GTA Press

Racial Ideologies and Imperial Discourses: A New Historicist Reading of Kipling's "The White Man's Burden"

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Abstract

Set against the backdrop of the 19th-century apex of European colonial expansion and formation of New Imperialism, Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden", composed in 1899, emerges as a cultural artefact reflecting and actively participating in the racial and imperialistic discourses prevalent during this epoch. Generally criticized for perpetuating a one-sided narrative, the poem ignores the violence, exploitation, and cultural disruption wrought by colonial powers and presents an idealized vision of the colonizers' mission without acknowledging the harsh realities faced by the colonized. The present article offers a comprehensive New Historicist examination of Kipling's iconic poem by contextualizing it within the racial and exceptionalist socio-political and pseudoscientific milieu of the late 19th century United Kingdom and the complex web of imperial ideologies prevalent in the Victorian era. By engaging critically with Kipling's poem, this study aims to give insights into the intersections between literature, power, and historical context and offer a nuanced understanding of the legacies of imperialistic ideologies and their implications for our present-day understanding of empire and race.

Keywords: The White Man's Burden, Kipling, New Historicism, Imperialism, Discourse, Racism, Colonization, White Man, Colour

1. Introduction

   Kipling's "The White Man's Burden", generally interpreted as a jingoistic poem and in accordance with continental philosophy of Manifest destiny, was written originally to render homage to the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria and was meant to shift the onus of a civilising mission in Philippine Islands onto the American imperialists. For British readers of the time, the poem, emphasizing the perceived necessity of dispatching sons to defend the empire, served as a continuation of familiar ideologies and consistent with the prevailing sentiments. The title itself has come to symbolize a paternalistic imperialist perspective, notably casting indigenous peoples, particularly in African colonies, as savages in need of salvation by their colonizers. Kipling's message is stark: the white man, owing obligations to God, fellow countrymen, and the non-Western world, must send his sons into "exile" to the far reaches of the globe and this is a duty - a test of manhood - wherein the white man must endure struggles for the "profit" of those who harbour animosity towards their saviours. While he acknowledges the inevitability of opposition, he implies a transformative trajectory for the burden as evolving into a "reward" by which he means the colonized people will eventually embrace the ways of their white benefactors and express gratitude for being brought into the proverbial light.

The speaker positions himself as an authoritative figure, reinforcing the central exhortation at the beginning of each stanza to emphasize the unwavering nature of his message. In fact, this repetition, combined with the use of the capitalized phrase "The White Man," implies a collective duty shared by all white peoples. Towards the conclusion of the poem, he stresses the idea that shouldering the burden is integral for western nations to outgrow their "childish days", which aligns with perceived duty of white nations to uplift and civilize other societies. The rhyme scheme and metrical schemes employed by Kipling are in line with the dictatorial tone assumed by the speaker. He creates a rhythmic pattern resembling a simplistic nursery rhyme and the iambic trimeter, with an additional unstressed syllable in odd-numbered lines, contributes to the sing-song quality of the verses. The rhyme, scheme, meter, and repetitive structure evoke a hymn-like quality, which is further underscored by the use of the antiquated pronoun "ye" and a reference to the story of the Israelites in the book of Exodus.

Kipling constructs a narrative in which he positions the empire as shouldering a burdensome responsibility to uplift and enlighten supposedly less-developed societies and the people of colour as recipients of the empire's civilizing missions, a mission that the poet considers essential for their advancement. He employs the word "burden" to convey a sense of duty and self-imposed obligation that the imperial power willingly accepts. Phrases such as "Your new-caught, sullen peoples, /Half-devil and half-child," depict the colonized as both morally underdeveloped and in need of guidance. The word "sullen" suggests a reluctance to embrace the benefits that the empire purportedly brings and this resistance becomes a justification for the burden the white man assumes in civilizing these ostensibly recalcitrant societies. As evident, the term "new-caught" implies a recent acquisition of territories which positions the colonized as freshly acquired possessions rather than established societies. This characterization reinforces the notion that these societies are in a nascent state. We could also see the portrayal of the colonized as "half-devil" exemplifies a dualistic characterization that serves to dehumanize and infantilize the colonized. It also suggests a need for suppression of perceived savagery and a justification for the imposition of order by the superior race. This clearly reflects a deeply ingrained belief in the inherent barbarity of non-European cultures and the imperialistic rationale for intervention and control. With regard to the term "half-child", it implies an incapacity for self-governance and autonomy reinforcing the notion that the noble burden the empire shoulders is not only a social responsibility but also a moral duty to guide and uplift these immature communities. Moreover, the notion that it is the responsibility of the white men to "Fill full the mouth of famine/ And bid the sickness cease" suggests the need for white intervention to save them from their own supposed deficiencies and justifies the subjugation of non-white peoples under the guise of benevolent paternalism.

As readers delve into Kipling's work, they may be taken aback by the stark contrast between the beauty of his prose and the ugliness of his racist ideology. The realization that a writer of such talent and influence could hold such abhorrent views can be jarring and unsettling, challenging our perceptions of literary greatness and forcing us to confront the uncomfortable truths about our past and the intersection of literature, race and imperialism. This revelation often prompts modern readers to confront the uncomfortable reality that even esteemed literary figures of the past were not immune to the prevailing biases of their era. This juxtaposition of literary acclaim and the colonialist rhetoric requires a re-evaluation of Kipling's legacy and serves as a reminder of the pervasive prejudices woven into historical narratives. However, penned in 1899 during the height of the New Imperialism, Kipling's poem mirrors and reinforces the racial attitudes prevalent in this period. While the contemporary reader may find these ideas reprehensible, recognizing the historical context aids in unravelling the complex web of ideologies that informed Kipling's perspective and contributed to the cultural landscape of the time.

The significance of a New Historicist approach lies in its ability to unravel the intricate connections between Kipling's poem and the imperialistic zeitgeist of the 19th century England. This approach invites readers to consider how Kipling's poem both shaped and was shaped by the power dynamics of the era and sheds light on the complex interplay between literature and the broader socio-political landscape. In other words, A New Historicist reading enriches our understanding of not just the literary text but the broader historical milieu in which it emerged and allows readers to appreciate how "The White Man's Burden" functions as a cultural artefact that reflects, contests, and contributes to the discourses of its time. This literary criticism framework, grounded in the belief that literature is deeply entwined with the social, political, and cultural conditions of its time, unveils layers of meaning and implications that might not be immediately apparent through other interpretive lenses.

2. Discussion

According to Brantlinger (2007), during the Philippine-American War, the death toll of Filipinos on Luzon alone could have reached up to one million, through combat or unintended consequences. In fact, the cruelty displayed by American troops in the Philippines mirrored the ruthless methods of Spanish forces in Cuba, leading to extensive devastation and loss of life. Also, in the context of McKinley's observations about Spanish brutality in Cuba, it is evident that American troops employed similar tactics in Philippines. For instance, following the Balangiga massacre of U.S soldiers by Filipino insurgents, orders were given to devastate the entire island of Samar which resulted in widespread civilian casualties (Brantlinger 2007). Likewise, Filipino prisoners of war often faced torture or capital punishment, with practices like the "water cure" being widespread. By drawing false parallels between Filipinos and Native Americans, portraying them as divided tribes incapable of self-governance, the media reinforced racist attitudes towards the Filipino people (Brantlinger, 2007). Theodore Roosevelt, as the president of the country, equated support for Filipino insurgents to aiding hostile Native American tribes during past conflicts. Similarly, American soldiers, many of whom had experience in fighting Native American tribes during the Indian wars, viewed Filipinos through a similar lens as enemies to be eradicated. Justified by dehumanizing Filipinos as savages, many of them held

contempt for their adversaries and by using terms like "googoos" and "niggers", they used the same derogatory language as their Spanish counterparts to demean their new captives (Brantlinger 2007).

As Kramer (2006) recounts, the capture of Manila by U.S. troops led to a tense six-month period marked by interactions between Filipinos and Americans as both nations sought to establish their presence. U.S. soldiers were navigating an unfamiliar urban environment and Filipinos were cautiously engaged with the invading army for business opportunities (Kramer, 2006). However, soon clashes arose due to conflicting interests, misunderstandings, and disrespectful behaviour from some American soldiers towards Filipinos. Negative stereotypes and mistreatment of Filipinos by certain soldiers, fuelled animosity and conflicts, highlighting the challenges of cultural difference and power struggles during this transitional period. It is believed that better treatment of Filipinos could have potentially prevented further tensions, but instances of discrimination and abuse by some white troops tainted the early interactions between the two groups (Kramer, 2006).

In Euro-American political contexts, while civilized societies engaged in traditional warfare, savage groups resorted to guerrilla tactics (Kramer, 2006). Thus, the Filipino guerrilla warfare was perceived by Americans as inherently barbaric and raised questions about whether Filipinos, in conducting a savage war, should be subject to the rules that governed civilized conflicts (Kramer, 2006). In fact, guerrilla tactics, characterized by decentralized command structures, undisciplined troops, reliance on rural resources through looting, and strategies of concealment and deception, clashed with European-American ideals of honourable combat (Kramer, 2006).

During a speech in May 1902, at the newly established Arlington Cemetery, Theodore Roosevelt, addressing a crowd of around thirty thousand people, passionately defended the ongoing colonial conflict in the Philippines and emphasized the role of colonial violence in shaping the American nation (Kramer, 2006). He framed the conflict as a race war, highlighting the importance of upholding the honour of the American flag and promoting civilization over what he deemed as savagery and barbarism. While acknowledging U.S. wrongdoings, he justified the sometimes harsh tactics employed by American forces as, according to him, the Filipino enemy had committed far worse atrocities. He claimed that such military actions were necessary in order to achieve the noble goal of expanding civilization at the expense of barbarism.

Kramer (2006) argues that the advocates of war used to merge American and British imperial pasts and integrated U.S. history into the broader racial narratives of "Anglo-Saxon" history. The Philippine-American War was seen, therefore, as a natural continuation of Western conquest, reflecting the ambitions, abilities, and destinies of Anglo-Saxon peoples. To put it another way, Americans, identifying as Anglo-Saxons, believed they shared the racial aptitude for building empires with British and viewed it as a duty to further the race and promote civilization. Even as the brutality of their campaigns became evident, they continued to justify their conquests as acts of liberation and spreading freedom (Kramer, 2006).

The foundation of British Empire was built on the exploitation of enslaved African labour in Caribbean and American plantations during the 17th to early 18th centuries and the transatlantic slave trade, which saw millions of enslaved Africans transported to the Americas, was a key component of this system. However, what set the British Empire apart from other colonizing empires - which were often based on continuous land annexation and had less pronounced distinctions based on physical appearance - was its systematic maintenance of white supremacy over people of colour across six continents. The casualties resulting from British expansionist wars, including those against Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians, Xhosa in South Africa, Mughals in India, and Maori in New Zealand, likely numbered in millions. Of course, the dark legacy of the British Empire's actions continues to shape global perceptions of colonialism and its impact on indigenous populations to this day.

The fact that Britain abolished its slave trade in 1807 and engaged in patrols to intercept other nations' slave ships is often misunderstood as Britain's leading role in anti-slavery efforts during this era. However, the genuine motivation behind this strategic move was to obstruct rival nations from benefiting from the slave trade. The 60000 African captives rescued by Royal navy were either compelled into service in the British military or assigned to colonists as unpaid apprentices for extended periods. Also, as a response to labour shortages on plantations after abolition, Britain turned to the system of indenture and transportation of 1.5 million British Indian subjects which underscores how legacy of slavery continued to shape Britain's historical trajectory well beyond the formal abolition of the slave trade. Interestingly, in 1853, the British government sought to address the mortality rates of European medical staff in its West African colonies by enlisting Africans from Sierra Leone into the army's medical service. The decision was made due to concerns that European medical officers were dying at alarming rates in the region. Although the introduction of quinine in the 1840s led to a considerable decrease in mortality rates, West Africa continued to be known as the "the white man's grave" for several decades (El Nabolsy, 2023).

In the context of India, the attempt to extend the jurisdiction of Indian judges through the 1883 Ilbert Bill sparked opposition, revealing a reluctance to allow Indian judges to preside over cases involving Europeans (Crowhurst, 2019). Even reforms introduced in the colonies, particularly in India, coexisted with repressive actions and were viewed as appeasement measures to quell discontent. The establishment of British enclaves in India, mirroring the customs and lifestyle of England, reinforced a perception of cultural and racial superiority and unlike earlier Christian missionary movements, the secular world assumed the role of promoting the idea that it was the duty of the British to export their way of life (Crowhurst, 2019). To illustrate, John Ruskin, in 1870, articulated the notion that it was the British role to establish colonies and send their best individuals to instil loyalty to Britain among colonists and Disraeli, in 1872, elevated the empire to a central position in politics, asserting that Britain could choose to remain insular or embrace a grand imperial identity that commanded global respect (Crowhurst, 2019). A prevalent belief was that black individuals were perceived as inferior and akin to children in their development

compared to adults. Even missionaries and antislavery campaigners supported the British Empire as based on this notion, through colonialism, Black people would eventually become responsible enough to govern themselves.

Edward Long (1774), a Jamaican slave owner and descendant of plantation owners, authored his influential book *The History of Jamaica* in which he blended elements of travel writing, colonial governance, and personal vendettas to promote pseudo-scientific racial stereotypes about Africans despite never visiting the continent even once. He disparaged Africa as a land of savagery and monstrosity and positioned slavery as a supposed salvation from the continent's perceived barbarism. Drawing upon his extended residency in the Caribbean to lend credibility to his prejudiced views, his writings depicted Africans as inherently inferior and potentially non-human, justified both slavery and colonialism, and influenced subsequent generations of explorers and scholars who encountered Africa through tainted lens.

Also, in his publication *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables*, Charles White (1799) sought to provide scientific support for the theory of polygenism by rejecting the inter-fertility argument proposed by French naturalist Comte de Buffon, who stated that only the same species could interbreed. He pointed to hybrids like foxes, wolves and jackals as evidence to argue that races were distinct species divinely created for specific geographical regions and his focus on the differences between Africans and African Americans compared to Europeans led him to believe in their separate origins.

As Crowhurst (2019) argues, in the 19th century, the British Empire underwent a transformation marked by a perceived moral dimension, which set it apart from its historical counterparts and it was this moral justification that served as the rationale for the wide expansion of the Empire, growing from just over two million acres in 1837 to nearly twelve million acres by 1901. The moral impetus emerged from a prevailing confidence among the British, who considered themselves the workshop of the world during an era of evangelical revival and this ethos of moral improvement, coupled with commercial interests, was championed by missionaries dispatched worldwide.

The "Mission to Civilise" rooted in this evangelical revival in the late 18th century emerged as a response to the pressing political agenda of abolishing the slave trade and gained momentum especially amid the imminent threat of French invasion (Crowhurst, 2019). Emphasizing individual salvation, personal redemption and purposeful life, the movement not only addressed spiritual concerns but also became integral to the national identity. By 1790s, a prevailing belief emerged that all individuals were redeemable, merely requiring introduction to God from their wickedness and this ideological shift paved the way for the British to embark on a century-long effort of sending missionaries abroad as part of their global outreach (Crowhurst, 2019). In contrast to the amoral character of the 18th century, the Victorian Empire was characterized by a sense of duty to redeem and uplift other races and the conviction that Britain's role was to civilize the world sanctioned by divine ordination became widely accepted. As Lord Palmerston articulated in 1848, the British duty was to set free and lead the way in moral, social, and political civilization (Crowhurst, 2019).

It should also be noted that the Victorian era was marked by a sense of British superiority and confidence in their imperial power, which had been established since the sixteenth century and unlike other nations venturing into colonialism for the first time, British commentators were not concerned about comparisons to older imperial powers or being influenced by them. Believing in the strength of British possessions and the protection of their trade, they did not worry about potential threats to their colonies from other empires and saw, instead, additional European colonies as potential bargaining chips in future conflicts or outlets for redirecting aggressive actions and military expenditure away from Europe, which could help maintain peace on the continent. The majority of mainstream writers who compared the British and European colonial empires typically favoured the British Empire and highlighted the role of the British people's efforts rather than government interventions in driving imperial success. By critiquing Continental over-government, arbitrary rule, and militarism, these writers extended their criticisms to the colonial sphere, overlooking the centralized nature of many British colonies.

We should bear in mind that during the 19th century, the rise of race science, supported by prominent political figures, posed a challenge for philosophers who simultaneously supported methodological naturalism and intended to uphold human moral equality (El Nabolsy, 2023). Horton (1868) as one of the rare supporters of equality in that age commenced his writings when racism had reached its peak. In his work *West African Countries and Peoples* he points out:

> It would have been sufficient to treat this [racist scientific discourse] with the contempt that it deserves, were it not that leading statesmen of the present day have shown themselves easily carried away by the malicious views of these negrophobists, to the great prejudice of that race. (p. i)

The evolution of ideas surrounding Social Darwinism served as a justification for the British conviction that they were a chosen race destined to bring progress to the underdeveloped regions under their administration and this was, in turn, accompanied by a notable silence on the issue of when Britain would relinquish governance responsibilities if preparing colonies for independence was the logical outcome. Although the practice of positioning humans within nature to draw normative conclusions is not unique to that era, what distinguishes 19th century philosophical anthropology is the increasing reliance on empirical sciences, viewed as independent from philosophical constraints, in determining man's place in the world (El Nabolsy, 2023).

Moreover, the discipline of phrenology purported to illustrate that cranial morphology, with a particular focus on jaw formation and facial angels, could delineate the evolutionary status of distinct races which caused a contentious debate to ensue concerning the conceptualization of either a singular creation (monogenism) or multiple creations (polygenism) for all humanity. Among the early British writers addressing matters of race, Robert Knox (1862), having previously served as an army surgeon in South Africa, garnered first-hand insights into the dynamics between Boers and the native population and

drawing upon his experiences, in 1850, he authored the widely circulated work *The Races of Men*, wherein he contended that race served as the paramount determinant for human behaviour. Generally, positioned as a polygenist, Knox (1862) posited purported anatomical and behavioural disparities among racial groups. Despite acknowledging redeeming qualities for each race, he evidently reinforced a deterministic view of racial aptitude as he propagated the notion of Caucasian race to emphasize the primacy of white men and asserted that although all races possessed the capacity for a semblance of civilized life, there is a substantial disparity between the negligible accomplishments attainable by the "negroid" and "mongoloid" races, and the significantly more substantial achievements and prospective advancements attributed to white men. While expressing a fatalistic perspective on the eventual extinction of all races, he reflected a completely dismissive attitude towards the significance of their survival or demise.

A recurring theme was the attribution of a long or prognathous jaw to the Irish, supposedly closer to apes, a characteristic associated by phrenologists with lower evolutionary forms, degeneracy, or criminality, particularly in the context of political radicalism. The characterization of the ape-like Celt became a malevolent Victorian racist trope, exemplified by John Beddoe, later the president of the Anthropological Institute, who linked Irish and Welsh to prognathous traits, asserting their purported closeness to Cromagnon and, by extension, the Africanoid. He utilized evolutionary methods to present a wealth of data including skull measurements, eye and grey colour statistics, and analyses of surnames and place names and asserted that historically, conquering races have tended to be fair-skinned while the conquered were darker-skinned. Even the ostensibly complimentary characterization of the Irish as poetic, light-hearted, and sentimental was potentially detrimental and sympathetic as these were attributes concurrently associated with childhood by the Victorians, depicting them as immature individuals who needed paternal direction.

The influence of Beddoe on Sir Halford Mackinder and the development of his ideas in the Edwardian period, in the context of imperialist and geopolitical thinking was significant. His holistic and organicist approach to geography, which positioned Britain within a global context as part of a Darwinian struggle, established him as a key figure in imperialist thought and his ideas on the centrality of geography to overall strategy and the concept of "heartland" had a lasting impact on geopolitical thinking, particularly among German strategists in the inter-war years (Harris, 2005). It was because the connection between Britain and Germany, inadvertently facilitated by Mackinder, exerted a prominent impact on Houston Stewart Chamberlain whose book *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, published in German in 1899, left a lasting dark legacy. He categorized all European populations, including Germans, Celts, Slavs, Greeks, and Latins, under the umbrella of the Aryan race and asserted that Germanic or Teutonic peoples were at the forefront of the race, preserving its pure bloodline. His theory of Aryan superiority attributed all positive aspects in the world to this race and sought to unite society based on common racial origins rather than creating a hierarchy. Aligning illustrious Western artists and thinkers like Homer, Leonardo da Vinci, and Goethe with tradition, he claimed that only Aryans could produce beautiful art and profound thoughts. His vision of Aryan grandeur contrasted sharply with his depiction of the Jewish race as the antithesis, bearing all the negative qualities of human species. Influenced by Gobineau and Wagner, Chamberlain's social Darwinism evolved into a fervent pan-Germanism, eventually aligning closely with the ideals of the future Nazi regime. His admiration for Hitler grew over time, reciprocated by the future dictator, leading to a meeting between the two men in 1923 (Harris, 2005).

H. H. Risely, a civil servant in West Bengal for about thirty years in the late 1800s and early 1900s, later led the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. His significance lies in his scientific background and interest in the Aryan invasion theory, which led him to believe that Indian racial caste groups could be categorized based on anthropology rather than cultural traits like language or religion. Using anthropometric measurements as opposed to ethnological and philological scholarship, he chose the nasal index as a measure, comparing nose breadth to height, to differentiate between racial groups. As a result, he categorized Indians into two main races: the flat-nosed Dravidians and the pointy-nosed Aryans, with a third Mongoloid group. He emphasized caste endogamy as a means to maintain distinct biological profiles along caste and racial lines and in a way perpetuated the narrative of light-skinned Aryans versus darker-skinned Dravidians.

S. G. Morton, known as the founder of "American School" ethnology, promoted the idea that racial differences were based on separate species rather than simple variations with humanity. He used Skull measurements to support his theory that different races had distinct intellectual capacities and his research on ancient Egyptians aimed to reinforce his belief in a racial hierarchy that justified the subjugation of certain groups. Placing Caucasians at the top and Negroes at the bottom, he suggested that civilization was exclusive to Caucasians as opposed to Negroes. His views reflected Anglo-Saxon superiority, with Teutonic peoples like the English deemed superior even among Caucasians. He praised the English for their intellectual abilities, courage, and colonizing efforts, contrasting them with the Celts of Southwest Ireland, whom he described in contemptuous terms. Despite limited access, his ideas and images reached a wide range of audience through cheap periodicals and magazines, including those aimed at working-class readers and woman and later influenced Southern slave owners in America.

Bagehot's exploration of the principles of natural selection and inheritance in his work *Physics and Politics* sheds light on the underlying social Darwinism present in his earlier work *The English Constitution*. He marvels at the mystery and influence of inheritance, highlighting how it distinguishes civilized individuals from primitive ones and praises England for achieving a progressive state, which he views as a rare occurrence among other races (Harris, 2005). He dismisses the perspectives of unfit individuals and defeated races, asserting that most races are either stagnant or declining. Delving into the sustainability of civilizations, he posited that early civilizations relying on conformity and military triumphs, once established, could progress towards systems that foster diversity and liberty. His perspective hinged on distinguishing between an "accomplished man", who is shaped by successive generations refining individual nervous systems through inheritance, and a "rude man". Bagehot

believed this refinement was a moral feat, enabling the elite to morally separate themselves from the "rude men" through hereditary influences and, even beyond that, suggested that individuals of mixed race lacked inherited beliefs or traditional sentiments crucial for human nature.

In the mid-1860s, Charles Dilke, envisioning a global expansion of the English race, embarked on a journey to explore English-speaking regions around the world. His travelogue, *Greater Britain*, published in 1868, not only established his reputation but also strengthened his political career. While discussions of races based on physical characteristics were emerging in British discourse, the concept was more about cultural and environmental influences rather than inherent biological traits. By the middle of Queen Victoria's reign, Charles Dilke still linked race to climate, observing changes in English settlers in Australia due to the hot, dry climate but also expressing doubts about climate's long- term effects on racial characteristics and dismissing the idea that climate could alter inherited racial traits among groups like the Irish or Chinese (Beasley, 2014). During his visit to America, Dilke encountered Native Americans and pondering the reasons for the perceived mental, moral and physical inferiority of the Indians to white men, he attributed it to their race. He further asserted that the gradual extinction of these supposedly inferior races was not only a natural law but also a benefit to humanity (Harris, 2005). His belief in the superiority of the Teutonic race was evident as he confidently predicted the triumph of Saxondom in the ongoing struggle for dominance. It should not be forgotten that Chamberlain and Dilke had known each other for a decade and Chamberlain would have been familiar with Dilke's book and ideas (Harris, 2005). Also, the close relationship between Dilke and John Morley, who edited the Fortnightly Review where Bagehot had previously published his *English Constitution*, suggests a shared set of evolutionary ideas and ideals among critical Whigs and bold radicals in Victorian England (Harris, 2005).

In 1867, C. O. G. Napier, known for his pursuits in natural history collection and writing, gained notoriety as a charlatan, who falsely asserting royal ancestry, endeavoured to elevate his social status. He released his *Table of Human Races*, detailing the mental traits associated with major racial groups. While the concept of racial mixing and its perceived impact on the decline of superior races was a significant theme of Napier's work, the Anthropological Review published two years later went so far to propose that English individuals involved in producing mixed-race offspring should face severe consequences (Harris, 2005). Likewise, in Canada and Australia, colonial governments forcibly removed indigenous and mixed-race children from their families and placed them in institutions run by white individuals, often marked by abuse, in an attempt to assimilate them and prevent the preservation of distinct indigenous identities in future generations (Harris, 2005).

J. R. Seeley in his *Expansion of England* in 1883, attributed the success of the British Empire to the Anglo-Saxon race's genius and viewed Greater Britain as England and its colonies, including India, which he linked to the Anglo-Saxons through shared racial origins. He warned against dilution of the national type through intermixture, contrasting the English Empire's civilized blood with the Spanish Empire's mix of barbarism (Harris, 2005). It is noteworthy that Joseph Chamberlain's views were heavily influenced by Seeley, whom he greatly admired and even sent his son Austen to Cambridge to benefit from his teachings. Chamberlain emphasized the rich traditions built in shared blood and origins among various branches of the English-speaking race and envisioned a unified "Greater Britain" where all shared a common heritage and lineage (Harris, 2005).

In his *Our Kin Across the Sea*, J.C Firth, a successful merchant and landowner in New Zealand saw common laws, literature, religion, love of freedom and language as unifying factors that could lead to the confederation of the English-speaking race worldwide as he believed in the English race's destiny to exert influence on the world greater than any other people, thereby emphasizing the need for common action between the United States and Britain (Harris, 2005).

One key figure in this racist context is Francis Galton who formulated his eugenics theory in 1865, just seven years after Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species*. He made a significant departure from Darwin's concept of natural selection to advocate for controlled human breeding to enhance genetic quality and to place humans in control of determining which traits should be passed on through generations, rather than leaving it to nature (Conlin, 2018). Having established the Anthropometric Laboratory at the International Health Exhibition in London, he charged the visitors to have their physical attributes and skills measured. He sought to argue that humanity was not descending from a higher state but rather ascending from a lower one and believed understanding the origins of success in familial lines could enable humans to effectively eliminate inferior races, particularly those non-white and non- Europeans, as well as disadvantageous individuals from the human population (Conlin, 2018). He is credited with coining the term eugenics to advocate for the promotion of "good stock" through encouraging capable individuals to marry early and bear many children, contrasting it with what he deemed as "dysgenic" behaviour of successful families having few children late in life. Despite the controversial nature of his eugenics, it did not face widespread criticism and Charles Darwin himself commended Galton for his work, viewing it as a significant scientific achievement.

Thomas Huxley, another proponent of Darwin's theory, also utilized the concept of natural selection as a foundation to formulate his own theory regarding the human species. He utilized physical anthropology as a tool to explore mankind's position in the natural world and specifically examined the brains and skeletal structures of various human races and compared them to apes. He conducted extensive research on a wide range of human brains and bones from different racial backgrounds and identified significant anatomical distinctions between races, particularly between White Europeans and Africans. Based on measurements of skeletons, he found that the average height of the negro is shorter than that of Europeans, with longer arms and different lower limb proportions. He also mentioned variations in skin colour and hair characteristics among different races, highlighting differences in hair texture and shape. Further, he highlighted differences in the placement of key skull features like the occipital foremen and condyles, which tend to be further back in lower races compared to higher ones. In his concluding remarks to one of his lectures, Huxley expressed admiration for the courage and military prowess of pro-slavery Southern

fighters, while also recognizing the moral and political complexities of the conflict in America. As a scientist, he refrained from taking a stance on the morality of slavery and accentuated the extreme views of abolitionists who claimed racial equality and improvement without sufficient evidence, as well as the exaggerations and misinterpretations made by pro-slavery advocates. It should be noted that his racist theory attaches itself to a ground-breaking anthropological discovery to gain credibility and influence and when challenged, as all scientific theories are, his theory stood strong (Conlin, 2018). Huxley (1871) openly asserts his belief in superiority of the white race over the Negro race. This could be clearly seen when he states:

> No rational man, cognizant of the facts, believes that the average negro is the equal, still less the superior, of the white man. And if this be true, it is simply incredible that, when all his disabilities are removed, and our prognathous relative has a fair field and no favour, as well as no oppressor, he will be able to compete successfully with his bigger-brained and smaller-jawed rival, in a contest which is to be carried out by thoughts and not by bites. (p. 20)

Huxley, known as "Darwin's Bulldog" for his staunch defence of Darwin's theory of evolution, was, as evident, a proponent of scientific racism. His views align with the racist ideologies that sought to maintain white supremacy and perpetuate the belief in the inherent superiority of white people over other racial groups. Even if all social and legal barriers against black individuals were removed, he believes that black people, due to their supposed biological inferiority, would still be unable to compete with white people in their intellectual pursuits. Interestingly, in October 2021, a historical review group, consisting of 21 academics established in response to Black Lives Matter demonstrations in 2020, examining colonial ties advised Imperial College London to remove a bust of Thomas Huxley and rename the Huxley Building due to concerns about his potentially racist views.

3. Conclusion

Delving into the racial prejudices prevalent in the late 19th century, this analysis aimed to unpack the Eurocentric worldviews that informed Kipling's portrayal of colonized peoples and his dehumanizing language. The new historicist analysis of "The White Man's Burden" serves as a reminder of the complex interplay between literature, history, and ideology, and underscores the importance of interrogating texts within their historical context to uncover the multiple layers of significance that continue to resonate with us today. As we confront truths revealed through this analysis, it becomes evident that Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" is more than a literary piece; it is a historical artefact encapsulating the ethos of an era marked by imperial ambitions and racial hierarchies. The poem served not merely as a reflection but as an agent, contributing to the discourses of its time and shaping the narratives that underpinned imperial ideologies. By contextualizing the piece within broader historical narrative of imperialism, racism, and social Darwinism, we hope to gain a deeper appreciation for the ways in which Kipling grapples with notions of power, privilege, and responsibility inherent in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

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