

British Imperial Propaganda at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Introduction

The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was possibly one of the most turbulent and critical periods in the history of the Empire. This turbulence was due to the fact that the British Empire was reaching to its highest political achievements during this period: shortly before and after the First World War Great Britain had the largest number of territories all around the world, which meant that a high number of foreigners were under British control. The Empire made the country a leading force in Europe and helped to demonstrate her power in international affairs. To ensure the Empire's legitimacy, the ruling governments, whether left or right wing, used various means in the media and education to influence people to think that the Empire was legitimate and useful as the white people could save the non-white peoples from decline, for example by giving them a more cultured education or religion. However, there were huge economic and political interests behind these intentions, which contributed to extensive colonisation. Of course, the process of colonisation was also marked by racism. The rise of racism and the exploitation of the economy, labour and industry of the peoples that Britain conquered were key factors in how it became a financially and economically strong and stable country on an international scale in the 20th century. Racism led to immediate tensions and inequalities between the "mother country" and the colonised areas. My focus in this research is to show how the justification of colonisation put the Empire in a positive light, which was achieved through media and education.

Chapter 1: The Victorians Times and the First Half of the 20th Century

The Victorian Era and the early 20th century

Victorians have always been known as the people who ensured the political, social, economic and financial bases of modern Britain. During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), Britain was also exempt from the 1848 revolutions, which secured the way to raise awareness to the problems of the working class in a more peaceful way, which during the whole 19th century gained them more rights than ever before. The Great Exhibition of 1851 showed the world not only how economically and technologically advanced Britain was, but in a provocative way invited other inventors and discoverers from different nations to showcase their talent (which meant to guarantee the future flow of international work). The middle-class values of hard work and discipline regarding work and education were strengthened. On an international scale both in Europe and all around the globe, Britain was involved in different political and economic affairs. John M. Mackenzie describes this era of Victorianism as follows:

“The late nineteenth-century imperial world view was an integral part of the commercial, industrial, and social revolution which took place in Britain between the 1850s and 1914. During that period the population nearly doubled; incomes exhibited a similar growth at a time when prices remained relatively steady; and British society achieved nearly universal literacy” (16).

Indeed, the greatest event of the century was most likely the Great Exhibition of 1851.¹ The event was closer to the early years of Victorianism and represented a time of major social, industrial, technological and economic development. It meant to show the true power of the

¹ “The exhibits included almost every marvel of the Victorian age, including pottery, porcelain, ironwork, furniture, perfumes, pianos, firearms, fabrics, steam hammers, hydraulic presses and even the odd house or two. Although the original aim of the world fair had been as a celebration of art in industry for the benefit of All Nations, in practice it appears to have been turned into more of a showcase for British manufacturing: more than half the 100,000 exhibits on display were from Britain or the British Empire. The opening of the Great Expedition in 1851 just happened to coincide with the building of another great innovation of the Industrial Revolution.” see: <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Great-Exhibition-of-1851/>

country, and the economy was so strong that not only English or British exhibitors were invited, but explorers and scientists could also showcase their talent and inventions. It was held at the Crystal Palace, and organized by Prince Albert, the Queen's husband. The event was sensationalized in the media. The spread of newspapers helped to boost the popularity of the Exhibition, which also led to the growth of tourism. Many people from the rural parts of the country came to London to check out not only the capital, but exported and domestic goods of The Exhibition as well. Travelling also meant the development of transportation, especially when it came to the trains and railways. The Exhibition furnished talent, created a way to exchange ideas, and showed to the world how new inventions and technologies could change the quality of living. In the early years of the new reign, the importance of the humanities and humanitarian causes also grew in relation to various political questions as more and more people required better living conditions. The Exhibition provided numerous solutions to how such hygiene issues could be dealt with in the future.

It was also around the time of the young Queen that the idea of blending traditions with modernity came about. The Victorians have always been known for their traditionalist and mindful societal expectations. Many ethical values and questions, such as the separation of women and men, and distinguishing women from each other based on their social status (the debate between angels of the house as mothers or living as prostitutes) solidified conservative thinking that is associated with the Victorians even today. On the other hand, due to numerous technological and economic changes of the 19th century, several modern critics changed their mind about how they envision these times. They started to view the Victorian era in a different light: spending money on, for example, the newest household inventions or clothing etc. led to consumerism. One simple example of consumerism can be explained as follows:

“(…) sources of information, travel, and uses of free time were open to the opportunities and manipulations of a consumerist society. Consumer activities also began to interweave with traditional celebrations helping to create new

commemorations. The commercial greeting card industry developed in the 1850s, first in Britain and then elsewhere. People began to buy Valentines instead of making them, which meant they were also buying manufactured sentiments” (Stearns 109-110).

Victorians, despite not presenting themselves overly emotional, clearly started to view buying or selling as a leisure activity, which helped to strengthen the economy. The idea of keeping certain products because we attach a certain emotion to them also stems from these decades. Consumerism in the 20th century was partially based on these Victorian developments and today in the 21st century it has become the most important pillar of world and domestic economy.

The Expansion of the Printing Press

One of the major developments that happened during the Queen’s time was the explosion of the printing media, which intensified imperial propaganda. During the early decades of the 19th century the number of printed newspapers was relatively low. However, by the time of the 1850s, as printing became faster and cheaper the number of newspapers increased. This was also because the attitude to reading, literature, entertainment, education and the exchange of information significantly changed for the better. By this time many people had become literate in the population, regardless of their financial or social situation. Literature started to function as a cultural capital, which entertained people and delivered important message through the pens of writers, novelists and poets at the same time.

Printing also led to “a great increase in the publication of leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, programmes, and other small ephemeral items which could be distributed free as advertising and propaganda” (19). Furthermore, these materials were used “by all forms of entertainment, by the exhibitions, the armed forces, and missionary societies” (19), which made the spread of political messages a lot easier than ever before. Printing in the long run led to an increasing interest in photography. Printing itself has existed in Europe since the 1440s, due to the

invention of the moveable-type of printing by the late medieval Johannes Guttenberg in Germany. Initially printing was used to spread religious texts cheaper and easier, especially during the Reformation.² Later on, however, the technology was used by publishers across Europe, and in Britain to spread books and newspapers.

Naturally, between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the literary field greatly changed. In the early Victorian period, the writers tended to be amateurs and had little to zero chance to earn decent money. Their relationship with the upper classes determined how many times they were hired. By the end of the century, however, numerous laws were formulated about who could write or not. It was usually the book publishing that made many writers better. Many books were written and published in English, which became the spiritual glue of the nation and cemented the sense and idea of a national community as well.

Literature, especially poetry, became significantly more important during the First World War. To write poem about the conditions of the war was an excellent way to express the suffering of the English soldiers, as well as those who came from the different parts of The Empire. The demise of the “heroic figure”, who is a great father, soldier and citizen representing the most important Victorian values, was inevitable. Many men came back home as newly disabled men and were unable to talk about the unprecedented horror and bloodshed they witness on the battlefield. Gas attacks were frequently carried out on the British soldiers by the Germans, which contributed to several mental health issues amongst the soldiers.

Despite the horror the soldiers went through, Richard Nevinson, a renowned artist at the time was asked to portray the glory of the war, but the painting, called *Paths of Glory* (1917)

² “Movable type and paper were invented in China, and the oldest known extant book printed from movable type was created in Korea in the 14th century. Printing first became mechanized in Europe during the 15th century. The earliest mention of a mechanized printing press in Europe appears in a lawsuit in Strasbourg in 1439; it reveals construction of a press for Johannes Gutenberg and his associates. (...) Gutenberg used his press to print an edition of the Bible in 1455; this Bible is the first complete extant book in the West, and it is one of the earliest books printed from movable type” see: <https://www.britannica.com/technology/printing-press>

represented quite the opposite. The painting meant to represent how the soldiers were misled into thinking they would die as heroes, with receiving glory, fame and memorials but the bodies on the portrait are visibly and slowly becoming one with the ground, melting into the mud. Their bodies are fragmented, dismembered, which makes the mode of representation more gothic than glorious.³

The Rise of Newer Technologies

Although newspapers remained important, photography meant a whole new technology that ultimately changed memory and representation. Photographs were initially pricey to produce, so only the upper-classes and aristocracy could afford to buy or make them. Many photos of the second part of the 20th century depicted every-day events and people, but in a few decades time the aristocrats started to collect images of the royal family and other famous political figures.

As for photography outside of the country, many who could afford to travel took photos of other cultures. This led to a different result in another kind of approach:

“Through photography Europe could provide itself with a visual representation of the remodelling of the world through economic and political control. From the 1850s travelling photographers set out for North Africa, Egypt, India, Burma, and China to create and satisfy both a new taste for exotica and a fascination with the technology, the ships, railways, post offices, troops and arms, which facilitated Western intrusion in far-flung parts of the globe” (19).

European sentiment during the early decades of the 19th century was increasingly nationalistic. Being different, more educated and superior compared to other parts of the world,

³ “‘Paths of Glory’ was famously censored by the official censor of paintings and drawings in France, Lieutenant - Colonel A N Lee. His concern presumably being the representation of the rotting and bloated British corpses at this stage in the war. The decision was confirmed three months before the opening of his exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1918 but Nevinson still included the painting with a brown paper strip across the canvas, blatantly inscribed with the word ‘censored’. As a result, Nevinson was reprimanded for exhibiting a censored image and for the unauthorised use of the word ‘censored’ in a public space. Predictably, the stunt created the publicity Nevinson desired. The painting was purchased by the Museum during the course of the exhibition” see: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20211>

it started to play a key image in the minds of those Western European countries, which at the beginning of the century did not control any African or Asian territories. Many nations of the other two continents became the focus of fascination and exploration. The British were the first to engage in a war to force China to open her markets to imperial goods and trades. The Opium War of 1839-42 between China and the British Empire forcefully and violently integrated China into the globalized world.⁴

When photography was difficult and expensive to produce, postcards became more affordable to the working-class as well. Working class people used postcards to greet each other or jot down memories, which they found important or to keep up the connection between loved ones who lived in many different parts of England. Postcards themselves were able to summarize the newer technologies of the Victorian era, as they combined photography, printing and mass production. The cheap costs of production and spreading partly explain why they became political tools for the Empire to spread propaganda. These postcards, which were specifically created by propagandists did not only show pretty images about the landscape or the city, but they tried to depict how easily the British were able to subdue and dominate the underdeveloped lands all around the globe:

“Vast numbers of cards were produced of the Empire itself, recordings, new buildings, transport and engineering achievements, colonial products, visits of governors and royalty, colonial forces and frontier warfare, labour migration, ‘ethnics’ showing the whole range of indigenous peoples under imperial rule, pioneering farmers, prospectors and miners, together with romantic (and sometimes fictional) deeds of imperial heroism” (Mackenzie 23).

Postcards were sold at local stores, which made them easily accessible. Despite their smallness, with their vivid colours and messages they were able to convey important political, economic or social messages. Even Queen Victoria admittedly did not only use them for

⁴ “The growth of international trade in the 19th century led to increasing contact—much of it violent—between cultures. The Opium War (1839-1842) between Britain and China was the violent resolution of a protracted trade dispute” see: <https://numismatics.org/east-and-south-asia-in-the-19th-century/>

aesthetic reasons but for “influencing her subjects” (21). At the time of political crises, postcards could be also produced to show the political dissatisfaction of the people. Around the time of the Gordon-crises (following the Sudanese-British war) postcards became active political objects to stand up for Gordon and his heroic values, as the government failed to support him.

Approaches to Africans

The representation of Africans during the Imperial times, especially during the late Victorian era was extremely harmful and racist. Around the second half of the Queen’s reign, Africa, the previously unknown continent was gradually discovered. During these discoveries, Africans, due to the vastly different societies and cultures had been seen as savage and underdeveloped, thus European intervention was needed to enlighten these people about the true meaning of culture and Christianity. This kind of approach was encouraged by the idea of the White Man’s Burden: Americans used the theory to educate and civilize the Indigenous Americans as well as the ancient Latino civilisations, but in British Imperialist terms it meant the British had the right to civilise those who belong to the Empire. The approach to non-white peoples was hugely different from that to the white, Christian Europeans. Europe, especially Ancient Greece had been seen and thought of as the cradle of Ancient and, in the long run, modern day civilisation. Due to the Greeks, philosophy, literature, architecture, ancient languages, poetry, law and many other aspects that were necessary for human development thrived.⁵ Many centuries later, Europe could be successfully developed into the leading political, financial, and agricultural continent of the world. Despite all their success, Europeans failed to discover Africa until the late 19th century. As the unknown continent, Africa meant many secrets. It was an exotic and

⁵ “The larger historical period spanning from the output of ancient Greek author Homer in the 8th century BCE to the decline of the Roman Empire in the 5th century CE is known as “Classical antiquity,” encompassing Greco-Roman culture, playing a major role in the Mediterranean sphere of influence and in the creation of Western civilization, and shaping areas as diverse as law, architecture, art, language, poetry, rhetoric, politics, and philosophy” see: <https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Greece>

exciting place full of opportunities. On the other hand, during these discoveries lots of signs of ancient African cultures were also revealed. To us, 21st century humans, it is quite clear, that humanity itself stems from Africa, thus the continent must have always been populated. For example, according to the Italian archaeologist, Rodolfo Fattovich the northern Horn of Africa “has been inhabited since the Early Stone Age” (149).

Yet, this kind of realisation was extremely puzzling for the Europeans: if the Africans had such a developed society, and culture, how could have Ancient Greece truly be regarded as the cradle of humanity? Africans had always been seen and treated as slaves, as inferior creatures meant to serve their white superiors. Patrick Brantlinger in his essay *Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark* also discusses John Lubbock’s views about Africans. Lubbock, despite being a politician and philanthropist is said to have believed that Africans were nothing more than savages:

“In “*The Origin of Civilisation* Lubbock argues not just that contemporary "savages" represent the starting point of social evolution but that they are below that starting point. The original primitives from whom Europeans evolved contained the seeds of progress; modern savages had not progressed, according to Lubbock, and hence must be lower on the evolutionary scale than the ancestors of the Europeans” (Bartliner, 184).

Bartlinger uses Lubbock’s thoughts to summarize the general attitude of the English towards Africans: their race, culture and civilization is so underdeveloped that it got stuck in a state from which there is no chance to recover. Africans from this point on will not be able to progress, thus it is not worth using the time, effort, and energy to understand or analyse them. Furthermore, the general thought of Victorian Anthropology was that people based on the development of their society, culture, and costumes should be very distinguished from Europeans, especially from Englishmen. Those civilizations that could not up to the expectations of Victorians were seen as irredeemable and barbaric, as they were part of the early stages of evolution compared to England, which was at the time an Empire lead by Europe’s most developed economy and population:

“For Victorian anthropology, the peoples called "primitive" represented the early stages of society's evolution. The doctrine of recapitulation—the idea that, during individual development in the embryo, organisms recapitulated the evolutionary history of their species—could be expanded from embryology to society: society advanced from the primitive to the advanced (called "civilization") through a series of stages. (...) Victorian "Man," not Everyman, occupied the tops of evolutionary trees. To call the "primitive" people of the world—people subject to conquest—"the childhood of the race" (...)” (Constance Clark, *Images of Evolution in Victorian Culture*, page 30).

According to Bartlinger, David Livingstone, who was one of the most influential Christian missionaries, believed Africans “care[d] for no god except being bewitched” (Bartlinger, 178). They also lived “without commerce and Christianity” (178). Coming from a Victoria area, Livingstone represented the European mindset that if a culture lacked Christianity, it inherently must be unrefined and be converted to it. Furthermore, Livingstone who was constantly travelling across the continent also expressed concerns and negative views about the future of the African continent. He did not believe the peoples/cultures of the continent could have the sufficient power and skills to make their conditions better: “Occasionally he even expressed doubt that a European presence in Africa would be beneficial, but he also believed that the African was "benighted" and that the European was the bearer of the "light" of civilization and true religion.” He held that Africa would be without hope of "raising itself" unless there was "contact with superior races by commerce” (178). Converting them to Christianity could enlighten them to give up their unsophisticated traditions and ways of living to change to something more cultivated and educated.

Besides David Livingstone, two other famous Victorian explorers, Richard Francis and Samuel Baker also shared very similar views. Their racist view of Africans as “natural labouring class, suited only for performing the dirty work of civilization (...)” (Bartlinger, 181). seemed to have corresponded with the commonplace thought of the Africans being inferior compared to the white and Christian Europeans. Despite the fact that slavery and slave trade

had both been banned since the early 19th century, they believed Africans were only fit to work and serve due to the lack of their mental capacity.

H. L. Marlow discusses the Victorian missionary John Williams' as he added to his observations about Africa and its people that "particularly in the lushness of the tropical landscape, a lurking moral danger to the white man himself-something of the Garden of Eden, an eternally feminine seduction, offering ripe fruit but also pollution and corruption" (50). It could be concluded that if a European could get close to live or talk to an African, he could have been influenced by the uncivilized savage in a negative way due to the "otherness" of the African race.

North Africa and the Empire

Racism against African cultures and peoples led Western Europeans to falsely believe that Egyptians were not originally of African, but European descent: "The basis of the « Egyptian Dilemma » amongst Western historians is that they have rested the foundation «Western Civilization » on the false assumptions that the Egyptians of the Ancient World were not a distinct of African people" (Clarke 151). The North African country was also "located at the cross-roads of three continents — a meeting-place for cultures and conflicts" (150). It was around the early 19th century, that Egypt became extremely important to European nations to discover, specifically to the French and British, as it meant a way to reach their own colonies a lot faster than ever before.

The Suez Canal was an excellent resource for strengthening shipping worldwide as it was also a major trading point with the other trading nations. The Canal had other major advantages in relation to different European nations, especially securing a way to trade in coal. It was a notable problem that on the Cape route the "coaling places were few and coal and facilities for coaling expensive" (Fletcher 557). Yet, on the canal routes the steamers secured

the shipping of the coal “at moderate rate” (559) especially towards Gibraltar, Malta, and Port Said. Initially many of the old streamer ships that were sent on these routes failed to conclude their journey due to their technical improprieties, but in return the Canal helped to “accelerate the technical perfection of the marine engine” (560) as well.

The British also needed the Suez Canal for economic purposes. The application of “the techniques of the Industrial Revolution to shipping” (556) enabled the British to regulate a significantly huge area in North Africa. In the long run, British control “helped to bring about the realignment and relative decline of the European entrepot trade” (556). Merchants were now “engaged in business with the East” (559), which in return secured Britain’s place as a new trading and economic partner among Arabic and North African countries. This new route also meant a faster way to reach India, Australia and other British territories. The Suez Canal really boosted economic relations between India and England given that “the highest class of cargo moving between England and India passed quickly to the steamship. Out of a total of 1.63 billion yards of cotton goods shipped to the East in 1870, over 57 per cent went by way of Egypt (...)” (560). Furthermore, “96 per cent of all plain cotton goods imported into Bombay went via Suez” (561). Sometime later “the invasion of the Australian trade began in earnest” (562). Although the trade with Australia was not as extensive as with India, the trading relations between England and Australia were still estimated to have been “17 per cent of the imports into the United Kingdom from Australia coming through the canal during 1880, 1.5 per cent of the exports from the United Kingdom to Australia going out through the canal” (563).

It can be clearly seen that Britain was among the nations who benefited from this new trade, yet the country itself suffered from economic losses as well. As the route to India was opened to other nations, they no longer needed Britain to get for example cotton from India, as “the Continental nations freed themselves from London by making their importations directly by way of the Suez Canal” (566). The British indigo re-exports followed the similar patterns,

because it was “utterly destroyed by the German discovery of methods of producing a chemical dye to replace indigo” (566). This resulted in the decline of British-Chinese trade, as indigo was an important colour that was exported from China.

However, the British had to face an even bigger challenge: nationalism in Egypt during the early 20th century was getting stronger and more significant. Of course, the extensive European control of the Canal, specifically due to British intervention caused frustration among the Arabs, who had had enough of being subjected to the needs of British and European traders and merchants. Even as early as 1894, there were attempts to create a free and independent Egypt, which would not be so vulnerable to the various European forces. As a result of the longstanding frustration, several Egyptian political parties that were also important during the 1900s were formed in the late 19th century:

“al-Watan ("Fatherland Party") in 1894 by Mustafa Kamil; Hizb al-Umma ("People's Party") in 1907 with Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha's help; Hizb al-Wafd ("Delegation Party") in 1918 by Sa'd Zaghlul Pasha; and Hizb al-Ahrar al-Dusturiyin ("Liberal Constitutional Party") in 1922 by 'Adli Pasha.⁸ "The King sought to strengthen his own influence by a Union Party (Hizb al-Ittihad). Although in combination these parties set the pace for political life in Egypt, the Wafd party was most vigorous. Under the influence of Western ideology, the demands of politicians centered around three main issues: (1) political independence for Egypt, (2) constitutionalism, to put an end to the autocratic rule of the palace, and (3) social reform” (181).

A few decades later, it became very clear that the Egyptians wanted to get rid of British control over the Suez and were fighting for an independent country as well. Egypt and its neighbouring countries suffered greatly under European rule, which was also partially thanks to how quickly the British were able to take the area under their leadership. It is remarkable how the establishment of British sovereignty “in Zanzibar and East Africa, the region of the Great Lakes, part of Somaliland, Cyprus, and Egypt itself and on the other hand in the establishment of French, Italian, and German footholds in East Africa” (Hoskins 668) made

several of these African nations weak and subjected to the needs of European economic and financial forces. As for Britain buying the shares of the Canal proved “to be one of the best financial investments in the world” (669).

In 1954, however, due to mutual agreement and rise of nationalism in Egypt, the British troops gradually withdrew from the Suez Canal. Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser was a great contributor to these developments and according to his plans a new high dam was to be built over the Nile to modernize the country. The costs of the new dam would have affected Britain too. This plan came to an end when Britain, France and the United States refused to finance the project, which in return made Nasser more anti-British and anti-European. The nationalist voices were also becoming stronger and the tension between Egypt and Britain could no longer be avoidable. Partially due to the nationalistic influences in the matter, on July 26, 1956, Nasser “proclaimed the "nationalization" of the Suez Canal and the seizure of all the accessible assets of the Company” (Mahmood 116). Britain and its allies tried to economically and diplomatically pressure Egypt and Nasser to give up such plans to no avail. Nasser emerged victoriously from the tension, which made him the instant leader of the Arab world. With his help, Egypt finally and officially became independent and was no longer reliant on the British to survive economically or diplomatically. This caused great changes and tension in the relation of the countries’ which was a huge problem in the second part of the 20th century.

Not only Egypt, but Sudan as well slowly became strategically and politically important for the Empire. Sudan at the end of the 19th century was controlled by Egypt, and as Egypt belonged to the Empire, Sudan automatically became a British territory. Originally, the British did not have any interest in the land, and remained ignorant of the Sudanese culture, as it was incorrectly thought to have belonged to the deepest and darkest parts of Africa. However, the dwellers in Egypt and Africa, became “acquainted with these vast regions” (Murad 61) as their

caravans “annually made their way northward to upper Egypt or to Cairo, bringing gold and gum, ivory and ebony, and above all, slaves” (61).

Today, the political and military British intervention into Sudan is well known, but it needs to be pointed out that it was not necessarily the British government that achieved this. The British contact with the Sudan “before the British occupation of Egypt was established not so much by the British Government, but by individual British citizens. The two outstanding figures were Samuel Baker and Charles George Gordon. In 1869 Baker was appointed Governor of Equatoria by the Khedive Ismā'il. Gordon succeeded Baker as Governor of Equatoria (1874-76) and was later Governor-General of the whole Sudan” (63).

Sudan and the Abandonment of General Gordon

By 1882, the political situation in Sudan escalated to a Mahdist Revolution, which naturally meant that the Sudanese wanted to get rid of Anglo-Egyptian rule. Sir Evelyn Baring (also known as Lord Cromer), the British General-Consul was warned by the Government not to interfere with the Egyptian-Sudanese affairs, however in November of 1883 the situation turned worse, prompting the British to try to convince the Egyptians to abandon Sudan overall. The Egyptian Government refused to obey the British, which led to the Government's fall and General Charles Gordon was sent to Khartoum, Sudan in late 1884 to evacuate the city. Understanding the severity of the Sudanese revolt, and the lack of British supplies, he asked the British Government for help, but “after a very brief distraction the British Government reverted in April 1885 to the policy of abandonment” (63). Gordon, without any help, died as early as January 1885. By spring he became a national hero: he represented those soldiers, who were let down by the government at a time when they would have needed help the most. Gordon's death in 1885 led to national outrage, so much so that even postcards were created to protect his honour. The death of the General, according to Lord Cromer led to the “the rapid growth of

imperialist spirit which about this time took place in England” (64). Gordon was martyred⁶ and the government lost much of its popularity.

It is important to understand how and why Gordon and his demise were able to change and shape ordinary people’s view on politics. According to Cynthia F. Behrman General Gordon was truly representative of the Victorian values of what it meant to be a hero: “bravery, modesty, resourcefulness, a certain charismatic quality of his leadership, and - most of all - the fact that he was dead. There is nothing so heroic as a dead hero, especially one who has died in a dramatic and unnecessary way” (48). Furthermore, she believes that “he could, after all, have been saved. The fact that he was not reached in time led to a spasm of collective remorse and guilt, which led to a glorification of Gordon as a figure of tragedy, crucified for the sins of the nation” (49). Gordon grew up as only the second son of his father, yet his disadvantage in a time when first born sons were ultimately the most valued children of their family and generation, Gordon was able to distinguish himself in multiple ways and wars prior to his death. He fought in the Crimean war, was involved in Chinese political and military affairs, and by 1873 he had become the governor of the Sudanese Equatoria. It is not hard to see how such a politically and militarily successful figure was able to generate such a large and noticeable complaint from the British, especially in England. According to an article in the *Fortnightly Review* Gordon’s “religious capacity, interests and achievements were so extraordinary that with all seriousness the writer believes him to have been truly saintly” (50). Another article referred to him as new type of hero who as a “towering figure (in truth Gordon was rather short) standing alone against the tide of darkness is repeated again and again” (50), which could be a suggestion of his heroic death and endurance during the worst of times. Furthermore, Gordon was symbolic to what Englishness and Victorian values meant: “bravery, religious humility,

⁶ “The British public reacted to his death by acclaiming “Gordon of Khartoum” a martyred warrior-saint and by blaming the government for failure to relieve the siege” see: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-George-Gordon>

honesty, resourcefulness, an innate sense of justice, and a real but manly feeling for the unfortunate. This was how the English nation liked to think of itself” (59).

Yet, Behram also points out that decades after his death, from around 1908 to 1920 a more “judicious attitude” (49) was held against Gordon, which attempted “to be more historical in approach, more careful to assess blame, more objective in detail. It was a period in which people reacted even - over-reacted - against what they saw as the excessive emotionalism and hysterical enthusiasms of Victorianism” (49). Some 20th century biographies believe that “Gordon was almost consciously seeking martyrdom; the reviewer would prefer to think of Gordon as the unpredictable school-boy who enjoyed tweaking the nose of officialdom, and he scorns the suggestion of the "death-wish" motive as being an unworthy and indeed a fake one” (57). It also needs to be kept in mind that Gordon was known to have a passionate, but sometimes abusive and obsessive behaviour. As a general, he expected people to follow his orders, and if he did not find the efforts of their subordinates adequate, especially if they were Muslims, he did resort to beating or verbally threatening someone.⁷

Hatred against Muslims, Turks and Arabs

At the time when Gordon was operating as a General there was a considerable amount of hatred against Muslim culture, which was fuelled by numerous political articles. Many of these articles pointed out the cultural and social differences between the British controlled Muslim countries and European Christianity and culture. This rise in anti-Muslim sentiment can be linked to the Russo-Ottoman War of the 1870s. During the war, the British public and politics strongly supported their fellow Orthodox Christian Russians against the Muslim Turks. Most views on

⁷ “However, continued Strachey, his subordinates dreaded his temper. "There were moments when his passion became utterly ungovernable; and the gentle soldier of God, who had spent the day in quoting texts ... would slap the face of his Arab aide-de-camp in a sudden access of fury, or set upon his Alsatian servant and kick him till he screamed.” See: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/britain-s-colonial-adventures-the-truth-about-gordon-of-khartoum-6101138.html>

Turkey were filled with “feelings of European cultural superiority. Racist attitude affects writings on all other areas of the Middle East as the work on Greater Syria, which had the highest proportion of well-and linguistically competent authors working on it” (Aucterloine 14). Aucterloine also explains that some British politicians and authors viewed the Turks as such:

“Turkish culture was also seen in very negative terms; Stratford Canning, Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, held that 'the Turks written almost exclusively confined to tracts and commentaries steeped in bigotry alien from truth', others went further and claimed that the Turks literature at all. Colonel Wavell saw the old school of Turks as having and pathetic character' distinguished only by 'their passive hatred of the Christian world, combined with an intense dislike of all change (...)” (11).

Some radical political voices also made “suggestions” (13) to reform the Ottoman Empire. Polygamy was seen as one of the reasons for “administrative corruption” (20), while others saw the Turkish as the “symptoms of a much malaise in the Middle East and as the product of the greatest problem European imperialism, namely, the religion of Islam” (20). To say that Muslims were “little better than pagans” (21) was also frequently rumoured among the British public. The aim was to create an even stronger anti-Muslim atmosphere to support the government and its racist views that favoured Christians over Muslims. In short, Islam was seen as a danger to European Christianity and culture, as Muslims were often seen as corrupt, uneducated, and unworthy of equal social or racial treatment.

Furthermore, writers and politicians were trying to point out the rebellious nature of the Muslims, who were fighting against the British occupation. Islam was a major interest “for writers on the Middle East (...) (20)” as the defamation of Islam in pro-Christian books, especially by those who supported Gladstone in his anti-Ottoman policy, was a commonplace practice to prove Muslims were “ignorant as they were vicious” (20). Other politicians, such as Arthur Arnold, who was a journalist and pro-Liberal MP, “saw Islam as incapable of fostering

democracy and attacked it for allowing slavery and polygamy, for oppressing Christians, and for its attitude to alcohol” (20).

Chapter 2: The 20th Century – The Fall of the Empire

The Empire and Moviemaking

After the disastrous social consequences of General Gordon's death, journalism remained for the next few years the most important and leading form of media to entertain people or make them aware of the every-day news. However, after the development of film in the early 1900s, political representation also changed: movies about the Empire were made rapidly and continuously to ensure the propaganda behind the Empire's military actions. Cinema and movies had numerous advantages: "The armed forces and warfare were one of cinematography's earliest obsessions and were to continue so throughout the history of the cinema" (Mackenzie 69). The army also exploited this new opportunity to afford "military music, open-air band performances, public displays, (...)" (69) at these cinematic venues, which, especially during the First World War became extremely popular and beloved by the public. The early imperial movies, despite the lack of adequate techniques depicted the lives of the soldiers, prior and during the fighting.

Some of the films were about the 1898-1902 Boer War. These movies showed the "departures of troops, with all the opportunities they afforded for sentiment, spectacle, (...)" (70) as well as the "images of war which purported to be captured reflections of the real thing, on a lighted screen (...)" (70). These cinematic tools made it easy for people to empathise with the British soldiers, despite the fact that it was well-known at the time that the British government used concentration camps to capture and torture its enemies.⁸ The new cinematic tools led to the making of several movies such as "a skirmish between a troop of cavalry scouts attached to General French on his march to relieve Kimberley, *The Scouts in Pursuit of the*

⁸ "Concentration camps were established in South Africa to house Boer families forcibly displaced by Britain's scorched-earth policies. The camps were poorly conceived and managed, and ill-equipped to deal with the large numbers of detainees" See: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/south-african-concentration-camps>

Boers, Bringing the Maxims into Action and *A Charge and General Fusilade*. Boer surrenders were inevitably popular subjects (...) (70). Movies related to the Boer War made sure they only showed the more positive, heroic and pro-imperialist messages.

On the other hand, many of these movies not only glorified the heroic death of the fighting soldiers but spread misinformation about “the nature of twentieth-century warfare, and fuelled the naval race which was kept prominently in the public eye by repeated newsreels of the launchings of dreadnoughts” (71). If the movies emphasized the heroic actions of the British or Imperial soldiers, the public naturally felt proud to belong to such a strong and militarily highly equipped nation. At the same time the movies usually overestimated the power of the military or navy, and the pressure to keep up with the naval race with Germany became much worse over time. It was also a major problem for the government that in many cases the development of the navy or military cost the economy enormous amounts of money.

India during the early 20th Century

As regards real-life events India had been under British control since the 1700s. The country, before the British invasion had quite a well working commerce and industry as “India was chief supplier of luxury items like muslin, ivory, carpets, steel, pearls, precious stones etc. Trade and commerce were pretty developed in pre-British India. Indian goods were in demand world-wide and appreciated for their fine craftsmanship (...)” (Thakur 406). By 1757, however, drastic changes had been done to the Indian economy, because the British:

“penetrated almost all areas of administration. British colonial economy can be divided into different phases. The first, ‘mercantilist’ phase, from 1757 up to 1813, was marked by direct plunder and the East India Company's monopoly trade, functioning through the ‘investment’ of surplus revenues in the purchase, often at arbitrarily low prices, of Indian (primarily Bengal) finished goods for export to England and Europe. By the Charter Act of 1813, the monopoly of the East India Company⁹ had been put an end to and private

⁹ The East India Company was “English company formed for the exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India, incorporated by royal charter on December 31, 1600. Starting as a monopolistic trading body, the

traders of free merchants were permitted under special license to trade lawfully. In its result the Charter Act happened to be the death blow for native industries” (406).

In the 19th century India was a “largely agricultural colony of Britain to supply raw materials to Britain. India, with her eager industrial base would have needed to import practically machinery and equipment, both large and small and for the associated minimum infrastructure” (Thakur 411). Furthermore, in the early 20th century, during the First World War the British “made India pay for war expenses” (406). It was also estimated that “India occupied second place (after England) in the British empire for its expenditure during the war” (406). Unfortunately, the British authorities were also “spending huge amounts of money on the upkeep and maintenance of army which was actually used for suppressing Indian national movement for independence. This expense so lavishly done by British led to huge debt increase on India” (406). The hardships Indians had to endure when they were part of the Empire raised concerns about the future: more and more Indians wanted to have an independently established country that was no longer connected to any European force. Thus, nationalistic voices were gaining momentum and the idea of an independent India, especially after the 1920s, became the cornerstone of Indian identity.

India was finally able to gain its independence in 1947. The country that was once seen as one of the most important territories of the Empire, providing the possibilities in trade and economic relations in Asia, became nothing but “an economic anachronism, a military irrelevance, an electoral liability, even an ideological embarrassment: in short, outlying and unproductive plot which should be made over without delay to sitting tenants” (Owen 407). Britain was financially struggling during the late 1940s: the country could barely stand on its

company became involved in politics and acted as an agent of British imperialism in India from the early 18th century to the mid-19th century.” See: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/East-India-Company>

feet without the help of the American government. At the end of the Second World War the state was offered to participate in the Marshall Plan, which aimed to help European countries to recover from the war.¹⁰

Initially, the British feared that Indian self-government “could never work properly” (418) as the country “lacked an educated electorate, and partially because her so-called political parties were fixed and unchanging communal bodies” (418). Winston Churchill himself was a great opponent of Indian independence. Churchill feared that the loss of the Asian country could encourage and even empower other nations to follow India’s footsteps, and in the long run he feared that the independence movement would lead to the fall of the Empire.

Churchill’s attitude towards an independent Indian government was divisive. The Labour Party accused him of being too harsh and cruel regarding the lives of the non-British citizens of the Empire. By the 1930s, the Conservative politician became well known for being the representative of “imperialism, militarism, and what in Britain passed for class-war” (Addison 26). Still, to prevent further co-operation between the Indians and the British, by the spring of 1946 Churchill “was planning to lead ‘an anti-capitulation Indian campaign’” (Owen 415) which would have stopped all negotiations about Indian self-rule. Furthermore, Churchill’s attacks on “Indian politicians made him an infuriating and unpredictable force” (426). Most of the public indeed agreed with the Conservatives as for many people (and not only for the right-wing politicians) “British India was still the embodiment of British power and self-esteem. Opinion polls confirmed public expectations that Britain should remain in India until a new constitution was established and that India should be granted only Dominion” (422).

¹⁰ “In the immediate post-World War II period, Europe remained ravaged by war and thus susceptible to exploitation by an internal and external Communist threat. In a June 5, 1947, speech to the graduating class at Harvard University, Secretary of State George C. Marshall issued a call for a comprehensive program to rebuild Europe. Fanned by the fear of Communist expansion and the rapid deterioration of European economies in the winter of 1946–1947, Congress passed the Economic Cooperation Act in March 1948 and approved funding that would eventually rise to over \$12 billion for the rebuilding of Western Europe.” see: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/marshall-plan>

However, it needed to be acknowledged that the running and maintaining of the Empire, especially India, was a “heavy burden” (408): the financial, economic and in all aspects of political management of the Asian subcontinent was becoming more difficult over time as Britain barely had enough of any of these important resources. As early as 1942, some British political movements were in favour of leaving the Indian subcontinent behind. Although it took only a few years for British politics to change its approach to India. Until the early 1940s, it was unacceptable to even think of such a drastic change that could negatively affect the Empire. As a response to the movement, the British propaganda “had been dedicated to portraying the Congress leadership as troublemakers, even fascist sympathizers, unrepresentative of the nation at large, prepared to resort to the methods of terrorism. To be run out of India by such men and women was likely to appear as a substantial blow to British prestige” (423). Anglo-British relations around the time of such reports were tense, and despite all political or propagandistic attempts to stop Indian self-rule, it was achieved in 1947.

To summarize it is obvious that the British took advantage of the Indians in many ways: they ruined one of the most basic elements of the Indian economy by destroying the native industry. Most importantly, despite all the initial efforts of the British government not to lose India, it became obvious that the subcontinent needed to control itself as for the British financially and economically the colony was more of a burden than a contributor to the Empire’s success. Therefore, the goal of Indian independence was realized in 1947.

Chapter 3 - The Empire's Propaganda in Education and The Contribution of Women to the Empire

The Empire's Propaganda in Education

It has been established before that imperial propaganda played a key role in how the reputation of certain individuals, historical events or different races in movies and novels appeared. It is important to mention that education in Britain also contributed to how the non-white citizens of the Empire were treated and explains why certain radical and sometimes racist thoughts thrived during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Education was largely seen as women's essential work and contribution not only to the family, but to the Empire: education was meant to uphold the British imperialists ideals and ideas about the superiority of British over other races. At the same time, teaching was used as a tool to make British children believe in the "promotion of imperial unity" (Reidi 585). Perhaps it was right to think about the Empire and its colonies in such fashion as during the world wars, especially after the First World War, the different nations could come together and fight the common enemy under British leadership.

Throughout the Victorian era education in England was very old-fashioned and did not really give a chance to the children or young adults to learn actual skills. It is also important to note that class, social standing, money, and even gender divided the kids from each other. Wealthier families could afford to send their sons to attend university. The young male students could learn Latin and Ancient Greek, and played older, more aristocratic sports, such as polo or horse-riding. The importance of hard work as a value was a core component of teaching when it came to ethical morals and questions. Other parts of the curriculum focused on leadership and confidence as many of these young men were expected to be the leaders of their communities or society.

Upper-class young girls had no such chance to extend their knowledge in a similar fashion. Even if they attended university, unlike their male counterparts, simply because of their sex they were not given a degree, no matter how many courses they took. Girls were discouraged from entering higher education as they were still expected to marry into wealthy and old families. Thus, it comes as no surprise that learning how to sing, dance, please men or raise children were the main details of their schooling.¹¹

As regards poorer Victorian children who came from the working class or lower ranks, they were mainly expected to work. Children were seen as young adults, thus capable of work. Many of them, especially those who were skinnier than other kids functioned as chimneysweepers. Most of the children worked in mines. Their lives were constantly in danger as they were exposed to dirt and pollution. Their hygiene was not really given any importance, especially in bigger cities. The only opportunity for children to be educated in any sort of way was provided through charity and Sunday schools.¹² Many of these schools provided some clothing and food, but it usually cost 1 penny, which was a great expense for many families.

By the Edwardian era the view on education greatly changed as the Empire continued to grow. Imperialism became an “integral part of the British school curriculum, expressed particularly through history geography textbooks, while the use of drill, rifle clubs, cadet corps, and (in public schools) the cult of athleticism promoted militarism, discipline, patriotism” (Reidi 585). Many organizations promoted the importance of imperialism in the British children’s curriculum at schools.

¹¹ “Boys in the upper class had the best opportunities for a good education. This idea is evident through the fact that private schools were male-only and they cost money to attend, so poor families could not afford to send their children there. Public schools were essentially used to prepare boys to be gentlemen (...). Upper class girls, on the other hand, were not sent to public schools. They stayed at home and learned skills that would benefit them when they got married (...). see: <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/education-in-victorian-england/>

¹² “Charity schools and Sunday schools were the first to begin the task of educating the poor.” see: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50139/explore_and_discover/1609/life_for_children_in_victorian_britain/4

One of the most important of these educational organizations was the League of the Empire. It was established in 1901 by women who wanted to make children “efficient citizens in any part of the Empire” (586), meaning that children were automatically seen as future contributors to the maintenance of the Empire and its glory. Over time, these women also aimed to make for children’s education to be more unified all around the Empire. They were also interested in introducing various other methods of teaching and learning, that would be available to all kids who lived under British control. For example, there were plans to focus more on binding religion and schooling together, which in certain parts of the Empire, such as in South Africa led to the Anglicization of several indigenous peoples and territories. Men were, of course, involved in the process, as many educationalists took part in the reform: “H.J. Mackinder, geographer, tariff reformer, and member of the coefficient and compatriot movements; H. O. Arnold-Forster, naval and military reformer, and writer of patriotic textbooks; and Michael Sadler, national efficiency campaigner and director of special inquiries at the Department of Education” (586) all had key roles in the new regime.

One of the main goals of the League was to assimilate South Africa into contemporary British life and culture. The Boer War of 1899-1902 was one of the most notable events in British history. The conflict between the Boers and the British arose when the British became more aggressive in their expansion of the Southern African territories, something that the Boers fiercely opposed. After the English won the war with using controversial techniques like using concentration camps, they occupied two Boer republics and other territories in South Africa. To strengthen Britain’s cultural and educational power the League and its supporters tried to “organize the distribution of English literature in South Africa (...). It aimed to promote 'a knowledge of English history and life' and 'the English language and literature' among South Africans in other words to encourage Anglicization” (587), which was essential as the British hoped “to produce in the next Boer generation” (587). This meant they expected to raise a

generation of Boers who were pro-English and could embrace the English intellect, knowledge of literature, culture, as well as language as much as possible without having to endure another war with the Boer people. They also tried to win the favour of the Orange Free State, which was mainly populated with people of Dutch origin. Thus, it was essential to the British to “attempt to win the Dutch population (particularly the children) away from inward-looking Afrikaner culture and towards the European cultural heritage” (588).

The League attempted to achieve cultural and literary dominance in Canada as well. It hoped “to introduce a distinctively patriotic element' into the literature work” (588). The British also encouraged the book and magazine editors and writers to “produce appreciation of and attachment towards British institutions” (588). This newspaper scheme in the early 1900s tried to connect the dominions and was “intended to strengthen the imperial bond by keeping British settlers in touch with British news and culture” (588).

Naturally, the League also focused on issues at home and how education could be developed in Britain as well. The organisation began to work with professionals such as scholars in private and public schools to emphasize the importance of “realities, responsibilities and duties of the Empire” (589). An important scheme the League organized was the pen-friend scheme. This allowed the children of the Empire and British kids were able to write to each other and learn about each other's culture first-hand, which led to “letters, postcards, flags, and pressed flowers or the seeds of local plants” (589) being frequently exchanged. The main idea behind such correspondence was of course to “develop into a political leaning towards the preservation of imperial ties” (589) from their early adulthood and onwards.

To put it into the right perspective, British children did not have equal opportunities to learn. The poorer they were, the more likely it was that they had to work from on an early age. Their richer mates were slowly but gradually introduced into imperialistic thinking, for example by being encouraged to correspond with other children from the Empire. This way the children

were expected to know the significance of the Empire and how urgent it was to keep up with the fruitful relationship with other imperial nations. Many, especially some male scholars and the women of the League of the Empire tried to extend English and British culture, education, curriculum and literature to other parts of the various territories held by Britain owned at the time.

The Iconic Figures of the Empire - The Role of Victorian Women in the Empire

The importance of the League had already been previously established before as one of the major organisations as they were in promoting imperial education both at home and beyond Britain's borders. However, the work of these women was not only notable in this regard. They aimed to achieve and promote much needed social reforms so all the British citizens could benefit from the financial, economic and cultural success of the Empire. Members of the League firmly believed that "Britain's imperial strength depended upon a healthy population at home" (592). To mention some important names associated with this idea were Violet Markham, Edith Lyttelton, May Tennant and Maud Pemper Reeves. With the power of the League, they managed to draw attention to several social problems Britain had to deal with. One of these problems was "the physical condition of an increasingly urbanized population and the implications of this national greatness (...)" (591), as well as the "high infant mortality and low standards of fitness in the urban working class" (591), which they found extremely worrisome and an issue that needed to be addressed as soon as possible. A lot of factors contributed to the death of children, particularly when they came from lower class and lived in cities where "population density, occupational and industrial make-up, environmental hazards, and local disease environments" (Jaadla, Reid 1864) made many circumstances hard to endure.

To solve the health-related issues of the population, especially with the encouragement of May Tennant, a health conference was held in 1914 which aimed to highlight how industrialisation and physical well-being were inevitably connected. The work was very

demanding and gruesome in the factories and in the mines, not to mention the working hours and most of the working class was underpaid. Therefore, delegates from Britain, the dominions and America started to work together after the conference to discuss the improvement of issues such as “housing” (Reidi 592) and “town planning” (592). The participants of the debate also called for a better “state intervention to improve infant and child health (...)” (592).

Perhaps it is not at all that surprising that a woman was able to help and orchestrate such a powerful debate. Women had been more active since the 1870s, when many tried to extend their household duties to the streets and help those who needed care the most such as orphans or the homeless. Although it needs to be taken into account that women were now encouraged to take part in social reforms, which was seen as an extension of domestic house duties, their attempts at any kind of political interference were not accepted in form. Many upper-class-men did respect the work of the League. However, they also stood by the philosophy that women were responsible for the emotional connection and support of the Empire, as “the organization of sentiment might be a suitable 'womanly' occupation, the reorganization of the empire's political structure was assuredly not” (593). For example, the League was unfortunately not successful in establishing a deeper cooperation with India by which they wanted to bring the Asian subcontinent closer to a broader vision of the Empire. Evidence of this problem can be seen in the unwillingness of the British to accept the growing number of Indian students, most of whom were studying in England:

“By the early twentieth century the number of Indian students studying in Britain, mostly for the bar or the Indian civil service, was substantial (over 700 in 1910). As numbers rose there was increased concern to regulate their activities, both politically (after the emergence of the nationalist India House centre in Highgate) and socially. In 1907 the League was approached by several individuals who 'considered that a great deal more could and should be done with Indians coming to this country, either for education or as visitors' (...). A three-man committee delegated to consider the more sensitive question of a predominantly female society 'extending personal friendliness' to young Indian men.' Two of committee - Sir Curzon Wyllie and Sir Theodore Morison, both of whom considerable Indian experience - gave a cautious welcome to the

proposal. The third member, Lieutenant Hordern RN, advised that the Victoria League 'should not undertake any responsibility itself, though it might furnish names of any members willing to receive Indian students' to the relevant societies" (594-595).

Not only Indian students, but many Australians also visited Great Britain regularly. Many of them ended up permanently emigrating to the country to settle down in England, which was literally seen as a homely thing to do. Britain was, even to the white dominions an example of how a country should be operating successfully when it came to domestic, international, financial, economics, trading and many other aspects of governing the country. Therefore, "the continuing resonance in Australia of the image Great Britain as home" (585) prompted many white Australian citizens to move to Europe. To the white nationals of Australia, Australian identity in this period "premised on a shared British heritage and notions of England as home" (585). Unlike their Indian counterparts, many Australian settled down in London or in other Southern English cities and were able assimilate into the English culture without any greater difficulty. This was also partially thanks to the work of the League, as their goal was "to foster in visitors from the dominions a feeling of being 'at home' at the imperial centre and strengthen the imperial connection by a network of personal links and happy memories" (585).

In return for such kindness and a warmth welcome, the British travellers, for example in Australia were similarly showed hospitality. If the British visited or decided to settle down in certain countries, it largely symbolized the "the interconnectedness of the mother country and dominions, aiming to make them feel 'that they are only in another part of home'" (585). Given that women were not allowed to express ideas about politics, or take their actions to a political platform, the idea of comparing the Empire to a home was very fruitful. The world "home" embodies the centre of the feminine duty. By welcoming foreigners in London or other parts of the country the women of the League extended their work to other parts of the Empire without overstepping their own boundaries. In the long run, using such gendered language

“helped to legitimize League women's imperial activism: extending the traditional role of hostess became a route into the masculine domain of empire politics” (585).

Unsurprisingly, given the limited role of women in society, the League's activities could never really “influence imperial politics” (597), yet it cannot be deemed unsuccessful as the League was still responsible for how relations between the Great Britain and many other countries improved. As it has been mentioned before, members had a key role in pointing out the problematic aspects of social struggles at home, many of which focused on the physical wellbeing of young children and their education.

The Role of Women during World War One

Women were even more in the focus of attention during World War One: they went to work and became an integral and undeniable force of British life and economy. Many started to believe that “the war would be a turning point for women” (Pycroft 699). The war created a new image of women as they “left the oven and cribside to go to work for the first time” (699). By work they “ultimately recognised their hidden strengths” (699), meaning that women were not only useful members of society by cooking in the kitchen and raising children, especially given that the war “caused massive unemployment for those jobs hit hard by austerity measures, such as domestics and dressmakers” (702). Women also took part in smaller but notable jobs such as window washing or delivery service. During the war, the number of “women working full-time rose by 1.3 million or an increase of 22 percent. Many industries showed a remarkable growth in the number of working women. In the transport the number rose from 18,000 to over 117,000, in banking from 1,500 to 37,000” (702).

Thank their work, many newspapers dedicated detailed accounts of their jobs, making them appear in the headlines. Women were presented positively in these papers, which was one of the rarer occasions of appreciating their achievements and values. However, it is also very

likely that the writing of such articles was “fuelled by government propaganda” (704) to inspire even more women to join the work field. Nonetheless, the articles frequently called the working women “100,000 Joans of Arc” (705). Although it was a hard and demanding for women to balance domestic life and work, many felt proud of their new role, as they actively contributed to society. Some women even worked in munitions, where conditions “could be harsh. Munitions workers worked twelve-hour shifts, often for weeks on end” (705).

In the consequence of all of this, women all around the country started to think about their rights and how their social statues could be improved. No matter which class they belonged to, the mindset of women about themselves and their role in society changed for good during and after the War. Many started to think about getting the right to vote. Eventually women indeed received voting rights after the War for their contribution to the economy and industry of Great Britain and, in the long run the Empire as well. Women could vote from 1918 over the age of thirty, and ten years later from the age of twenty they were all eligible to vote.¹³

The Suffragette Movement

The Suffragette Movement was an organisation that from as early as the 18th century tried to draw attention to the unsatisfactory political and social situation of women. It is often thought that the Suffragettes started to operate from the middle of the Victorian era or from the beginning of the 20th century. In truth many women toward the end of the eighteenth century, “in the days of revolutionists and liberal thinkers, woman's interest in government began to be formally urged” (Turner 589). In the century of the Enlightenment, human rights and their extension to women were widely discussed in England. By the time of the late 18th century, many women started to question the legitimate right to express their opinion about political and

¹³ “By 1918 women over the age of thirty had been given the right to vote, whilst the main legislation enfranchised men of twenty one years and over (...). It would not be until 1928 that another law would be passed lowering the voting age for women down to twenty one years of age in accordance with male enfranchisement” see: <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Votes-For-Women/>

social or even economic/financial questions, especially if they belonged to the middle class or above. For example, in 1797 it was widely thought that “the superior class of women were far better qualified to vote than the lower class of men” (589). By 1847 the idea of giving equal representation in the Parliament for women was introduced, because many believed that the governance of a country “was impossible unless both sexes were represented” (589) in the Parliament. However, due to the conservative thinking and approach to women’s role in Victorian society, such idea was seen too radical and thus was rejected in Parliament, too.

It was John Stuart Mill who in Parliament represented the most cardinal issues that effected women at the time such as the lack of political rights. The poet even campaigned for women’s rights in numerous ways. Mill notably tried but failed to extend the Second Reform Bill of 1867 which “would have granted the vote to women property holders” (Pugh 399). Nonetheless, he was urging electoral changes during elections stating he would “give the vote to all adults, both men and women, who were literate, could do sums in the rule of three, and who had not in recent years been a charge to the parish” (400). Mill emphasised the fact that through the centuries “men and women had become companions to each other” (409). Therefore, “a domestic revolution” (409) was also needed to advance women’s situation at home as well, with which he tried to justify the need for women’s rights.

Interestingly, many women were still satisfied with their non-political status and did not wish to improve it. Even Queen Victoria was against the movement “whose opinions frequently epitomized those of her countrymen, called the whole question “this mad, wicked folly of women's rights” (418). In defence of the Queen, it must be emphasized that she symbolized the typical middle-class values of her time: being a Queen did not mean she neglected her duties as a mother or wife. At the time, the middle class was the most dominant part of society and despite their aristocratic background the Royal Family was able to represent the middle class as well: religious, hardworking, and as they were the first Royal Family to be photographed, they

seemed to have been more approachable. The Queen herself was photographed on numerous occasions, and many times the public could see for example how she dressed as a mother or a wife. The public and politics were largely on Queen Victoria's side as over time it became easy to condemn the movement "which had failed to reach a broad spectrum of women, had left politicians unconvinced" (418) and up until the First World War "had failed in its goal of the parliamentary franchise" (418).

Conclusion

To examine what led to the acceptance of government propaganda one needs to understand the importance of the early Victorian times, as the technological developments of that era contributed to the expansion of the media, the printing press and newer technologies. The newer technologies such as photography helped to understand and document the previously unknown cultures, such as certain types of indigenous Africans. With such discoveries came a lot of racism and questionable Christian worldviews made sure these racist thoughts could deepen the misunderstanding of many non-white cultures. False beliefs were also created by the media about Egyptians, the Chinese, Indians, and Muslims such as Turks or Arabs. Some of these misconceptions claimed these peoples were either too violent or incapable of leading their own country due to their lack of political or economic intelligence. Many films, especially around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries depicted British soldiers in a heroic way, which helped to further develop patriotic feelings for the Empire. Education was also a key component in spreading the importance of the Empire, and women were heavily involved in this, introducing educational reforms to ensure that the Empire's values were clearly established abroad in the colonies. They also tried to initiate social changes during the late Victorian era. Women proved to be helpful during World War One, and their actions led to the development of their social, political and, in the long run, educational rights. However, the political and economic stability of the Empire started to crumble when India became independent. Altogether, the Empire had been the cornerstone of British identity for hundreds of years, and it was around the turn of the century that it was the strongest and most developed. Therefore, it was easy to make the public believe in the necessity of its existence.

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