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The Worlding of the Jingo Poem

Elleke Boehmer

This essay looks critically at the circulation of the jingo poem as cultural artifact and imperial message through the networked domain of the British empire. Though the jingo poem has never drawn the same critical attention as an ideological vehicle of empire as has the imperial adventure story, verse acclaiming British values and exhorting Britons to follow the flag, the essay submits, acted as both a powerful catalyst *and* a conduit for imperialist attitudes. Indeed, within the increasingly more complicated global webs and circuits of the expanding empire, the jingo poem – tub-thumping and also anthemic, exhortatory but at times elegiac – provided sources of inspiration and sustaining intimations of fellow feeling, strongly and evocatively expressed. Whereas the novel provided a symbolic cartography, however incomplete, of that expanding world, the jingo poem, never so spatialized or so nuanced, offered incentives on an emotional level. Traversing colonial borderlines and ocean spaces, migrating, as refrain, from music hall to newspaper page, and, as exhortatory rhetoric, from the oeuvre of one colonial versifier to that of another (Henley, Kipling, Newbolt) – the poem carried not only British imperial convictions but also British nationalist feelings, projected on to a global stage.

*The poets, that so often seem
So wretched, touching mournful strings,
They likewise are a kind of kings,
Nor is their empire all a dream.*

*Their words fly over land and main,
Their warblings make the distance glad,
Their voices heard hereafter add
A glory to a glorious reign.*

–Alfred, Lord Tennyson, from “To the Queen” (1851; Ricks 986-7)

To begin, imagine yourself travelling the widely separated yet curiously intertwined city streets of what was once the world-enveloping British Empire circa 1899, or 1914, or 1919. You are walking along Pulteney Street in Adelaide, say, or Adderley Street in Cape Town, or Park Street, Calcutta, or down Yonge Street towards the waterfront in downtown Toronto. What do you see around you? In all cases, you find the expansive pavements or sidewalks, the generously proportioned streets, the ample shop awnings, the painted wrought-iron pilasters – the commercial street furniture of an empire of shop-keepers.

But now look more closely: glance, and glance again, to overcome the geographical vertigo you suddenly feel, this overwhelming sense of *déjà vu*. Where was it again you said I was, you ask, Is this Sydney or Victoria, Wellington or Kingston, Harare or Kolkata? I could be in the one, you say, I could be in the other. Not only the architectural motifs and the street names, but also the urban layout and the statuary, the sandstone or bluestone World War memorials, the societies, banks and other institutions that stand squat and large on Main Street or High Street, all are repeated or find their resonance in urban centres thousands of miles apart. Squint slightly and it seems that these different names and designs are on the move, imperceptibly changing place, circulating from one context to another. Here is the Temperance Society hall, Adelaide, with its Roman temple frontage and ionic columns; there is the Egyptian Building in the Gardens, Cape Town, decorated in sphinx and compass motifs, long the meeting house of the Freemasons of the city. But Cape Town too has its Temperance Society, and Adelaide its Freemasons' building, its local headquarters or meeting hall of the Legion of Frontiersmen or of the British Legion – as do Montreal, Harare, Auckland, Melbourne, Nairobi. And many if not all share similar architectural motifs, the Roman references, the Victorian wrought-iron curlicues, or the characteristic insignia of Freemasonry. And many if not all of these cities, too, will have their Anglican cathedral, their Society of Friends meeting hall, their branch of the Theosophical Society, as well as their great dockyards and river fronts, railway stations and colonial exhibition halls, and their vast municipal graveyard full of standard-issue white marble crosses on staggered pedestals, now yellowing and rainstained, marked with Old and New Testament and Anglo-Saxon names.

On or around 1914, the Empire at its height – powered by what Andrew Thompson calls “the British World economy,” animated by the ceaseless mass migration of British peoples across the nineteenth century – the “new” Empire resembled nothing so much as a great circumlocution both of ideas and of things; a vast intercontinental flow-chart of trade, commodities, money, technologies, or what Rudyard Kipling

designated the “stimulants of the West” (*From Sea to Sea*, p. i). Sharing features with what we term globalization today (despite the intensification of present-day circuitry), this Victorian world-interchange was convoluted and deeply embedded, emerging out of a complicated history of “transoceanic and transcontinental trade, travel and conquest,” as well as the new “communications revolution” brought by steam locomotion and the telegraph (Loomba 10; Bell, “Dissolving Distance” 523-62).¹ Therefore, despite the fact that metropolitan art forms at the time registered a spatial disjunction between the European imperial centre and its peripheries, as Fredric Jameson famously traces in “Modernism and Imperialism,” yet travelling and trading things, both raw materials and commodities, bore with them the traces of their distant places of making, and, if even these were disguised, then the marks of wear and tear of their transoceanic shifting. Along the great routes of trans-colonial exchange and trade, institutions, organizations and societies branched and ramified, and with them moved travelling individuals and migrating families, social mores and ways of cultural doing, fads, fashions, urban designs, Manchester goods and dress patterns, books, rifles, foodstuffs, print technologies, playground games, and also, as this essay will explore, literary genres and poetic forms, in particular the arch-poem of empire, the jingoist verse or what I will more inclusively call the jingo poem.²

Though the jingo poem has never drawn the same critical attention as an ideological vehicle of empire as has the more generically varied imperial adventure story, verse acclaiming British values and exhorting Britons to follow the flag, this essay submits, acted as both a powerful catalyst *and* a conduit for imperialist attitudes. Indeed, within the increasingly more complicated global webs and circuits of the expanding empire, the jingo poem – tub-thumping and also anthemic, exhortatory but at times elegiac – provided sources of inspiration and sustaining intimations of fellow feeling, strongly and evocatively expressed. Whereas the novel provided a symbolic cartography, however incomplete, of that expanding world, the jingo poem, never so spatialized or so nuanced, offered incentives on an emotional level. Its structures of sentiment in-

¹ See also Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*; Elleke Boehmer, “Global Nets; or what isn’t new about Empire?”. I am indebted at this point in the essay to discussions with Konstantin Sofianos on the Victorian novel in the context of imperial globalization.

² Jingoism and poetry are often deemed antonymic terms, with jingoist verse being the term in widespread general use. Though it lacks historical currency, the resonantly assonantal phrase “jingo poem” permits reference to the more strident imperialist work of Rudyard Kipling and W. E. Henley, amongst other canonical names, though does not exclude the rabid jingoist verse with which their work existed in dialogue.

voked a connection with the wider world. Whenever the imperial going got tough, or imperial conviction quailed, the poem acted as a morale booster, a sharp verbal shot in the arm. Moreover, from its inception, the jingo poem with its often idealized and emblemized subject matter (lauding British Strength, Honour, Endurance), and its strong mnemonic features, its tuneful repetitions and infectious balladic and hymn-like resonances, was a portable form, that unfixed easily from wherever it was first heard, proclaimed or published. Traversing colonial borderlines and ocean spaces, migrating, as refrain, from music hall to newspaper page, and, as exhortatory rhetoric, from the oeuvre of one colonial versifier to that of another – the poem carried not only British imperial convictions but also British nationalist feelings, projected on to a global stage.

In his account of the accelerated formation of “inter-national networks” at the end of the nineteenth century, C. A. Bayly complicates the received historical picture of an unprecedentedly interconnected imperial world by proposing that the speeded-up empire building of this period, in fact animated and extended already existing global networks (*The Birth of the Modern World* 2004). He also adds, importantly, that this internationalized system was fuelled by the expansionist ambitions of nation-states, including Britain; that high imperialism in other words has always been at base a nationalist formation. At the same time, nationalist ambition, his analysis recognizes, is not a lone vehicle of empire. For Bayly, the development of these at once imperialist yet “inter-national” networks is expressed through three dominant registers: ideology (such as in the spread of nationalist and liberal ideas); human diaspora; and forms of bodily practice. His analysis however misses a crucial fourth category, that of aesthetic form. The operations of the popular jingo poem amongst other imperial genres, this essay contends, can be seen to demonstrate persuasively the functioning of Bayly’s “inter-national” networks; to reveal both what moves through these networks, and how it moves.

If, as Bayly, Colin Graham, Robert MacDonald and others suggest, imperialism as a political idea is typically coterminous with national, racial and masculinist thinking, then the jingo poem in the time of high imperialism worked as an important reagent in forging that mix. In other words, it was addressed at once to “home” and to the world. Travelling widely and well along the Empire’s circuitry, it served as a truly “international” and global formation, at one and the same time celebrating national strengths, such as British courage and invincibility, and expounding imperial virtues – brotherhood, white solidarity (see Kitzan 43). To Lord Milner, for example, empire involved a sense of national mission which would allow the British to preserve “the unity of

[their] great race.” Pressing the same chord, Rudyard Kipling’s characteristically declamatory “A Song of the English” (1896) sees British imperialism as founded upon a national and racial imperative whereby the expansion of empire is framed as the fulfilment of the moral destiny of the British people to rule the world (Kipling, *The Definitive Edition* 170-71; MacDonald 4, 11, 55). Other cultures, the poem’s belief is, are better off under British rule, and the manly British nation is strengthened and consolidated by imperial expansion.

Conventionally, jingoism as a mode of thinking or feeling is understood as nation-obsessed, closed-minded, xenophobic and inward-looking. The *OED* definition of the jingo, which emerges in this period, denotes a “blustering patriot” and is associated with war-mongering rhetoric. Yet, no matter how strident and single-minded or indeed how aggressive and *nation*-obsessed jingoistic verse was at this time, it nonetheless bore the unmistakable marks of an expansive imperial ideology, and also of the increasing networking and capitalization of the world under empire. Its terms of address were at once to the British Nation *and* to the wider British Empire – to Britons around the globe – and its operations took as read a global map. Following on from Colin Graham’s suggestion in his discussion of Victorian epic that “from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century the ‘nation’ is the conceptual force which pushes, justifies and underlies imperialism,” the jingo poem at the century’s end provided a key medium through which that force was expressed (2).

Like the imperial adventure story, the jingo poem was predicated on the “worlding” both of British society and of its national literature, in precisely the opposite way to how the etiolated decadent poetry which equally defined the *fin de siècle* was a poetry of interiors and introversion, of little magazines rather than popular newspapers, of night not day, of a little England shrunk down to the dimensions of a drawing room. If the world reached the mauve poem of the 1890s mainly through the highly mediated form of its orientalised decorative effects, the jingo poem by contrast was actively directed to that wider world. It was fully aware of taking a British national message to the globe, and, simultaneously, of communicating an imperial world-view to the British public. Not unexpectedly, the peak time of the jingo poem coincided with the popularity of music hall, to whose refrain-based song structures it was formally indebted (see Falk). Kipling’s first place of residence after his arrival in London from India in 1889 was, as if by special appointment, in Embankment Chambers, just opposite Gatti’s Musical Hall, where he became a regular (Allen 297-98). Media of imperial propaganda both, the jingo poem, like music hall verse was imbued with the certainty that

the spread of British power and values around the world was a powerful good, and that the verse itself had a part to play in that dissemination.

Empire “really was,” observes Andrew Thompson, referencing John Darwin and Alan Lester, “an interconnected zone constituted by multiple points of contact and complex circuits of exchange . . . a field of enterprise for the whole of British society” (16-17; see also Hopkins; Lambert and Lester; Lester). A clear instance of this interconnection is how the jingo poem circulated through the ramifying new networks provided by steam-ship transport, the cable-based communications media, such as the telegraph, and also the popular press, which immeasurably speeded up its movement and its reception. So a jingo poem that might be generated in Sydney or Sioux-Ste Marie, could within weeks be taken up, copied, set to music, reworked, in Vancouver or the Virgin Islands. If British empire at its height thus effectively represented the “first wave” of modern globalization, within that globalized world, I suggest, jingoist verse in English was, before the 1950s pop-song, probably one of the most culturally migrated or “worlded” of literary genres. On one level it addressed the British world as something akin to a united nation, and yet, on another, it itself carried few locatable geographical markers, as stood to reason in a “Greater Britain” interpenetrated and homogenized by English or British cultural meanings (certainly from the vantage point of the white Greater Britain audiences for whom the poem was intended). Moreover, in tandem with this process whereby the jingo poem established itself as a worlded cultural form, it also contributed via its dissemination throughout the networked zone of the Empire, to the further worlding of British culture.

Represented by such names as Alfred Austin (the Poet Laureate after Tennyson), W. E. Henley, Henry Newbolt and, above all, the “Laureate of Empire” Rudyard Kipling, the heyday of the jingo poem embraces the two closing decades of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century.³ It was in this period that Kipling not only became the “supreme exponent of his age,” but was also deemed, especially in his poetry, to “[express] the imperial idea in its simplest and most powerful form” (MacDonald 145-73, and in particular p. 149). Tennyson, though an important influence on these later poets, and though he took the national “addressivity” of his role as Laureate seriously, falls outside

³ “Laureate of Empire” is W. T. Stead’s name for Kipling (see Stead 553). It should be noted however that Kipling’s poetry is often more conflicted and ambivalent, and certainly more metrically complicated, than the term jingo poem might at first suggest.

this period of high imperialism and massive global expansion.⁴ Moreover, he rarely espoused overt imperialist sentiments even in his later work, though poems like “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After,” following on from the already pessimistic “Locksley Hall” of the 1840s, are in-seamed with anxiety at the decline of empire.⁵

The inaugural moment, if such it can be called, of the jingo poem, as of jingoism, came with the so-called British “Great Awakening” to a sense of imperial destiny that was sparked by the aftermath of the death of the national hero General Gordon at Khartoum in 1885. Gordon, a one-time Governor-General of the Sudan, had been overwhelmed by the Mahdi in an attempt to withdraw the British garrison from Khartoum, and was widely perceived to have been let down by the British government who had delayed in dispatching a relief force to his aid. In 1898, to wide popular enthusiasm, Kitchener’s Omdurman campaign took revenge for the death of Gordon. That one-and-a-half decade interim saw the first publication of imperialist verse by Henley and by Newbolt, and the meteoric arrival of the “Indian” Kipling on the London literary stage. The closing episodes of the jingo poem as world-penetrating form came with the humiliating defeats of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), and then with the Liberal landslide of 1906 – though these dark days for Tory imperialism were to some extent counterbalanced by the charged “jingo” election of 1900, and the eventual successful suppression of *Swadeshi* resistance in Bengal from 1905.

From the 1870s, and markedly from around 1890, British society became increasingly saturated with militaristic and imperial ideas, a development that was driven by the newly global communications media already cited, by the technology of high-speed presses and the cheap “New Journalism” it made possible, and by mass education. Between 1870 and 1908, for example, the global total of submarine cables increased nineteen fold, from 24,793 to 473,108 (Headrick 25). The private telegraph companies operating these cable networks, and the international news agencies that depended on them, became “among the first transnational corporations” (Potter 622). These different world-embracing and speeded-up media were conjoined in the conviction, held both by their owners and their consumers, that the English-speaking colonies (eventually together with the United States) might unite to form a vast “Greater Britain”. This planet-spanning, “railway-girt” entity, first conjured in Charles Dilke’s travelogue *Greater Britain* of 1868,

⁴ It was in the final three decades of the 1800s that, with the acquisition or consolidation of territories in Africa and South-East Asia, the British Empire came to cover a fifth of the world’s land surface (see MacDonald 2, 5).

⁵ See Graham 38-46. See also Hill 94-101, 467-76.

was further propagated in the writing of imperial raconteurs and historians both Liberal and Tory, including J. A. Froude and J. R. Seeley, and not omitting Rudyard Kipling, a life-long enthusiast of the idea of an expanded England linking together the homebound English and the frontiersmen of the world.⁶

Significantly for its worldwide circulation and spread, the growing popularity of the jingo poem in these years coincided not only with the rise of Greater Britain ideas, but also with the shift from what Anne McClintock calls “scientific racism” to “commodity racism” (33). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, she argues, in the phase of high imperialism, ideas of imperial progress via the struggle of the fittest, gave way to mass-produced spectacles of racialized ideas, reflected in “advertising and photography, the imperial Expositions and the museum movement,” and also, I would add, in the popular imperialist and racialized posturing of the jingo poem, as, most notoriously, in Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden” (1899) (Kipling, *The Definitive Edition* 323). Imperial exhibitions in the period, for instance, broadened their primary objective of imparting a scientific education to the masses, and became additionally concerned with commercial entertainment. But so, too, the songlike jingo poem bent itself to the edification and entertainment of the masses through its propagation of imperialist ideas.

Though not perhaps an instantly recognizable commodity, unlike soap, cigarettes or Manchester goods, the jingo poem was in this period of shift both widely printed in popular magazines and newspapers, and also reproduced in a variety of commercialized forms. In some cases it acted in effect as a kind of imprimatur or official stamp of empire. The jingo poem printed on a teacup or tea-towel hypostatized that commodity of the British Empire as an Imperial commodity, in much the same way as logos such as the Nike swoosh “tag” Nike products as global commodities today. Working through these channels, the jingo poem, probably above most other literary genres, assisted in the process of, as Joseph McLaughlin writes, moving “Victorian imperialist discourse out of the realm of the scientific societies and clubs,” and “[resituating] it in the commercial and domestic spheres.” As a circulating form the poem joined in with the remarkable new fluidity of things, styles and designs as well as people in the expanding global marketplace of late nineteenth-century commercial capitalism (17-18).

Bard of empire Kipling’s massively popular, music-hall style “Tommy song,” “The Absent-Minded Beggar” (1899), captures pre-

⁶ Charles Dilke’s *Greater Britain*, which ran into many editions, looks forward to a unified network of English-speaking peoples that would bring together Britain, Canada and the United States under one great government (see vol. 2, p. 400).

cisely this transnational and transcultural circulation of the jingo poem, in so far as its catchy exhortation to “pay-pay-pay” into the Soldiers Families Fund of the Anglo-Boer War was widely hummed and sung by soldiers and civilians in Britain and South Africa alike, and also disseminated around the settler colonies on handkerchiefs, mugs, tea-towels, jugs, coasters (Kipling, *The Definitive Edition* 459). “Cook’s home – Duke’s home – home of a millionaire” (as a line from the poem has it) – the different contexts were bound together in their imperialist solidarity by way of the circulation of the poem, and of the movement of monies inspired by the poem, which in turn confirmed that solidarity. Other of Kipling’s poetic hits such as “If” and “Bobs,” too, were massively anthologized, reprinted and reproduced on commodities like handkerchiefs and tea-sets, and as texts for framing. As the poet recognized in *Something of Myself*, late in his career, the “mechanism of the age” had succeeded in marketing his work across the world (111). As a consequence of this dissemination, not only individual poems by Kipling, but also his image and voice as imperial laureate and singer of a Greater Britain were elevated in the public mind, becoming global icons of a bullish and pushful empire, as well as the objects of admiring imitation (by Edgar Wallace and “Banjo” Paterson, amongst others). A self-consciously modern poet who also celebrated the railways and cable technologies, Kipling perhaps even more than Dickens was the first writer of whom it might be said that he was fully worlded.

For Elaine Freedgood in *The Ideas in Things*, a cultural archive is embedded in the represented things of Victorian literature. Commodities in particular, goods manufactured and traded, the mahogany furniture in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, for example, are loaded with a world history of trade and exchange, a history marked by imperial force fields of ownership and power. Drawing together several of the threads outlined above, the jingo poem, by contrast with the thing in the Victorian novel, was in its massive popularity at once a circulating form (like the thing), and a form of circulation (less like it), to adapt also from Arjun Appadurai’s analysis of the complexities of present-day globalization (see Appadurai: *Modernity at Large; Globalization; “Circulation Forms”*). Appadurai notes that in a globalizing modern world, the circulation of forms is especially intensified by heightened and accelerated forms of circulation. By these lights, the jingo poem can be seen as at once a carrier of meanings, yet also a means and a mode of carrying meaning; both a channel of transference, bearing imperial messages from one colonial site to another, like a telegraph cable, say, and itself the imperial message. So the jingo poem could also be described as at one and the same time dense with meaning and yet, in its function as channel, strangely empty of meaning, an unclogged conduit. Much like the commodity

within world capitalism, the jingo poem sought out colonial contexts (markets, audiences) that already shared cultural features through being networked by empire, and then, by way of its own networking operations, confirmed, embedded and further homogenized those common features.

The characteristic apostrophic and exhortatory mode of the jingo poem is marked by, and in turn marks, this worlding – the same applies to its broadly disseminated yet highly standardized generic patterns (the ballad stanza especially). The poem invokes the moral values of the British – chivalry, military honour and courage, good governance, paternalism towards other races- and via this invocation urges British colonials at all social levels to spread these virtues around the world. Yet, at the same time, the poem assumes that these national values are already widely accepted as global goods; that its desideratum is an accomplished fact. The poem's imperial advocacy, therefore, which in Kipling at times takes the shape of global warning or admonishment, as in "Recessional" (1897) or "The Lesson" (1901), is also a form of national reinforcement or repeat recognition. Empire is, again and again, seen for what it is (or ought) to be, the British nation writ large upon the English-speaking world (Kipling, *The Definitive Edition* 328, 299).⁷

The jingo poem's worldwide seeding in this most malleable and popular of its guises, of nationalist song or patriotic tune, is persuasively demonstrated wherever colonial poets of the empire with nationalist leanings, most notably the so-called "Australian Kipling," "Banjo" (A. B.) Paterson, enter into a dialogue with Kipling's imperialist yet English "songs"; where they adapt his language and forms in order to catalyze nationalist sentiment within their own colonial locales. It was a seeming paradox only that the jingo poem's appeal to the stout heart or the pioneering spirit of the home country could be enthusiastically embraced in the white English-speaking colonies where the precise same characteristics transmuted into signifiers of national spirit. This ready take-up of the form again reflects how imperialist genres might speak powerfully both to home audiences and to the world, moving fluidly along the spectrum linking imperial and nationalist values.⁸ Whereas, for the Britain-based imperialist, the jingo poem addressed the expansive ambitions of the nation in so far as its rhetoric at the same time reached out to the world, for the colonial nationalist the reverse situation obtained: the jingo poem, by invoking "home" values, spoke the more dynamically to the world, or to that part of it he might designate as his new home.

⁷ Both poems, like "The White Man's Burden," were first published in *The Times*.

⁸ For further discussion of the segue between imperial and nationalist values in the Victorian writing of empire, see Kitzan.

The nationalist-imperialist interchange that marks jingoism is palpable in many of the poems of “Banjo” Paterson (such as “Clancy of the Overflow” or “The Bushman’s Song” from *The Man from Snowy River*), and also in the Canadian Confederation poets Bliss Carman or Charles G. D. Roberts (“A Vagabond Song,” “The Pea-fields,” respectively) – in poems that borrow the recognizable shapes of English popular verse, as propagated by Kipling, amongst others, to applaud new, fledgling nationalities (Paterson 13, 66; Boehmer, *Empire Writing* 162-171). As this implies, the jingo poem when speaking to the world, spoke particularly strongly and plainly to the outer, male-dominated edges of that world, to its borderlines and frontiers, its growing mine-towns and expanding civil lines. As suited its origins in traditional ballad and campfire song, this was verse that belonged out in the open, and that, when traded and passed on in these far-flung contexts, not only broadcast imperialist and masculine values, but also, from the vantage point of the singers and readers of the songs, helped in some measure to make these places more enduring (see Ackland).

It was in respect of its operation as a *circulating form* of high imperialism that the jingo poem with its musical, refrain-based structures and sometimes strenuous mode of address played a key role as a value-conveying and -embedding imperial genre. No mere celebratory jingle, the jingo poem drove empire home in memorable phrases. It both echoed and generated imperial structures of feeling. Its power lay in how it worked, simultaneously, at different ideological, emotional and visceral levels. Pressing upon its audience popular sentiments in entertaining yet also emotionally charged ways, it invited repetition, citation, reiteration; it ceaselessly flowed and circulated; it itinerated. Its performative features added to its impact: its declamatory public style; the combinatory, collective effects of its choric forms, embodied ideas of race loyalty and solidarity as if they were part of the natural order of things. Like epic, and unlike the lyric, the jingo poem explicitly directed itself to the political sphere; it did not signify a private, non-social mode of address. Yet, unlike the ode or epic fragment, say, it did not seek to expound a position within any particular political framework; it was a declarative and not a discursive form, and hence was the more memorable, the more repeatable.⁹ In some rare cases, a widely reproduced work like “The Absent-Minded Beggar” might become so elevated by the effects of enthusiastic reiteration as to come to stand as a cipher for a particular political attitude or approach – most usually, a fervent pro-imperialism.

⁹ On the role of Victorian epic in propagating ideas of nationality and national cohesion within the nation-state, yet more widely also, see Graham.

In his discussion in *Poetry of the Period* (1870), the (later) Poet Laureate Alfred Austin, lamented the bifurcation within contemporary British poetry between “great poetry” and “beautiful poetry,” in which the former was addressed to the world of action, conflict and public statement (123-4). Though questions may be asked of its “greatness” as well as of its seriousness, the jingo poem that openly conveyed an imperial message or set out to rouse an imperial response, related to that outer world. While not seeking to embody the complex geography of the globalizing Empire, it did take as read an imperial stage, which is to say, an imperialist speaker, a ready-made imperial myth, and a quantity of imperialist enthusiasm in its audience or readership. In the Victorian novel, the global nexuses of capital, finance, and communications might be figured, say, in terms of a hero’s arduous and truncated journey to a distant land (H. Rider Haggard’s *She*), or of the abstraction of social space such as was produced within the growing and speeded-up world system (Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*) (see Bell). As against these constructs, the jingo poem appealed to the heart, and did so in part by insisting upon group bonds and group identity (as in “A Song of the English”). One important quality it shared with the adventure tale, therefore, was in its emphasis on doing, on an ethic of action over an ethic of contemplation. In the adventure, this was embodied in dering-do, bush-whacking and other vigorous activity; in the jingo poem, in its characteristic imperative mode – “Play Up, Play Up and Play the Game!”; “Take up the White Man’s Burden.”

The jingo poem, as this suggests, is a poem that implies a crowd. It also implies a vertical social structure. By and large, it is directed from a leader-figure towards a group. The group could comprise a group of likeminded if more junior imperialists, drawn from the same social class as the speaker, or it might entail the greater British public. As stands to reason, high-minded ideals with respect to extending the *Pax Britannica* tended to be directed at the upper classes, the colonial officers, while notions about mucking in and making do as Greater Britons self-evidently interpellated a wider audience. It is part of Kipling’s power as Empire Laureate that, most successfully of the jingo poets, his terms of address glide smoothly between and across social levels, and are consequently the more prominently worlded both in reaching out to a diversified “England,” and in terms of their potential influence. As Malvern van Wyk Smith shows in his study of the poetry of the Anglo-Boer War, the pages of Cape and Boer republic papers of the period were bestrewn with verse, not all of it pro-British or pro-imperial, written in imitation of Kipling’s infectious plain-speaking balladic stanza.

In respect of its second operation, as a *form of circulation*, the circulating and globalized jingo poem could also work in a more obvious way as

a channel for the transmission of imperial meanings. The shift of emphasis here is fairly subtle, in so far as the one form is predicated upon the other; the widely circulating jingo poem could, as a reifying structure, in itself, also become a conduit for circulation. In some cases, for example, imperial values were embedded within its form, such as in its capitalized abstracts, which features then came to act as circuits for these values, especially where, say, the style of capitalization was copied from one poet's work to another. Other formal features such as the imperative mode, the ballad stanza and other choric effects, widely repeated and rehearsed, were conventionalized as embodying certain British colonial values – moral endurance, no-nonsense robustness, masculine steadfastness. In a word, the jingo poem emolliated imperial and national values across the world, even as itself operated as an emollient form.

The mobility of “things” and forms, including poems, and the enhanced openness of the channels through which these things moved, which the jingo poem's worldwide dissemination illustrates, can now be pinpointed by looking at the operation and reception of two iconic jingo poems of high imperialism, both already cited. Newbolt's “Vitae Lampada” (The Lamp of Life) and Kipling's hymn-like “A Song of the English,” a poem sequence celebrating the worldwide spread of English “Sons of the Blood,” can be read as exemplifying, respectively, a circulating imperial form, and a form of imperial circulation (that itself acknowledges the global dissemination of English “forms”).

“Vitae Lampada” (The Lamp of Life, 1897), the earliest written of Henry Newbolt's patriotic turn-of-the century poems, is based on an ethic fundamental to Britain's imperial endeavours, namely, that war is like sport and, therefore, that war is the more successful the more it is played out as a game on a public school playing field (Boehmer, *Empire Writing* 287-8). Differently put, learning selflessness on the playing field produces honourable conduct in imperial battle. In the poem, the beleaguered cricket scene galvanized by the captain's call to go on playing the game that is evoked in the first stanza fades into the classic scene of late nineteenth-century imperial warfare in the second, with the broken square in the desert reminiscent of the fateful January 1885 battle to relieve Gordon. In the third and final stanza, the historically stirring poem gathers itself to deliver once more the motto that by now is well established though clearly worth repeating. Life is a tireless relay in which the ethic of playing the game against the odds is passed on like a torch from one generation to the next in order that, the assumption is, the people sustained by precisely that chivalric ethic may propagate themselves into the future.

So familiar and emollient was its ethic to the poem's audiences, and so effective the poem in conveying it, that it was widely anthologized within years of its first being published, and taken up as a school song by public schools across Britain. It remains the poem for which Newbolt is best known as a poet today, despite the fact that his reputation in the period was founded on his work as a Liberal balladeer of British maritime history. With its memorable four-square double-quatrain stanzaic structure tightly rhyming *abab*, "Vitae Lampada" was quickly loosened from its origins in Newbolt's oeuvre to become quite obviously a circulating form disseminating an object lesson in imperial circulation.

This is nowhere more convincingly illustrated than in its adaptation under the more straightforward, or less pretentious, title "Play the Game!" as a tableau-and-recitation exercise in "patriotism" in Robert Baden-Powell's first edition of *Scouting for Boys* (1908). As the dates suggest, this was a mere eleven years after the poem's first publication. Himself convinced by the idea that boys never learn so well as when they are at play, Baden-Powell included the "Play the Game" playlet in "Scouting Games, Practices and Displays," the filler section to the final Part VI of his Scouting primer, where it comes complete with stage-directions unabashed as to their literal reading of the poem (336-7). Before the last refrain-like direct-speech line at the end of the second stanza, Baden-Powell inserts:

Action: The younger officer stands forward pointing his sword to the enemy, and the retreating soldiers turn ready to charge with him as he cries –

"Play up! Play up! And play the game!"

It would be difficult to think of a more explicit rendition than this of the soon-to-be Chief Scout's belief that, as in his own Matabele campaign, officers support their leaders to the hilt not for rewards but "*because it is the game*" (MacDonald 66-7, 21). In the playlet, as in the poem, the ethic that "[war is] the only game worth playing," to quote the *Pall Mall Gazette* at the start of the Boer War, is so unquestioningly accepted that the pivot on which the poem turns, the shift from playing field to real-life battle, requires little to no special explanation, not even from Baden-Powell. As "Vitae Lampada" clearly shows, a circulating form of empire, the jingo poem, could further corroborate its function by becoming also a form of circulation; in this particular case, a channel for imperial morale.

Rudyard Kipling first published his collection of verses hymning the English-speaking colonies and their interconnection under the title "A Song of the English" in 1893, and then as *The Seven Seas* in 1896, with the inclusion of "Hymn Before Action," in the lead-up to Queen Victo-

ria's Diamond Jubilee.¹⁰ In the poem sequence, the five recognizably hymn-like stanzas of "A Song of the English" introduce the "broken interludes" of the six further "songs," which take the form of rhyming couplets, the lines as long as or longer than the alexandrine, but with metrical digressions into balladic and other stanzaic forms: "The Coast-wise Lights," "The Song of the Dead," "The Deep-Sea Cables," "The Song of the Sons," "The Song of the Cities," and "England's Answer." In each one of the poems, even as the empire is successively represented as woven, "strawed," threaded, seeded, linked, and knotted by, respectively, coast-light beams, English bones, under-sea cables, fraternal and family connections, harbour cities, and "The Blood," the stern injunction throughout is for the British to rise to the God-given mission of imperial expansion and strive to "be one." From 1909, towards the end of the high imperial Edwardian decade, the "Song of the English" poem sequence was printed separately in an expensive though popular velum format. This is further evidence, reinforcing that which emerges from the sequence as a formal structure, that even as the poems intoned the importance of imperial interconnection and solidarity, their physical manifestation, here in book-form, handed down this lesson also (MacDonald 147).

Throughout the poems comprising "A Song of the English," the empire is cast as a natural birthright of the English and yet also as a duty to which they should proudly rise. "[Serving] the Lord" is equated with imperial service; and to "smite" a "pathway to the ends of all the Earth" means "[Holding] the 'Faith'". As regards this essay's particular focus on the world circulation of jingoist feelings and jingo forms, what is of particular interest is the poem sequence's repeated recognition of the interpenetration of the world, its seas, sea-beds, cities, and frontiers, by the English, and by English meanings. Formally, this interpenetration is underscored through the use of the same or related poetic devices across the different constituent poems, not only in the adaptation of the would-be grand alexandrine that recurs in all but "The Song of the Cities," but also in the high-flown biblical idiom, disseminated across the poems, and the anthropomorphism of lights, bones, cables, and cities that is in each case voiced in the first-person. As "The Deep-Sea Cables" has it, the world that is reflected in this poem is "joined" by the "words of [English] men" that "flicker and flutter and beat" across the "deserts of the deep."

Although "A Song of the English" in its vellum covers may have played its part as a circulating imperial form, it is most resonant for the purposes of my argument for the attention it pays to forms of circula-

¹⁰ For the entire sequence, see Kipling, *The Definitive Edition*, pp. 170-8.

tion, on two separate levels. First, there is its acknowledgement of the many interwoven forms of circulation that make empire possible (cable networks, “[shuttling]” steamships), and second, even more presciently, the sequence itself can be seen to operate as network of circulating forms, threading different imperial registers (the hymn-like cadences, the first-person monologues) through the different poems. While Kipling allows the outer world to interpenetrate the sequence in the form of its images of networks and intercontinental conversation, these various poetic devices also interpenetrate the expanded and expanding British world such as the sequence represents it.

Fredric Jameson in “Modernism and Imperialism” controversially observes that though the imperial metropolis was interpenetrated by colonial capital, empire itself remained to modern writing almost inconceivable, beyond representation, unless of course writers had travelled out to meet that blankness, as did Joseph Conrad, or, as in the case of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the work rose out of a “First World” social reality locked within “Third World” economic structures. In his words: “[T]he mapping of the imperial world system becomes impossible, since the colonized other who is its essential other component or opposite number has become invisible.” The high level of aestheticization that is associated with modernism, he therefore proposes, emerged as a type of compensation for the “unrepresentable totality” of empire (Jameson 60-64).

Refining the terms of Jameson’s thesis, this essay has submitted that empire, the world interconnected by British nationalist ideologies and technologies, can be read as fully present within, and present to, the jingo poem, though in rhetorical, technical and emotional more than in spatial ways. At the time of high imperialism, the jingo poem as at once a rallying cry to an invisible world-wide constituency *and* a boom of patriotic sentiment, as an anthem to imperial power *and* a self-glorifying national chorus – *felt* even more than it imagined the colonial system “as a whole.” It emerged from the belief that the British Nation had become a global force, that its imperial values carried significance, in various registers, for peoples around the world, and that it served as an important conduit for those values.

Different from the early twentieth-century novel, which sought, though in vain, to grasp a social reality in its totality, the jingo poem implied rather than directly referenced transnational space and a global audience. Even so, its terms of address assumed a world reality; it did not recognize that occlusion of a full existential experience embracing

both metropolis and margins that Jameson sees as endemic to modern writing. As a product of trans-empire movement (a circulating form), and through its sheer reproducibility (as a form of circulation), the poem bore the traces of the broader social realities, both global and national, through which it had moved and through which it might once again flow. Far from excluding “an external or colonized people” as Jameson’s Edwardian novel might, the jingo poem therefore roused feelings that potentially appealed to settler and colonized nationalists and to metropolitan xenophobes alike (Jameson 60-64). Simply put, no world space was ec-centric to the jingo poem.

Closing evidence for the world-wide propulsion yet also local tethering of the jingo poem comes from an unexpected but compelling quarter, which can be explained by that slide between imperialist and nationalist values which the poem characteristically accomplishes. Across the twentieth century and beyond, it is curious to see, imperialist sentiments, devices and phrases that had been trademarked for and by the late nineteenth-century jingo poem and its settler counterparts, migrated without obstacle into both the public rhetoric and private structures of feeling of anti-colonial nationalist leaders. These leaders, like postcolonial writers, took the appropriative, transverse approach that Edward Said amongst others has powerfully analyzed as “contrapuntal,” cleaving both to and from inherited colonial traditions, in that they adapted the anthem-like sentiments of imperialist verse to fit their own particular structures of nationalist feeling (See Said 230-340; Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* 100-6, 161, 164). Nationalist energies, as Said recognizes, can at once undo and reify inherited frameworks of authority.

M. K. Gandhi, for example, invoked Tennyson’s “Do or Die” from “The Charge of the Light Brigade” as a motto for his Quit India campaign in 1942 (Young 324-5). And Nelson Mandela openly turned to lines of seeming imperialist verse for moral support at times of emotional stress. On 11 June 2010, the opening day of the international World Cup tournament in South Africa, while himself experiencing intense personal grief at the loss of a great-grand-daughter in a car accident the night before, Mandela in absentia urged audiences around the globe, and especially in South Africa, that “the game must start and we must enjoy the game” (Williams 1, 3). His line bears unmistakable echoes of Newbolt’s refrain to “Play the Game” against all odds.

Earlier than this, on Robben Island, Mandela turned for comfort and inspiration to a work by the hysterically jingoist Scottish amputee poet W. E. Henley, author of such poems as “The Choice of the Will” and “Pro Rege Nostro,” as laden as Kipling’s Songs with elevated abstract nouns like “Will,” “Law,” and “Word” signifying the imperial (yet also implicitly national) mission (Boehmer, *Empire Writing* 283-6; Boehmer,

Nelson Mandela 84, 87). As dramatized in the Clint Eastwood directed 2010 film *Invictus*, Mandela in extremis valued the bold (but not particularly imperial) defiance of lines from Henley like: “Under the bludgeonings of chance/ My head is bloody but unbowed.” “Invictus,” or undefeated, which was first published by Henley in 1875 as “I.M. R.T. Hamilton Bruce,” and later in his 1889 collection *Echoes*, probably only acquired its Latinate title once it entered colonial school anthologies, alongside poems like “Vitae Lampada” (125). Yet it was in this already widely circulated and de-contextualized form that young readers like Mandela and also the Caribbean Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey would have encountered the poem and felt profoundly drawn by it, discovering in the evocation of the beleaguered individual asserting his mastery over fate a subtly postcolonial image of the emergent nation resisting the “fell clutch of [imperial] circumstance.” Distinguishing within the imperial cadence of the jingo poem the bass-note of nationalist sentiment, or the co-ordinates of home within the world, Mandela, Gandhi and Garvey felt validated in adapting a colonialist rhetoric to suit the immediate demands of national liberation.

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