a great part of his life was devoted to the British Empire.

As a nearly contemporaneous writer, George Orwell remarked in 1942, six years after Kipling's death;

He [Kipling] was the prophet of British Imperialism in its expansionist phase [...] and also the unofficial historian of the British Army, the old mercenary army which began to change its shape in 1914. All his confidence, his bouncing vulgar vitality, sprang out of limitations which no Fascist or near-Fascist shares.²

¹ Kipling, Rudyard . "The White Man's Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands." (*McClure's Magazine*), 1889.

² Orwell, George. "Rudyard Kipling." (London: *Horizon*) February 1942.

These words were words of praise, with a foundation of honesty and a twist of censure, as a comparison to fascism at that point in time meant nothing but ill. Kipling wrote for the public servant both military men and civil administrators. He often did so quite bluntly. Dominant power hierarchy was a major part of nearly every work, and the words he invoked were less eloquent than contemporary writers. Although, his works were vulgar in the sense of language and sometimes content, they appealed to the common man. Kipling was known for his staunch support of Britain and British policy, especially in his early writings. He was a nationalist, full of pride and support for his country, and in favor of hierarchical power structure they exemplified, but his passion never went so far as fascism as Orwell pointed out. Even those who disagreed with Kipling's politics tended to still value the greatness of his works. His works were enormously popular and enjoyed by nearly all who read them, and even those who did not read them, but rather encountered them through quotes and verses. As historian C. E. Carrington described in her book *The British Overseas* :

His [Kipling's] career is a far more significant episode in the history of the British Commonwealth than in the history of English literature. To a whole generation, homesickness was reversed by inoculation with Kipling's magic. Englishmen felt the days of England "sick and cold, and the skies gray and old and the twice-breathed airs blowing damp" [sic]; heard the East a'calling; fawned on the younger nations, the men that could shoot and ride; were conscious of the weight of the White Man's Burden; learned to read and talk the jargon of the seven seas; while in the outposts of Empire, men who read no other books recognised and approved flashes of their own lives in phrases from Kipling's verse.³

This historical inquiry will focus on Rudyard Kipling's life, his works, and

³ [Quoted, the *Kipling Journal* 224, December 1982, pp.15,17] [The extract below from "The British Overseas," by C. E. Carrington, M.A.— Cambridge University Press, 42s. net—is reproduced by permission. The passages are from Chapter XII : The New Imperialism : South Africa to 1912. Section (3) Rudyard Kipling.]

relationship to British Imperialism. More specifically it will demonstrate how Kipling's attitude changed after World War One through his works. To understand Kipling and his place in the British Empire it is essential to understand the framework of Imperialism at the time. Once an understanding of Imperialism is formed, it is possible to get to know Kipling and the world he grew into. The circumstances of Kipling's upbringing were undoubtedly what drove him into his passion for empire, and his later experiences were what drove him to reconsider his positions.

For the purpose of this thesis it is necessary to establish a working definition of imperialism, one that might match Rudyard Kipling's interpretations. Imperialism is among the most complex concepts in history. There have been countless books published on Imperialism, many of which were written by well learned scholars.⁴ Among them every definition is slightly different. As Barbra Bush pointed out,

when writing about imperialism it is impossible to be value-free; interpretations of imperialism and contemporary structures of global power depend on where individuals were/are positioned within empires, or the aftermath of empires, and in relation to vested political and economic interests and personal family histories.⁵

Each person experienced imperialism differently from the soldiers, public servants, and laborers to the shop keeper, merchant marine, and Governor Generals. Those who may not have experience it directly experienced it indirectly through their cultural backgrounds that colored their point of view.

⁴ Some such scholars who are utilized in this essay include John Sealey, Bernard Porter, Barbara Bush, J. A. Hobson and many others.

⁵ Bush, Barbara. *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*. (London: Pearson Longman) 2006. pg. 7.

Britain has a history of expanding militarily and commercially. Systems of trade were used to exploit India through the East India Trading Company for many years before the empire officially ruled the subcontinent. An empire over-seas was the most apt description of Britain's Imperialism, but there were many other types of empires.⁶ China ruled over bordering territories for hundreds of years, yet by some definitions, China may not have had a policy of Imperialism. China did not expand quite like European countries did in the Age of Exploration, or perhaps more accurately, the Age of *Exploitation*⁷. The concept of Economic Imperialism, the practice of infiltrating a countries economy, also defined the nature of Imperialism. In the past, the case was made that any nation which bought or sold goods in a foreign market took part in imperialism. A trade policy that extended a country's power through cultural means rather than military or colonial ways conducted an imperialist agenda. Catholic missionaries could reasonably be classified as imperial agents; just as a peddler traveling from sea-port to sea-port as there work is to spread their own culture.⁸ However, generally only trade on an "unfair" point is considered imperialism.

The above scenarios describe various styles of imperialism but there are historians and political theorists who would argue for a stricter definition, thus limiting it to the act of politically governing a place through military force. Examples included Britain's relationship to India, North America, and other locations around the world where Britain

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ This time period was characterized by the expansive policies most European countries held, there was massive *Exploitation* of places like Africa and South East Asia, in the form of forced labor, and a harvesting of natural resources.

⁸ Wright, Harrison M., editor, *The "New" Imperialism: Analysis of Late Nineteenth-Century Expansion*. (D. C. : Heath and Company), 1961.

created colonies.⁹ Colonies held dominion over the land and native populations, not purely through economic relationships but with political and military might. With a limited definition, it was possible to examine the historical beginning and decline of widespread, overt, imperialism. The point of mentioning these different scenarios, definitions, and ideas is to emphasize the complexity of imperialism.

One of the most influential imperial historians was Sir John Robert Seeley. In his work *The Expansion of England* published in 1883 he professed that imperialism was not really a political drive, but more so a higher form of patriotism. Remarking on the tendencies of the British people he said “in short, we think of Great Britain too much and of Greater Britain too little.”¹⁰ As far as Seeley was concerned, the British colonies were not so different from the motherland Great Britain. His urgings shifted the views of many politicians at the time, the question of how much self government a colony should be allowed, or who defends them in a time of war, or even whether they are “useful” should never be addressed in any way that separates them from the motherland. Great Britain was as responsible to its colonies as it was to itself, it was not a matter of politics, economics or efficiency the colonies should be awarded equal treatment Seeley thought. His writings formed a basis of imperial theory that influence all future imperial historians including the more contemporary Bernard Porter.

For the last hundred years historians, anthropologists, political scientists, and sociologists have debated, discussed, and wrote about the nature of imperialism. Bernard Porter, in several works examined imperialism. In his book, *The Absent Minded*

⁹ Hobson, J.A., *Imperialism: A Study*. (New York: James Pott and Co.) 1902

¹⁰ Seeley, Robert *The Expansion of England* 1883 pg.61

Imperialist, published in 1994, he demonstrated that imperialism affected everyone connected with Britain both overseas and at home. There was a culture experienced not only by the so called “imperialists” but also the shop keepers in northern London. they experienced imperialism every time they obtained a shipment of clothing. In Britain's early imperial relationship with India the clothing produced in India utilizing cheap labor and inexpensive cotton. Later, India’s textile industries were shut down almost completely and cotton was sent to Britain for refinement domestically. The patrons of the shop took part in the system because they benefited from the cheap products. This chain of events would not be considered by the average person at the time, they would utilize the system of cheap goods without understanding that they were taking part in the imperial system. These examples illustrate the far reaches of imperialism, and play into the book’s title, *The Absent Minded Imperialist*.¹¹

As Porter stated in his introduction, “Britain was made up of imperialists and subjects, just like the colonies were. Her culture must have reflected this.”¹² Although Porter applied imperialism to both foreign and domestic affairs, his definition as explained throughout his book was more restrictive than others. Racism and other cultural repercussions of imperialism were not considered part of imperialism. Porter believed imperialism was not a phenomenon; it had no cause and no specific effects. Instead, he suggested that imperialism was a convenient label. A label that could be

¹¹ Porter, Bernard. *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc.) 2004.

¹² *ibid*, pg. xiii.

applied to many diverse circumstances. It was not a “reality” as other historians suggested.¹³

The concept of imperialism received its name in the late nineteenth century primarily by its opponents. However, its supporters started using it soon after. The earliest studies of imperialism were done primarily by political theorists, economists, and sociologists. One notable theorist was English economist John Atkinson Hobson. Hobson authored *Imperialism: A Study* in 1902, a book that examined “modern” British imperialism. Like many other scholars who wrote on imperialism his definition and understanding was restrictive. He ignored “loose” imperialism, such as the cultural dissemination caused by trade in foreign markets and instead focused on the direct economic and political impact of domestic imperial policies. The first portion of his book was dedicated to a careful analysis of statistics. The second part looked at political impacts on conquered races, and the impact of direct British control, particularly the notion that imperialism was part of a civilizing mission. Hobson’s emphasis on industrial imperialism, that being imperialism purely for the sake of profit and pushed by capitalists, opposed Seeley’s theory, and has been criticized for its failure to explain early British expansion. While Seeley explained imperialism as greater patriotism for “Greater Britain” Hobson saw the colonies as separate entities brought into existence for exploitative reasonings. Hobson, like many liberals at the time, was opposed to imperialism both on economic and moral grounds.¹⁴ The moral grounds likely being the treatment of natives in foreign lands.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Hobson.

The term “liberal”, “liberalism” or “left” has been in politics for a very long time, but the way the term was used in the nineteenth century was not identical to the way the term is used today. In Kipling’s case it is an even more challenging term because it was in a process of transition throughout Kipling’s life. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth century it was a term to define those who supported a free market and limited government regulation. Beginning in the early twentieth century, liberalism supported basic social welfare programs, unionization and more “socialist” tendencies. This was due in part to infighting among the Liberal Party and the election and reelections of William Gladstone as British Prime Minister in the 1870’s and 1880’s. To gain popular support Gladstone broke away from traditional liberal values like laissez-faire capitalism, in exchange for welfare oriented values. As Prime Minister, he reached out to the lower classes of Britain. He also took actions to reduce the power of the aristocracy and church. Through Gladstone the Liberal party and liberalism in Britain shifted dramatically. Not all liberals were anti-imperialist. For the later part of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of Britain’s government was of the Liberal Party and understood perceived benefits of imperial policy. That being said, those against imperialism were almost exclusively liberals.¹⁵ Kipling’s writings responded primarily to the “modern liberalism” that came to be in the late nineteenth century. Being a true child of imperialism, he believed liberalism was folly and undermined the British Empire.

As Porter pointed out, British historians of the mid-twentieth century often separated imperial history from British History. Scholars were seemingly ashamed of that

¹⁵ Rich.

part of Britain's history. As a form of exploitation, many non-imperial countries (at least not overtly imperialistic) used imperialism as a way to guilt Britain for its terrible past. This argument sets the stage on which Kipling is judged, the backdrop for his writings, and his legacy.¹⁶

In subtle ways, the study of imperialism shifted, from a rigid narrow perspective to a more inclusive, broad perspective. Since Rudyard Kipling was born in India, he experienced the British side of imperialism and its effects on the local populations. This upbringing influenced him considerably. While he was writing his early works, before 1900, the British Empire was a strong ideal. An achievement held dear by many British citizens. However, in the years after World War One people stopped believing in empire, and no longer held it as a source of pride. The rise of modern warfare shocked populations and the great loss of life stirred the hearts of many, even staunch expansionists. This was when Kipling's reputation began to decline.¹⁷

Kipling was a child of the British Empire, his identity was tied to Imperialism. He dedicated his life to his country, writing for the soldiers and the civil servants who maintained the system and served their country. He was known as a champion of imperialism, but this title did not come without great cost. Due to the tragic loss of his son in The Great War, Kipling's writing changed. He questioned his former assertions and no longer acted as a prophet of the British Empire. The war marked a turning point not only for Rudyard Kipling, but also imperialism as a whole. The institution's decline

¹⁶ Porter.

¹⁷ Sullivan, Zohreh. *Narratives of Empire : the fictions of Rudyard Kipling*. (New York:Cambridge University Press), 1993.

mirrored Kipling, and the original fervor for imperial progress held by the common man all but died along with the great author in the decades following the The Great War.

There are several strong themes that appeared in Kipling's early writings that will be described in greater detail throughout this essay. They include racial superiority, order through obedience, mutual benefit, and civility (a "taming of the wild", so to speak).

These ideas shaped his view of the British Empire, as he believed it was a global force for good. Imperialism, as Kipling viewed it, was a national policy of expanding a country's power to less developed places around the world through economic, political and military means in order to gain natural resources and labor in exchange for order and civility. This definition is slanted in such a way as to make it a desirable occurrence or phenomenon for both the imperial power and the indigenous people. Without ever writing those words, Kipling portrayed this patriotic and racist definition throughout his many early works. To discover Kipling's motives it is necessary to look at his own history.

Rudyard Kipling was born December 30, 1865 in the coastal city of Bombay, India. Bombay was acquired by the British as a dowry from Catherine of Portugal to Charles II of England two hundred years prior. The territory was primarily controlled by the British East India Trading Company, and although originally seven islands, by Kipling's birth it was geographically one island held together by extensive land-filling. During the American Civil War in 1865, Bombay became the world's primary cotton producer, which dramatically increased its wealth. Kipling spent his first five years of his life with his parents, John Lockwood Kipling and Alice Kipling (MacDonald) in this booming city. His parents were of fairly modest means. John Lockwood Kipling was an

instructor of art at the Jeejeebhoy School of Art. It was a job that paid very little, but due to his and his wife's unique family connections (both children of Wesleyan ministers) they were able to furnish a very nice home, with several servants. The Kiplings owed their livelihood and well-being to British Imperialism, and this fact steered Rudyard Kipling's life.¹⁸

As Robert Moss points out in his book *Rudyard Kipling and the Fiction of Adolescence*, "Kipling's personality was shaped from its earliest years by the knowledge that he belonged to the ruling class, that he was born to command and that the darker skinned people around him, however affectionately he might feel toward them, were social and political inferiorities."¹⁹ He was treated like a king in India, in some cases a tyrant that even his parents could not control. Young Rudy was known for his tantrums and no one dared to cross the child when he was throwing a fit. Evidently, his parents were not skilled in discipline, this may have had some weight in their next decision. In India, Kipling was exposed to all colors of life, and this experience set the backdrop for many of his works. But, nothing lasts forever.

At age five Rudyard Kipling was sent back to England to live with a foster family. The Kiplings were too poor to send him to public school in India, as they possessed more status than material wealth. Rather than asking relatives for help they made arrangements with a retired sea captain, Captain Holloway. The Captain was kind to Rudyard Kipling,

¹⁸ In 1962 Fidel Castro remarked in "The Second Declaration of Havana"; "if imperialism provides sources of aid to the professions, arts, and publications, it is always well understood that their products must reflect its interests, aims and "nothingness". [Sullivan]

¹⁹ Moss, Robert. *Rudyard Kipling and the Fiction of Adolescence*. (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1982. pg. 2.

but he died shortly after his arrival and left his wife to look after the young boy. The years with the foster family were some of the most difficult ones of Kipling's life.²⁰ He remarked in his autobiography, *Something of Myself*, "I had never heard of Hell, so I was introduced to it in all its terrors—I and whatever luckless little slavey might be in the house, whom severe rationing had led to steal food.[...] Myself I was regularly beaten."²¹ This experience gave Kipling a harsh sense of reality but the darkness of this time did not come out again until his later years.

Took us from our mothers--
Flung us on a naked shore
(Twelve bleak houses by the shore.
Seven summers by the shore!)
'Mid two hundred brothers.²²

At age twelve Kipling escaped his prison and attended the United Services College at Westward Ho! It was a private boarding school for sons of military officers. Kipling was not the son of a military officer, but the headmaster happened to be a very close family friend, Cornell Price. Throughout Kipling's time at the school, Price was a valued mentor. It was a school generally meant to prepare boys for military academies, though not all those who graduated would join the service. Kipling had a different calling, while at the school he demonstrated exceptional skill with the pen. Price recognized this gift and encouraged it.²³ Kipling later portrayed his experience in a collection of short stories published in 1899 with the title *Stalky and Co. Characters in*

²⁰ Moss. pg.3.

²¹ Kipling, *Something of Myself*. 1936

²² Kipling, Rudyard. *Stalky and Co.* (Gutenberg Project), 1899.

²³ Moss. pg.5.

these stories represented Kipling and people Kipling had met at his time there. The main character, Stalky, was constantly getting in trouble with the head masters and the keepers of the houses. Such misdemeanors generally warranted punishment, but Stalky and his friends were able to get off with a slap on the wrist. Since Kipling did not receive adequate grades to go to Oxford on his own merit, and his family could not afford the tuition, he decided to return to India to begin his life again.

Remarking on his return to India Kipling wrote, “there were yet three or four days’ rail to Lahore, where my people lived. After these, my English years fell away, nor ever, I think, came back in full strength.”²⁴ When Kipling moved inland on a train from Bombay to Lahore he placed his English years in the past. He was a child of India and it was his true home. Through his parent’s influence he was granted a job as the assistant editor to a local newspaper called the *Civil and Military Gazette*. While working for this paper he was given some freedom to write short stories and published many poems.

He was known in the office for being a very uninhibited writer, thinking faster than he could write and spraying ink all over himself with his pen without restraint. After he demonstrated his talent he was transferred to the newspaper's much larger sister paper, *The Pioneer*. In 1889, Rudyard Kipling worked as a kind of traveling correspondent for *The Pioneer*; his goal was to work his way back to the heart of the British Empire, but first he wanted to see America. He described this opportunity as “a sort of waking dream when [he] took, as a matter of course, the fantastic cards that Fate was pleased to deal [him].”²⁵ It was the perfect start to his career and his life. While he traveled throughout

²⁴ Kipling, *Something*.

²⁵ *ibid.*

America he visited many places including Elmira, New York where he had the pleasure to meet Mark Twain, one of his idols at the time.²⁶ He was thoroughly impressed by the literary genius, even though they disagreed considerably on the matter of imperialism. Twain was a leading member of the American Anti Imperialist League, and spoke against imperialism as much as Kipling spoke for it. Unlike Kipling, Twain's views on imperialism did not exclusively reside within the pages of his works. Twain gave many speeches and lectures on the subject of Imperialism.

Over the course of his life Kipling published hundreds of works, works which also included his posthumously published autobiography which he died during the writing of in 1936 at age seventy. On the sheer quantity of his writing he remarked "mercifully, the mere act of writing was, and always has been, a physical pleasure to me."²⁷ Due to his skill at the art of writing he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. In the presentation speech he was chosen by the committee to receive the award "in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the [his] creations..."²⁸ He also received several other honors including the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature in 1926. He was one of the most famous writers in England at the time, and today.

Kipling, and his wife, Caroline Starr Balestier, never stayed in the same place for too long. In 1892, they were married in England, then they moved to America and had

²⁶ Kipling, Rudyard. *An Interview with Mark Twain*. Literary Classics of the US , 2010

²⁷ Kipling, *Something*.

²⁸ "The Nobel Prize in Literature 1907" Nobelprize.org. 24 Mar 2013

two children. Josephine was born in 1892 and her sister Elsie was born in 1894. During the British-American crisis in 1895 the family decided to move back to England and have their third child John Kipling (named after his great grandfather) in 1899. Tragically Josephine, the first born, succumbed to pneumonia before the age of ten in the same year her brother, John, was born.²⁹

All the while the couple tended to take their winter holidays in South Africa. Kipling did not write about these holidays in his autobiography, but he did explain his relationship to South Africa. He spent a great deal of time with the soldiers there as a journalist working for The Pioneer. On several occasions, when supplies ran low and funding was short he sold subscriptions of his works to civilians and used the profits (over a quarter of a million pounds) to purchase luxury items for the men serving in South Africa. Remarking on this in his autobiography he said, “some of this was spent in tobacco. Men smoked pipes more than cigarettes at that epoch, and the popular brand was a cake—chewable also.”³⁰ The places he lived and visited played a unique role in Kipling's works. Although he often wrote fiction, his fiction lived in places that he knew. *The Jungle Book* and other children stories were set in the jungles of India, while *Stalky & Co.* took place at a boarding school similar to the one he attended in England.

It is not difficult to draw comparisons between Kipling's early life and his most famous work, *The Jungle Book*. *The Jungle Book* (a collection of stories and poetry) was published in 1894 while Kipling was living with his wife in Vermont. The first part of the book chronicled the life of a young Indian boy named Mowgli. At a very young age

²⁹ Ricketts, Harry. *Rudyard Kipling, a Life*. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc.) 1999 pg. 249.

³⁰ Kipling, *Something*.

Mowgli, was separated from his human family and became a feral child of the jungle. Taken in by wolves he was called “man cub” and treated as if he were a wolf. Many treated him kindly but some did not want him there. Nevertheless, he was taught the laws of the jungle like the other jungle animals, by Baloo the aging bear. Because he was a man he had to learn far more than the average beast. It was not enough for him to learn only the laws pertaining to wolves. He learned the ways of the snake, panthers, and other animals. The laws were complex, but Mowgli was a very fast learner, although, on occasion, he made mistakes and was beaten lightly by his teacher. To a small bear cub the blows may have been light, but to a small boy they were quite painful. But it was the way of the jungle. Punishments were short and carried out immediately, but afterwards there were no lingering conflicts, no persistent feelings of guilt or unfriendliness.

The Laws of the Jungle provided Mowgli with a sense of order and structure, and were the building blocks of his formal education, an education that allowed him to live safely within the “society.” This time in Mowgli's life represented Kipling's time spent with his foster family in England. Kipling was taken away from his parents in order to learn and be raised at the center of the British Empire. Although Mowgli's experience was colored in a more positive light, he never felt as though he belonged. When the jungle boy was brave enough he stole a bit of fire from a nearby encampment of native humans. The jungle beasts were terrified and sent him away.

Mowgli's demonstration of power meant that he was truly a man, and had no place in the jungle society. He went back to where he had come from, and began to learn the ways of man. Mowgli found the ways of men confusing and confining, but still

managed to adapt and learn. He was seen as a jungle child by the other humans. Even after he slew his long-time rival, Shere Kahn, the great tiger and man hunter, and proved his merit, he was not seen as one of the animals, but only feared more intensely. Like Kipling, Mowgli was destined to be homeless and live a nomadic life. Rudyard Kipling traveled the world as a writer and news correspondent, just as Mowgli hunted alone, until the day that they would both marry.

The story of Mowgli's future was written within *The Jungle Book II*, in 1895 a year after the first book was published.³¹

Waters of the Waingunga, the Man-Pack have cast me out. I did
them no harm, but they were afraid of me. Why?
Wolf Pack, ye have cast me out too. The jungle is shut to me and
the village gates are shut. Why?
As Mang flies between the beasts and birds, so fly I between the
village and the jungle. Why?³²

This short poem within *The Jungle Book* portrayed Kipling's own feelings of confusion, perhaps brought about when he was nearly forced to move out of Vermont due to political pressure and upheaval between Britain and the United States. In the early 1890s there was a border dispute between Britain and Venezuela. Under the Monroe Doctrine the United States claimed the right to arbitrate. This led to a great deal of tension between America and Britain. Although the situation was resolved, the press in America was unbearable for Kipling. The political tension, in addition to issues with his wife's family, led Kipling to pack his bags. He was destined to be a man without a home.

³¹ McBratney, John. *Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space: Rudyard Kipling's Fiction of the Native-Born*. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press), 2002

³² Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book*. (Gutenberg Project.) 1894

This early biographical look into Kipling's life sets up his adult writing career, giving him a frame of reference in regard to empire. Imperialism was, to an extent, a spirit or pride held by those within the ruling class of an empire. It was a drive for expansion that was often colored by greed and racism. It was believed by the British that the greatest societies in history formed empires, from Athens and Rome to The United Kingdom. The British Empire was one of the largest. It was once said that the sun never sets on the British empire, as it stretched across the entire world. Although empire had its place in ancient history, the modern concept of imperialism can only be seen in much more recent times. Britain used it to become very wealthy and spread its ideals and customs around the world. The British Empire was an empire of commerce and law. Government stemmed from the island of Britain. Rudyard Kipling championed British and Anglocentric imperialism through his works of fiction, both those directed towards children and those for adults.

Looking back into *The Jungle Book* an interesting comparison could be drawn between this notion of forced progress and the story of "The White Seal". The story of "The White Seal" was completely divergent from the Mowgli plot line and focused on a unique white seal cub named Kotick and his adventures. Kotick was born on the beach as were thousands of other seals that year. His father fought for months to protect his spot on the beach; as was customary each year, although he was quite bruised and battered, he remained proud. Kotick was the first and only seal to be born with a fleece as white as the sand. As a young pup he witnessed a group of men killing and skinning many of his companions. It was as traumatic as one would expect, but the older seals were not very

concerned, as they were jaded by experience. When Kotick told them what he had seen they explained that it had always been that way. Each year the men came and collected all the fur they needed. It did not matter where the seals went; the men followed.

At this point in the story, Kotick became determined to find a new place. A secret place for all the seals to live. He spent many seasons swimming the ocean and refused to take a mate. His parents supported him, but they were not pleased by his choice. In the seventh season of his search he came upon an inlet, protected from sight and untouched by man. It was a place where all the seals could be safe. However, when he approached the many thousands of seals on the beach and tried to explain to them what he had found, they refused to believe him. Kotick would not accept defeat, especially not after he had spent so long in search of this place. He challenged each seal to a fight, with the terms being, should he win, they would follow him. His father remarked,

never in all his little life did he see anything like Kotick's charge into the nurseries. He flung himself at the biggest sea catch he could find, caught him by the throat, choked him and bumped him and banged him till he grunted for mercy, and then threw him aside and attacked the next.³³

By the end of the day Kotick's white fur was drenched with blood and the other seals were ready to follow. The following week, ten-thousand seals went with him to the safe haven. Since that point, Kotick, "The White Seal", was remembered for his tremendous deed.

This children's story taught the lesson that it was okay to use force where force was necessary in order to do the right thing. Imperialism in Kipling's mind was good, not only for Britain and Englishmen, but also for the natives. Although, like the thousands of

³³ Kipling, *Jungle Book*, "White Seal".

seals that refused to listen to Kotick, natives resisted “progress”. They did not understand it and were often not thankful for it. The undertone of the story was racist, a characteristic that made Rudyard Kipling less and less popular over the years. It was the white seal, whose pure intentions and determination freed the other seals from abuse. Kotick was the smartest among the darker colored ones and led them all to safety, just as it had been the white man who led the natives out of the dark and offered them safety and protection under the flag and crown.

Looking further into *The Jungle Book*, the story of “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi” spoke to the virtue of trust between the master and servant. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi was the name of a small mongoose who was the main character of the story. After a sizable flood the mongoose nearly drowned. Before death could seize him he was rescued by an English family that had recently moved into the house within the jungle. The family nursed the small creature back to health and offered it a comfortable place to live. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi's mother always told him that a house mongoose was a happy mongoose, but to stay in the house one had to protect the family. Once Rikki-Tikki-Tavi was well enough to scurry around he traveled into the garden. Snakes represented an incredible threat within the jungle, even the smaller ones carried enough venom to kill a man. A mongoose, however, was the snake's natural enemy and is capable of killing with a single bite. Two snakes were notorious among the other creatures of the garden, but both of them were fearful when they saw Rikki-Tikki-Tavi.

Throughout the story the bitter rivalry continued as the snakes tried to kill the family in hopes that Rikki-Tikki-Tavi would leave if the house was abandoned. The small

child was the first target, but the mongoose defended the child with help from the father who used a wooden bat to drive the snakes off. Later, the snakes attacked again with even greater cunning, but the mongoose continued to serve his English family. In the end, all the snakes were gone and the family was able to live in peace with their protector and pet Rikki-Tikki-Tavi.

This moral of this story was, at heart, the relationship between the mongoose and the family. The family saved Rikki-Tikki-Tavi from the dangerous elements and in return he protected them from the jungle. This sort of relationship was the idealized imperial relationship that Britain shared with many native peoples. It was one of mutual benefit. Both sides had things they could offer, for instance the British offered society and civility while natives offered resources and goods that strengthened the empire's economy and protected the interests of investors. Natives were treated well if they helped the empire, just as Rikki-Tikki-Tavi was treated well for his continued diligence in keeping the family safe.

“You can work it out by Fractions or by simple Rule of Three, But the way of Tweedle-dum is not the way of Tweedle-dee.”³⁴ The final chapter of *The Jungle Book* taught that everyone had their own role to play in the success of the British Empire. The story, titled “Her Majesty's Servants,” centered on a discussion between the various camp animals that served their human masters who were soldiers of the British Empire. There was a troop horse, a mule, two bullocks, an elephant, and a camel. Each had their own way of fighting and supporting a battle. The troop horse charged in with a rider on his

³⁴ Kipling, “Jungle Book”, *Her Majesties Servants*. Npg.

back, while the mule would not come close to the combat. Rather, the mule climbed up steep hills and cliffs while carrying a small cannon to a strategic encampment position. The horse saw it as cowardly for an animal to stay on the back line, but when the elephant explained his job with the artillery encampments the horse did not envy him.

To some extent there were hierarchies of intelligence among the animals. The gun towing bullocks were stupid, for they did not understand violence of battle. Their brains were too small;

“Oh, I'm not talking to you. You can't see inside your heads.” [said the horse] “No. We see out of our four eyes,” said the bullocks. “We see straight in front of us.”³⁵

In order for the imperial system to function there had to be those who were servile and those who were leaders. Everyone had a part to play. This was an important lesson in patriotism for young children. It helped to teach that no matter what a person was skilled at, no matter how dull or gifted, service to the empire was possible. The clerk and the bureaucrat played a role just like the captain and the engineer. All different, diverse and unique, but valued nevertheless. This lesson connected with Bernard Porter's concept that everyone, even people living in Britain played an important role in the empire, whether they were aware of it or not. From the shop keeper who sold Indian textiles in his/her shop to the person that purchased them.

Then I heard an old grizzled, long-haired Central Asian chief, who had come down with the Amir, asking questions of a native officer.

"Now," said he, "in what manner was this wonderful thing done?"

And the officer answered, "An order was given, and they obeyed."

"But are the beasts as wise as the men?" said the chief.

³⁵ *ibid.*

"They obey, as the men do. Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier the general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress. Thus it is done."

"Would it were so in Afghanistan!" said the chief, "for there we obey only our own wills."

"And for that reason," said the native officer, twirling his mustache, "your Amir whom you do not obey must come here and take orders from our Viceroy."³⁶

The excerpt above was taken from the last few lines of "Her Majesty's Servants" and took place directly after a parade of thirty-thousand men and camp animals. It was a marvelous sight, and the Afghan man questioned how such a feat could be choreographed and executed so perfectly. The key statement in the quote was "an order was given, and they obeyed."³⁷ This was one of Kipling's most imperial messages in *The Jungle Book*. It emphasized that through order, law, and a sense of duty great things could be done. However, it relied on each part to work properly. Every rank and level had its own responsibilities, even the camp animals played a role in the success of the empire.

Returning to the story, the old elephant told the other animals of its upbringing and struggles. The elephant learned that by displaying courage and a willingness to do what was asked of it by its masters it would be treated well. The elephant did not cower or startle at the blasting of the gun, never gave the soldiers a reason to beat him, and was rewarded with food, lodging and respect. Obedience, was the lesson of the elephant. Any child reading or listening to this story would be inspired to behave and obey, with the idea that a reward would come. Through this system the British Empire became strong as

³⁶ *ibid.* Npg

³⁷ *ibid.* Npg

each citizen sought to display the values of imperialism. Those values were, patriotism, pride, obedience, duty, and entrepreneurial drive.

Other nations, countries, and peoples were forced to submit to British rule because they lacked those values. Without obedience there cannot be order, and without patriotism there could be no unity. This was described in the final lines of *The Jungle Book* as the Afghanistan Amir (or chieftain) was forced to take orders from the British viceroy. Although, on the surface, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* seemed like a simple children's book full of talking animals it had very strong tones of imperialism. In reference to this Kipling noted in his autobiographical work *Something of Myself* how some of his works were misinterpreted and mentioned his imperialistic nature;

Yet, since the tales had to be read by children, before people realized that they were 'meant for grown-ups; and since they had to be a sort of balance to, as well as a seal upon, some aspects of my 'Imperialistic' output in the past, I worked the material in three or four overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth, and experience.³⁸

This demonstrated an awareness of his works and of his bias. It supported the notion that there is a wealth of underlying messages within his works, for both children and adults.

Based on Orwell's interpretation and defense that Kipling was not a fascist, the liberals (primarily anti-imperialists) despised Rudyard Kipling because he saw the hypocrisy of the "left." Most enlightened people thought coolies (slang for Asian laborers) should be set free and that forced labor at the barrel of a gun was wrong. Yet, without the cheap labor British industry suffered and the quality of living enjoyed by the left middle class would deteriorate. Although Kipling did not see the massive labor

³⁸ Kipling, *Something*.

exploitations he was familiar with the Indian civil servants who manned the less glamorous jobs. He recognized that any man who was highly civilized needed less civilized men under him to feed him and keep him safe in function. This understanding allowed Kipling to coin the most poignant and controversial phrases that made his work profound. One such example can be found in a short poem called “Tommy” where he wrote, “making mock of uniforms that guard you while you sleep.”³⁹ The metaphor was meant to show the folly of the left for thinking they would ever dismantle a system that kept them well fed, wealthy, and safe. Kipling was an imperialist because he believed it was the best system for all parties, even the enslaved, and those who condemned it were hypocrites.

Rudyard Kipling was a very worldly man, an Englishman of proud blood born in India, who lived part of his life in America. He had a great deal of faith in Britain, but he realized that one country alone could not civilize the entire world. America became a new super power with a very large sphere of influence, particularly after its war with Spain where it gained territories such as the Philippines, Puerto Rico and parts of Cuba. However, the Spanish American War was not the end of America’s imperial journey. The Filipinos who had supported America in the fight against the Spanish wanted full independence and raised an insurrection against the United States in 1899. The three year Philippine-American War sparked one of Rudyard Kipling's most imperialistic poems called The White Man’s Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands. The war took the lives of over a million Filipino civilians. Although the official war ended with

³⁹ Kipling, Rudyard. “The Queens Uniform” aka “Tommy”.(*Scots Observer*), 1890.

American victory after three years, it was not until 1913 that all fighting stopped.⁴⁰ In the very beginning of the conflict in 1899, Kipling published his poem as shown below:

- 1 Take up the White Man's burden
- 2 Send forth the best ye breed—
- 3 Go send your sons to exile
- 4 To serve your captives' need
- 5 To wait in heavy harness
- 6 On fluttered folk and wild—
- 7 Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
- 8 Half devil and half child
- 9 Take up the White Man's burden
- 10 In patience to abide
- 11 To veil the threat of terror
- 12 And check the show of pride;
- 13 By open speech and simple
- 14 An hundred times made plain
- 15 To seek another's profit
- 16 And work another's gain
- 17 Take up the White Man's burden—
- 18 And reap his old reward:
- 19 The blame of those ye better
- 20 The hate of those ye guard—
- 21 The cry of hosts ye humour
- 22 (Ah slowly) to the light:
- 23 "Why brought ye us from bondage,
- 24 "Our loved Egyptian night?"
- 25 Take up the White Man's burden-
- 26 Have done with childish days-
- 27 The lightly proffered laurel,
- 28 The easy, ungrudged praise.
- 29 Comes now, to search your manhood
- 30 Through all the thankless years,
- 31 Cold-edged with dear-bought wisdom,
- 32 The judgment of your peers! ⁴¹

⁴⁰ Painter, Nell Irvin. *Standing at Armageddon, A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 1987.

⁴¹ Kipling, The White.

The poem quickly made it around the United States capitol and strengthened the imperialists' resolve. The title of the poem itself aimed to inspire a sense of responsibility. It was the burden of the white man to look out for fellow nations and to protect the weaker, "less civilized" ones. Often protection came in the form of order and law. Protecting the barbarians from themselves. It required the best of the best, as a mediocre man would break under such strain. The poem called upon Americans to serve their captive's need: creating infrastructure, roads, postal systems, government, and commerce. Kipling pointed out that it was thankless work as those who were saved would not understand. Only a true man, or strong country was able to do what was "right" in the face of great struggle. Near the end of the poem he challenged the United States, how would other countries see the situation if America backed down, what judgment would they make?

A personal friend, and soon to be vice president, Theodore Roosevelt, commented on "The White Man's Burden" saying that it was "rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansion point of view." Kipling and Roosevelt met in 1895 and got along rather well. Kipling remarked in his autobiography "My own idea of him was that he was a much bigger man than his people understood or, at that time, knew how to use..."⁴² Roosevelt was a new breed of leader in America orchestrating more reforms than most American Presidents. However, he came at a time before the United States realized its power. America was only in its early stages of global interactions. Kipling believed in Roosevelt and on several occasions he utilized his literary talent to aid the future

⁴² Kipling, *Something*.

president. This connection and willingness to use his craft for political purposes demonstrated Kipling's "patriotism" and unique outlook.

"The White Man's Burden" it was immediately confronted with rivals and parodies. Some of the most notable works were "The Poor Man's Burden" by labor editor George McNeill, and "The Black Man's Burden" written by the African-American clergyman and editor H. T. Johnson, both of which were published in 1899. In addition, "The Real White Man's Burden" was published in 1902 by poet Ernest Crosby, along with several other satirical anti-imperialist works loosely based on Kipling's early writings. These poems contradicted Kipling's version of the world and enlighten readers as to the true nature of imperialism. A few lines from "The Poor Man's Burden" correspond to lines three through six of Kipling's poem. "Go bind his sons in exile, To serve your pride and greed; To wait in heavy harness, Upon your rich and grand."⁴³ Imperialism was bred out of greed, useful as a means of cheap labor and natural resources. "In a world of canting hypocrites, This kind of business pays."⁴⁴ This was quoted from the last few lines of "The Real White Man's Burden." Attacks were fierce and widespread. In the end America continued down the path of empire and Imperialism.

This poem fortified the minds of the more expansionist oriented politicians, but, it, and the American Philippine war also strengthened opposition to imperialism. The American Anti-Imperialist League was formed near the very end of the nineteenth century led by liberals. It was notably supported by the American author Mark Twain, and personal friend of Rudyard Kipling. On any occasion they were in the same country,

⁴³ McNeill, "The Poor Man's Burden". [in Painter]

⁴⁴ Crosby, "The Real White Man's Burden". [in Painter]

they would make a point to drink with one another. Despite their friendship, Twain strongly opposed imperialism and gave countless speeches against it. The league believed that imperialism contradicted republicanism and basic American ideals, like self government and consent of the governed. Interestingly, The American Anti-Imperialist League limited its opposition to this key philosophy. They were not opposed to imperialism on religious, economic or humanitarian grounds. They opposed it because it was un-American.⁴⁵ America was founded on the basis of self government. The colonists broke away from the mother country of Britain in order to form their own country where the government would not be across the ocean but rather at the heart of the country itself. Imperialism relied on controlling foreign territories much the same way as Britain controlled America. Members may have felt that economic exploitation was wrong, and military actions against non military targets was inhumane, but the emphasis of the league was on self government. The league was of the opinion that no reasonable American could favor keeping dominion over a territory that wanted the freedom to govern itself. But, the United States was a country of progress and continued to expand its dominion into the mid twentieth century.

The racism of Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" colored imperialism from its publishing till the present. Imperialism became recognized as a racist institution by many mid-twentieth century historians because of its dependence on the enslavement of those with darker skin. Kipling was known for his many dichotomies, black and white, east and

⁴⁵ Harrington, Fred. *Literary Aspects of American Anti-Imperialism*. (New England Quarterly, inc.) 1937. 650.

west, primitive and civilized. These views were expressed in many of his works.

Everything was based on contrast and an imbalance of power.

As one might expect, Rudyard Kipling was one of Britain's most fervent patriots leading up to World War One. He used his skill with a pen to create propaganda for the war, including *The New Army in Training* published in 1915. The piece was originally five articles, and a commentary on the British military. A more modern army formed, training with the latest technologies and tactics. As Orwell mentioned, Kipling acted as unofficial historian for the British Army. He sought to honor those who served, risking their lives to protect the motherland.

They stand at the very beginning of things; creating out of chaos, meeting emergencies as they arise; handicapped in every direction, and overcoming every handicap by simple goodwill, humour, self-sacrifice, common-sense, and such trumpery virtues.⁴⁶

This quote speaks to the sacrifices soldiers make and the obstacles they overcome, often through sheer force of character.

Although Kipling never served in the military he was no stranger to it. The school he attended in his early years was a prep school for boys going into the army, and when he worked for the newspaper in India, he ate most meals with soldiers of the empire. He knew what battle was like and how camps operated from the stories he heard, he thus experienced them vicariously. Rudyard Kipling generally associated himself with the administrators, civil servants and soldiers, particularly the officers. However, he was often too high brow for the working class. Kipling admired the working class but in his

⁴⁶ Kipling, Rudyard. *The New Army in Training*. (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited) 1915.

day to day life he did not encounter them. In the late 1800s the common British person was growing tired of imperialism, its popularity was waning particularly among the lower classes. “The mass of the people, in the nineties as now, were anti-militarist, bored by the Empire, and only unconsciously patriotic.”⁴⁷ Kipling's real audience was the “service” middle class, they put him on a pedestal because he was one of their few supporters. He did not villainize the British soldier. He celebrated him for being brave, courageous and for doing his duty. His portrayals of British officers tended to be rather comedic, but nevertheless he made them look like the ideal Englishmen.

World War One, however, was a more brutal conflict than the world had ever seen. Referencing one of Kipling's many visits to army camps he said:

I watched their faces in the camp, and at lunch looked down a line of some twenty men in the mess-tent, wondering how many would survive to see the full splendour and significance of the work here so nobly begun. But they were not interested in the future beyond their next immediate job.⁴⁸

The soldier's bravery stemmed from their purpose, and the duties they performed. He knew there would be casualties; everyone did; but the splendor of their accomplishments, and prolonged wellbeing of the empire justified the burden and sacrifice.

Kipling sought to encourage civilians to take up arms and join the army, as well as giving military men a place of honor in literature. His words scorned the coward, and those who shirked their duty. Not everyone joined the military in its moment of need. As Kipling pointed out, “They (the new army) think it vile that so many unmarried young

⁴⁷ Raskin, Jonah. *The Mythology of Imperialism: Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and Joyce Cary*. New York: Random House, 1971.

⁴⁸ Kipling, *New Army*.

men who are not likely to be effected by Government allowances should be so shy about sharing their life.”⁴⁹ These men were often talked about by name in military camps. Safe from harm in one way, but also the targets of extreme criticism and mockery.

Kipling's attitude towards war changed dramatically after World War One. Due to the death of his son, his writings changed tone, as he was much less in favor of the imperialism he had preached in his earlier years. Leading up to WWI, Rudyard Kipling's son, John Kipling, named after his grandfather, wanted to join the service and fight for his country. John had a deep connection with his father, generally referring to Rudyard Kipling as “Daddo”, and he had always tried to make his father proud. John was at just the right age, turning seventeen in 1914, to join the first year of World War One. After two attempts, however, he was not accepted into the British army due to his poor eyesight. Had the story ended there Rudyard Kipling's viewpoint may not have shifted so dramatically. Because his son so desperately wanted to fight, as any good Englishman ought to when his country needed him, Kipling utilized some of his old contacts. Lord Roberts, commander and chief of the British army and colonel of the Irish Guard, was an old family friend. After Kipling begged him, Roberts made it possible for John to join an Irish Guard regiment, and he was commissioned as a lieutenant.⁵⁰

At first soldiers were wary of fighting along side Lieutenant John Kipling, as everyone knew his father and assumed he had lived a rather spoiled life. This wariness did not last long though, and soon he made a name for himself. He was known for his

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Pinney, Thomas. *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling volume 4: 1911-19.*
Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999 pg.245.

sharpness of dress and his cunning wit, in addition to his natural bravery. One fellow soldier, Sergeant Kinnelly, noted; “Mr. Kipling was about 50 yards in front of his platoon and was shouting ‘Come on Boys!’ He was the bravest officer I ever saw.”⁵¹ John found genuine brotherhood in the guard, but it was short lived.

After just two days of deployment at the battle of Loos, John Kipling was killed in action. It was reported that he was hit in the head by a great deal of shrapnel. One young guardsman, Bowe, said, “that as they left this wood he saw an officer, who he could swear was Mr Kipling, leaving the wood on his way to the rear and trying to fasten a field dressing round his mouth which was badly shattered by a piece of shell.”⁵² Several guardsmen saw this but did not offer assistance for John. He cried with pain, almost hysterically, unable to manipulate his jaw in order to speak, and they did not want to humiliate him by offering assistance. It was clear that the wound was fatal and no amount of bandaging would have helped. John’s death devastated Rudyard Kipling. In addition to a parent’s grief, he also felt responsible for the death of his son. There is only one mention made of his son in his autobiography as he recorded his birth; “my son John arrived on a warm August night of ’97, under what seemed every good omen.”⁵³ Sometimes what is left out of a work can be just as important as what is within. The strain he felt must have been immense. Kipling avoided the darker events of his life throughout his autobiography. Instead, he focused more on his life as a writer than his life as a man.

⁵¹ Ricketts, pg.327

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ Kipling, *Something*.

As terrible as this occurrence was, the strain was multiplied by the fact that his body was never identified. At first, Rudyard Kipling and his wife were hopeful that perhaps their son had been kidnapped or taken as a prisoner. They even used a plane to drop pamphlets all over the front line asking for information on John's whereabouts. Eventually they gave up hope that he was alive. Kipling and his wife spent many years searching for the anonymous grave that was their son's, but to no avail. It was not till the 1992 that John Kipling's remains were located, and his body moved to a new cemetery with a marked headstone.⁵⁴ The death of his son shook Kipling's support of Britain and its policies. Although he did not become an anti-imperialist, he certainly gave up his role of the "prophet of imperialism." One short poem within his larger work *Epitaphs of War* shows Kipling's change in attitude. "If any question why we died, Tell them, because our fathers lied."⁵⁵ Kipling no longer held unwavering trust in the leaders of the country. Although he was a patriotic Englishman till his death, he saw the folly of his ways. Who knows how many men joined the war on account of Kipling and his works.

Kipling never moved past the death of his son. He coped with his depression by delving deep into his work. Shortly after the war Kipling wrote a collection of poetry called *The Epitaphs of War*. They were not aimed against the military by any means, Kipling remained a supporter of the military his entire life, but they did point out the horrors of war. Some of the poems went as far as attacking the leadership, the politicians. The passion of the work most assuredly came from John's death. One poem, "The

⁵⁴ Ricketts.

⁵⁵ Kipling, Rudyard. *The Years Between* "Epitaphs of the War" 1919.

Beginner”, described soldiers like John who joined the war to fight for their country, but were slain before they had a chance to show their bravery.

On the first hour of my first day
In the front trench I fell.
(Children in boxes at play
Stand up to watch it well.)⁵⁶

Kipling was often not able to write directly about his son. There are many poems that were likely inspired by him, but even the poem “My Boy Jack” which many thought was a nickname for his son, was instead about one particular naval battle in the beginning of World War One. His grief permeated his works, and sometimes that grief transitioned into anger. The best example of Kipling’s anger can be found in another poem within the *Epitaphs of War*, “A Dead Statesman.” It attacked the politicians. First it accused politicians of being unable to work a reasonable job, but without the heart to steal directly for their sustenance. They lie to please the crowds, and make grand speeches that promise success and splendor. It is not till the end of the war that their lies were proven untrue and ‘they had to face the men they slew.’⁵⁷ These scornful words would not likely have come from the Rudyard Kipling before World War One, but his mind had shifted. The *Epitaphs*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Kipling, *Epitaphs of War*, “A Dead Statesman”.

A Dead Statesman:

*I could not dig; I dared not rob;
Therefore I lied to please the mob.
Now all my lies are proved untrue
And I must face the men I slew.
What tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young?*

of War would not have been written without John's death. England won the war, and the champion of imperialism (Kipling) would have been empowered rather than defeated.

After World War One Rudyard Kipling's writing pace slowed considerably. He published only about half as much as he had in the first part of his life. One of his largest works post World War One was a two volume history of the Irish Guard. It has been considered one of the greatest military histories ever written.⁵⁸ Kipling spent nearly three years interviewing soldiers, collecting letters and journals and revising his work. To his secretary he once remarked "This will be my great work."⁵⁹ He knew he had to write it for his son, as agonizing as it was to meet all those who survived where his son had not, he was determined. By April sixteenth, 1923, *The Irish Guards in the Great War* was published and in the shops. All royalties Kipling earned from it went to the widows of those who served in the regiment. Within the text Kipling told the story of his son. This is the only time that John shows up directly in Kipling's writings. It was a work of blood, sweat and tears for the aging writer.

Kipling's change in character was not just in his writings but also the way he conducted himself in public and the ideas he shared. A close friend and fellow writer, Sir Henry Rider Haggard⁶⁰ noted the following in his daily journal after spending some time with Kipling.

I happened to remark that I thought that this world was one of the hells. He [Kipling] replied that he did not *think* he was *certain* of it. He went on to show

⁵⁸ Ricketts, pg.341

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925) was an English writer who, like Kipling wrote several children's books and had a passion for adventure stories.

that it had every attribute of a hell, doubt, fear, pain, struggle, bereavement, almost irresistible temptations spring from the nature with which we are clothed, physical and mental suffering, etc., etc., ending in the worst fate that a man can devise for man, Execution!⁶¹

The darkness of Kipling's words were undoubtedly representative of his life. Although he was a great success and still revered by many to this day, his life was filled with hardships. At first the empire was Kipling's only comfort, it treated him well when he was young, and servants waited on him hand and foot. The Empire even allowed him to travel the world as a journalist, free to follow his muse. However, in the end the empire took what was most dear to him, his one and only son.

In *Narratives of Empire*, published in 1993, Zohreh T. Sullivan, looked at the changes that occurred in Kipling's works over his writing career. She attempted to expand the readers' sense of colonialism and understanding of Kipling's cultural context in his early works. Sullivan examined him and reported fears and desires that came about in his later work. No doubt, feelings brought about by the loss of his son. She worked in the narrative form to tell the story of Kipling and his relationship with imperialism from his residence in India, his studies in England, all the way to his residence in America.⁶²

In addition to *Irish Guards in the Great War*, Kipling also involved himself with the War Graves Commission, set up to honor the fallen soldiers and construct cemeteries. After consultation with all ranks and races of the armies, including Britain's native armies, he chose the Biblical phrase "Their name liveth for evermore."⁶³ This phrase was

⁶¹ Ricketts, pg.338

⁶² Sullivan.

⁶³ Pinney, pg.521

both simple and profound, and Kipling deemed it the right fit. As part of the War Graves Commission, he toured many of the cemeteries and accompanied the King on his pilgrimage. In fact he also served as King George V's speech writer for a time after the war. Being one of the most revered writers in England it made sense that the King would choose him. They had been acquaintances for some time.⁶⁴ Kipling was also involved in other memorial commissions around the world. He consulted with several organizations, assisting them in choosing the best quotes.

In 1919 - 1920, Kipling worked on an anti-Bolshevism campaign with his friend Sir Henry Haggard. They were determined to keep the Bolsheviks out of England, and set about forming the "Liberty League." Its mission was to "combat the advance of Bolshevism in the United Kingdom and throughout the Empire."⁶⁵ It was an organization that did not rely on the government or the church but was backed by *The Times*. A Bolshevik conspiracy made its way throughout England. The Liberty League was short-lived and the leadership crumbled. As it did, other newspapers sought to discredit both Haggard and Kipling. Kipling's involvement in the Liberty League shattered his credibility and made him look like a fool. One article in particular, published two years later detailed a conversation between Kipling and a man he thought was a family friend. Kipling unleashed a tirade against America's late involvement in the war and warned that the peace that was achieved was not adequate. He believed that Germany was not

⁶⁴ Rudyard Kipling and King George V had known each other for some time, in fact they used the same mechanic/artisan in 1911 while Kipling was waiting to have the body of his Rolls-Royce rebuilt the King was having his 200 year old coronation carriage regilt. However, a fire consumed the shop and destroyed both the carriage and Kipling's automobile. Kipling joked in a letter to a friend that George was so put out by this occurrence that he had not as yet taken the time to send condolence about the loss of his body (the body of his automobile). Pinney, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling volume 4: 1911-19. pg.21*

⁶⁵ Ricketts, pg.352.

punished harshly enough and a second war would not be surprising. He did not realize that the family relation was really an undercover journalist and was taken aback when this conversation was published. It was not the sort of thing he wanted publicized.⁶⁶

The last of Rudyard Kipling's works was his autobiography *Something of Myself*. He died before the book was published. Although he was an excellent writer, this autobiography was not what one would expect. It was generally vague and distorted, over-emphasizing some parts of his life while entirely ignoring others. This certainly made it a much more unique work, though not very helpful when trying to piece together his life. The last lines written in *Something of Myself* were; "Left and right of the table were two big globes, on one of which a great airman had once outlined in white paint those air-routes to the East and Australia which were well in use before my death."⁶⁷ Kipling was a traveler, visiting nearly every corner of the British Empire, but just as he saw his impending death he also saw the empire fading.

Two days after he died in January 1936, Kipling's long time acquaintance King George V also passed away. This marked the end of an era. Rudyard Kipling was a controversial writer in his own time as well as in more modern times. He preached imperialism in his early years but after the death of his only son the old man was surely subdued.

With the passing of King George V and Rudyard Kipling, the once fervent prophet of empire, the days of imperialism were numbered. Many British citizens already

⁶⁶ Ricketts, pg.354.

⁶⁷ Kipling, *Something*.

considered it the country's dirty habit.⁶⁸ George V was the Emperor of India, a title that the crown would only hold for roughly another twenty years.⁶⁹ In 1947 King George VI gave up the position of Emperor of India. Although several years later he became the first Head of the Commonwealth when India wanted to become a republic, but did not want to leave the Commonwealth of Nations.

Kipling was proven correct in his suspicion that peace would not hold in Germany as war broke out again in 1939 starting World War Two. Whether Kipling's claim that the Germans were not punished enough is true or not, the armistice failed. World War Two marked the end of an era as the entire world began to change. After the war the last Imperialist prime minister, Winston Churchill, was voted out of office. In a speech Churchill gave in 1943 to Harvard University he spoke of America and Britain's role in the future of foreign affairs. He said; "the empires of the future are the empires of mind."⁷⁰ By observing the present it seems Churchill might have been right, the spread of ideology, political systems, and culture. has been immense in recent years.

It was not long before "crown jewel" of the British Empire was lost to home rule. Kipling's birth place, and once proper British soil, India claimed its independence in 1947. In his earlier years, Kipling made it clear that he did not think India could ever be an independent nation. The native people would not be able to maintain a stable and peaceful government. This was proved untrue just ten years after his death. Britain maintained some of their dominions throughout their empire's decline, for instance the

⁶⁸ Orwell.

⁶⁹ Wolpert, Stanley. *A New History of India*. eighth edition. (New York: Oxford University Press), 2009.

⁷⁰ Richards, *Empires of the Mind*, Pg. 187

Falklands, but the rest were set free. The most extensive empire the world had ever known is now almost a distant memory.⁷¹

Race and race relations continued to be a major issue in Britain. For a long time the average British citizen believed nonwhite populations were primitive and warlike. They were portrayed in Kipling's works and others as less intelligent and less than human. However, an increase of nonwhite immigrants came to England, and England adapted. "The first generation of black immigrants came to experience considerable racial hostility due to a lingering public doubt that they all came from primitive jungle societies or had tails or were cannibals..."⁷² These stereotypes were often promoted by cartoonists, and the popular press. Over time Britain was forced to change its perceptions and strive to treat those of color with respect. A variety of organizations aided in this transition, such as the "Racial Relations Group" and "Racial Unity" which were active in the 1950s.⁷³

Looking back at Kipling, a great deal changed after his death. Some things that he had predicted came true, for instance World War Two, while other things did not, like the continued dominion of India. Imperialism declined in Britain in the sense of direct colonial rule by the mother country, but the case could be made that America has in fact lived up to Rudyard Kipling's plea in "The White Man's Burden". The power of American capitalism can be seen all over the world through fast food industries, clothing

⁷¹ Wolpert.

⁷² Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, Pg.175-177.

⁷³ *ibid.*

trends, entertainment etc. America's military dominance and political power can also be seen in most countries.⁷⁴

Rudyard Kipling's story is relatively unknown as many see him as a caricature of the racist and elitist imperialist. He was those things in his lifetime but he was also much more. He was a troubled man with a troubled childhood, who experienced fierce beatings by his foster family. His childhood was marred by darkness, that could be detected in his early works. India was a liberating place for Kipling both in his early childhood and later when he worked for the newspaper the *Civil and Military Gazette*. The popularity he derived came from the beauty of his writing and the stories that he told. He wrote in a time where the average military man was not often portrayed positively, particularly those who served in India and Africa.

Through his poetry and stories he taught the morals of empire, and the nature of contrast. He preached that the white man knew the way. For instant, Kotic the White Seal, was a character who brought the darker seals to safety. Everyone had a part to play whether war horse, pack mule, camel or elephant. He taught obedience and respect towards your keeper, as well as the importance of order and law. *The Jungle Book* is still a beloved classic although some of the lessons are no longer acceptable, it is possible to look at the stories in different lights. Being respectful and knowing one's preordained role in society is good, but knowing when to act on your own instinct is also important. Mowgli had to make his own life, he did not have the comfort of a society that understood him, he was in between two worlds while not fitting in either of them.

⁷⁴ The question of whether America has or has not lived up to the tenants of The White Man's Burden is a good topic, but is too immersive to be discussed within this essay.

The bravery Rudyard Kipling inspired even if for imperialistic means strengthened the spirit of the British people. Sadly, he had to learn first hand the horrors of war. In his post World War One collection *Epitaphs of War* one poem speaks to the loss of a son.

A SON:

My son was killed while laughing at some jest. I would I knew
What it was, and it might serve me in a time when jests are few.⁷⁵

It is unknown exactly what John Kipling was doing in the moments leading up to his death, but it is a reasonable hope of a father to think that perhaps he was laughing at a joke, enjoying his last few minutes before the fatal wound. This event changed Kipling, it forced him to rethink his motives. Although he died an imperialist, many years later his works reflected a change in attitude. A newfound distrust of government permeated his works. It is important not to judge a book by its cover or a man by his dogma. Everyone has a life filled with significant events and to understand a person one must take time to look at the person's past. The same can be said for imperialism. To judge the ideology from a modern perspective does not allow the entire truth to be told.

⁷⁵ Kipling, *Epitaphs*.

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