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*Popular Imperialism and the Textual Cultures of Empire*

Justin D. Livingstone

In 1984, John MacKenzie published his influential *Propaganda and Empire*. Arguing for the importance of popular culture to the study of British imperialism, the book was swiftly recognised as a major intervention in reshaping the field of imperial history. Addressing sources that historians had for the most part ignored, such as popular literature, theatre, cinema, and educational texts, MacKenzie argued that imperialism constituted a dominant ideology in late-nineteenth-century Britain, and one that was deployed in a wide range of media. It was an ideology, moreover, that showed ‘extraordinary durability’, persisting in popular culture until the mid-twentieth century – a much later juncture than might be expected.<sup>1</sup>

There has, of course, been widespread recognition of MacKenzie’s reorientation of imperial history. As Berny Sèbe puts it, ‘*Propaganda and Empire* initiated a historiographical turn, emphasizing for the first time the cultural consequences of imperialism on the British Isles themselves.’<sup>2</sup> Stuart Ward goes so far as to speak of a ‘MacKenziean moment’ in the historical discipline. At a time when imperial history was in decline, and when historians widely assumed that the British public had displayed an ‘ingrained ignorance ... towards their empire’ during the imperial period, MacKenzie insisted on the intersections between ‘empire and metropolitan culture’ and paved the way for a wave of studies arguing that ‘imperialism as a cultural phenomenon had as significant an effect on the dominant as on the

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<sup>1</sup> John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 5.

subordinate societies'.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, as Cherry Leonardi points out, even critics of his approach acknowledge the widespread impact of the 'MacKenzie school' of imperial history.<sup>4</sup>

MacKenzie's historiographical influence is undeniable, but it has also been much debated. This chapter, however, pursues a different approach. The aim here is to read MacKenzie from the perspective of a literary critic, and to examine his work for its important contribution to the study of popular imperial literature. This chapter offers no comprehensive account of his engagement with literary sources, but rather focuses on several key interventions, while also drawing on his insights in order to sketch possibilities for future research.

### ***i. Empire, Adventure, Environment: Popular Imperial Fiction***

In *Propaganda and Empire*, MacKenzie ranges widely in delineating forms of imperial propaganda, which he defines as those mechanisms that serve 'the transmission of ideas and values ... with the specific intention of influencing the recipients' attitudes in such a way that the interests of its authors will be enhanced'. For literary studies, a crucial part of this work is the chapter on juvenile literature, in which he traces the emergence of writing imbued with the 'patriotic, racial, and militarist elements' of the 'new popular imperialism'.<sup>5</sup> Identifying children's journals as key instruments of influence, MacKenzie follows their increasing secularisation from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and their increasing inclusion of nationalist and imperialist content. Exemplified by the *Boys' Own Paper* and other popular journals of the 1880s, 'adventure stories and historical romances' soon became the mainstays of the juvenile market. MacKenzie's discussion encompasses the growing ascendancy of boys' authors – the likes of W. H. G. Kingston, Robert Louis Stevenson, G. A. Henty and R. M. Ballantyne – whose work frequently featured

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<sup>3</sup> Stuart Ward, 'The MacKenziean Moment in Retrospect', in *Writing Imperial Histories*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 30–31.

<sup>4</sup> Cherry Leonardi, 'The Power of Culture and the Cultures of Power: John MacKenzie and the Study of Imperialism,' in *Writing Imperial Histories*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 49.

<sup>5</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 3 and 199.

colonial settings. Adventure writers, he argues, many of whom had ‘experience of colonial life’, became ‘exemplars’ as well as ‘propagandists’, acting as ‘recruiters’ to the military and colonial service and promoting ‘nationalist and patriotic ideals’.<sup>6</sup> In addressing these developments, MacKenzie places emphasis on the media revolution of the late nineteenth century. The growing popularity of imperial-themed literature lay partly in expanded literacy and more efficient publishing, which together brought a new popular readership into existence. It was further facilitated by the rise of publishers such as Thomas Nelson, Blackie and Son, and Macmillan, who made these genres their speciality, while the ‘prize system’ used by schools and Sunday schools functioned as a key mechanism of distribution.<sup>7</sup>

Since over thirty years have passed since the publication of *Propaganda and Empire*, there are inevitably aspects of MacKenzie’s analysis that contemporary scholarship might question. For instance, his approach to popular literature could seem instrumentalist. Ward observes that MacKenzie’s early work – and the first volumes in the *Studies in Imperialism* series – tended to read popular culture as an effective means of ‘social control’. Influenced by contemporary formulations of a ‘dominant ideology’ thesis and Gramscian political theory, MacKenzie employed a vocabulary that posits a strategic, ‘conscious and deliberate’ effort to orchestrate public opinion.<sup>8</sup> Today, literary scholars tend to resist such an approach and argue for a less straightforward deployment of ideology in popular forms. Current reader-response approaches, moreover, highlight the subtleties of reception by readers, who are rarely passive consumers of texts. Indeed, Leonardi notes that recent research has developed MacKenzie’s investigation by taking up this question of readerly reception and ‘appropriation’, engaging with the complexity of individual responses to and relations with empire’.<sup>9</sup> In his later work, MacKenzie has refined his own approach by considering the interactions between ideology and individuals that his earlier

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<sup>6</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 203 and 207–8.

<sup>7</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 199, 209, and 206.

<sup>8</sup> Ward, ‘MacKenziean Moment’, 42; and MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Leonardi, ‘Power of Culture’, 60.

‘top-down’ model of propaganda made little space for, and by adopting the language, as Ward points out, of ‘internalised imperialism’ and the ‘colonisation of consciousness’.<sup>10</sup>

In the wake of such refinements, it is possible to miss the powerfully polemical nature of *Propaganda and Empire*. Part of what makes the work so striking is the disconcerting picture of Britain that it presents. Challenging the popular belief that ‘propaganda does not come easily to the British’, MacKenzie argued that in the case of imperialism this was simply not true.<sup>11</sup> In the context of Thatcherite Britain, and the resurgence of imperialist language that accompanied the Falklands War, his exposure of the pervasive nature of imperial ideology served to puncture an enduring national myth.<sup>12</sup> It was also deeply significant that MacKenzie took a range of neglected sources and subjected them to serious analysis. Although he would later distance himself from postcolonial scholarship, his work played a key role in the developing critique of imperial ideology by augmenting its scope to include – for the first time – the products of popular culture.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, MacKenzie’s foray into juvenile literature contributed to the opening up of a new corpus for close reading. While *Propaganda and Empire* began the process of analysing such texts, he enhanced his approach significantly five years later in his essay ‘Hunting and the Natural World in Juvenile Literature’. In this piece, MacKenzie set out to investigate the ideological nature of the representation of the natural world in children’s adventure fiction depicting the ‘hunt’. Hinging on the encounter between ‘civilisation’ and ‘savagery’, the hunting narratives that loomed large in Victorian boys’ books were ‘laden with symbolic significance’. At the most basic level, they served to valorise cherished

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew S. Thompson, ‘Introduction’, in *Writing Imperial Histories*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 15; and Ward, ‘MacKenziean Moment’, 43.

<sup>11</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ward, ‘MacKenziean Moment’, 31 and 36.

<sup>13</sup> In his riposte to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, MacKenzie argues that popular culture was a critical omission from Said’s project. See John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 14.

characteristics, such as ‘endurance and stamina... stoicism, application, command of self’.<sup>14</sup> And yet, as MacKenzie showed, the adventurous activities of the hunt were bound up in more complex ways with the formation of imperial character. In the works of Mayne Reid and R. M. Ballantyne, for instance, the hunt provides ‘trials of knowledge, skill, and courage through which boys become men’ and ‘a rite of passage between adolescence and adulthood’.<sup>15</sup> In MacKenzie’s reading, moreover, the narration of big-game hunting was also preoccupied with questions of race and difference. Hunting became ‘a marker of racial character’, with European methods and technologies construed favourably in opposition to the less civilised techniques employed by indigenous peoples. By signifying an appropriate exploitation of natural resources, in opposition to the supposed mismanagement of the land by locals, representations of hunting could be used to legitimise European territorial claims.<sup>16</sup>

As in *Propaganda and Empire*, MacKenzie’s approach took a long view of the genre under examination. Following hunting narratives into the twentieth century, he traced their development in the context of new ‘sensitivities’ to animal life and emerging conservationist mentalities, while also exploring connections with the discourses and practices of scientific collection, sport, and trade, which served to justify vivid descriptions of animal slaughter. And yet, despite such complexities, juvenile hunting fiction ultimately remained a genre in the service of empire. Across a considerable period, argues MacKenzie, the hunt was consistently ‘a mark of the fitness of the dominant race’, ‘an emblem of imperial rule’, and ‘a metaphor of conquest’.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John M. MacKenzie, ‘Hunting and the Natural World in Juvenile Literature’, in *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, ed. Jeffrey Richards (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 146–7.

<sup>15</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Hunting and the Natural World’, 147 and 154.

<sup>16</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Hunting and the Natural World’, 150 and 157–8.

<sup>17</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Hunting and the Natural World’, 165, 168, and 170. Imperial hunting and the development of game conservation receive monograph-length treatment in MacKenzie’s *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

What is particularly notable about MacKenzie's interpretation of adventure fiction is the richness of his close reading; historicising texts from a genre widely considered inconsequential, he disclosed the ideological implications of their recurring thematics. MacKenzie's serious approach to texts that might otherwise be dismissed as simplistic or ephemeral has been very influential. The emphasis on the gendered nature of adventure writing that emerges in this discussion, for instance, helped to inform scholarship on the construction of imperial masculinity.<sup>18</sup> MacKenzie's analysis, moreover, influenced the recent development of 'ecocritical' and 'zoocritical' approaches to imperial literature, as interest in the environmental contexts of empire has intensified.<sup>19</sup> In John Miller's *Empire and the Animal Body*, MacKenzie's delineation of 'the Hunt' as 'a ritualised demonstration of mastery of colonial space' serves as a launching pad for Miller's own investigation of adventure narratives. In exploring their 'ecological imagination' – their vision of nature, land use and representation of animal-human relations – Miller emphasises the 'tensions, disturbances and complications' that emerge in seemingly transparent celebrations of the hunt.<sup>20</sup>

And yet, even if scholarship is increasingly addressing the complexities of imperial fiction, returning to MacKenzie's work reveals continued gaps. As Miller observes, the vast majority of writing

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<sup>18</sup> For other research on imperial fiction and masculinity, see Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventure in a Man's World* (London: Harper Collins, 1991); Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London: Routledge, 1997); and Bradley Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature, 1870–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Other key works addressing imperial masculinity include Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994); and John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> On the emerging field of 'postcolonial ecocriticism', see Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> John Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body: Violence, Identity and Ecology in Victorian Adventure Fiction* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 11, 31, and 3.

on the adventure genre, or the ‘imperial romance’, confines itself to a small number of now canonical authors.<sup>21</sup> A writer like Haggard attracts considerable attention for his works of ‘imperial gothic’, which support dominant literary narratives about the manifestation of anxieties in the popular culture of the fin-de-siècle.<sup>22</sup> For different reasons, Joseph Conrad equally sustains a scholarly industry, as his critical dialogue with the adventure tradition and his complex narration inspires literary scholars who embrace radical perspectives and experimental styles.<sup>23</sup> But many other adventure authors who do not so easily appeal to contemporary academic proclivities suffer continued disregard. Although Miller has turned towards Ballantyne, Henty, and others, arguing for their surprising ‘negotiation of space, identity, literary form and colonial power’, much work remains to be done on the wider corpus of adventure literature that stimulated and sustained interest in imperial domains.<sup>24</sup>

## **ii. Imperial Myth and the Icons of Empire: Heroic Biography**

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<sup>21</sup> Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the ‘imperial gothic’, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 227–53. Among the better-known discussions of Haggard’s fiction are Anne McClintock, ‘Maidens, Maps and Mines: *King Solomon’s Mines* and the Reinvention of Patriarchy in Colonial South Africa’, in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cheryl Walker (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), pp. 97–124; and Laura Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner, and Plaatje* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23–119. For monograph-length treatment, see Gerald Monsman, *H. Rider Haggard on the Imperial Frontier: The Political and Literary Contexts of his African Romances* (Greensboro, N.C.: ELT Press, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Important works on Conrad and imperialism include Andrea White, *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition: Construction and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Christopher GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, 30.



MacKenzie has consistently been preoccupied by the significance of what he calls ‘heroic myths’ of empire. While his work on juvenile fiction marks a key intervention into scholarship on popular literary culture, his interrogation of iconic imperial heroes who developed powerful reputations may seem of less obvious significance to literary studies. Yet across a number of essays, his discussions of the reputations of T. E. Lawrence, Sir Henry Havelock, General Gordon, and particularly of the missionary-explorer David Livingstone have engaged important questions of textual production and literary representation.

In examining such familiar figures, MacKenzie’s emphasis is emphatically not on their lives, but on what he calls their ‘afterlives’.<sup>25</sup> Drawing a distinction between the ‘hero’ and the ‘heroic myth’, he aims to shift attention away from biographical discussions of imperial figures to the process by which such individuals acquire archetypal status and ‘instrumental power’ that could be invoked by contemporaries and later generations. For MacKenzie, myths have active political agency, serving a role in justifying policy and even in ‘the rise of the imperial state’ itself.<sup>26</sup> They provide a powerful means of achieving ‘unity’ and ‘consensus’, and generally uphold the ‘dominant ideology’.<sup>27</sup> And yet, he argues, the myths surrounding imperial heroes had a certain flexibility. They were sufficiently open to interpretation to be mobilised across changing contexts and by a variety of interest groups.<sup>28</sup>

The literary significance of the turn to imperial heroes lies in MacKenzie’s account of the means by which their legacies were created and maintained. His investigation of Lawrence’s reputation, for

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<sup>25</sup> For his most recent discussion of imperial ‘afterlives’, see John M. MacKenzie, ‘Afterword’, in *Decolonising Imperial Heroes*, ed. Max Jones, Berny Sèbe, John Strachan, Bertrand Taithe, and Peter Yeandle, special issue of the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42 (2014), 969–79.

<sup>26</sup> John M. MacKenzie, ‘Heroic Myths of Empire’, in *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 112 and 114.

<sup>27</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Heroic Myths’, 112 and 115; and John M. MacKenzie, ‘David Livingstone: The Construction of the Myth’, in *Sermons and Battle Hymns*, eds. Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 27.

<sup>28</sup> MacKenzie, ‘David Livingstone: The Construction of the Myth’, 27; and MacKenzie, ‘Heroic Myths’, 115.

example, reveals that it was propagated by a network of media, including newspaper journalism, educational textbooks, and both ‘serious’ and popular biography.<sup>29</sup> In identifying the significance of the last of these, MacKenzie directs attention to a crucial imperial genre: the heroic life. This staple of Victorian publishing was both a product and perpetuator of the Carlylean approach to world history as ‘the biography of great men’.<sup>30</sup> These texts, furthermore, were a manifestation of the contemporary emphasis on the educational and moral value of what Geoffrey Cubitt calls the ‘exemplary life’.<sup>31</sup> Designed for younger and popular readerships, they upheld their subjects both as key historical actors and as inspirational models for emulation.

In assessing the ‘heroic life’ genre in various publications, MacKenzie delineates some of its major features. For the most part, these biographies do little to present complexity, instead distilling life narratives to iconic elements that maximize the symbolic potential of their subjects.<sup>32</sup> As in much biography of the age, unpalatable episodes and character flaws are downplayed. They are also, he argues, highly repetitive in nature. Reiteration served to compound heroic myths, with the market for such subjects sustaining biography after biography that largely covered the same body of material.<sup>33</sup> And yet, as MacKenzie shows in his study of Livingstone’s afterlife, these texts routinely appeared because of – rather than in spite of – their ‘tendency to obsolescence’; popular biographies often had immediate concerns, as they revisited heroic lives in search of their relevance to the contemporary imperial moment. Indeed, MacKenzie’s most interesting finding is perhaps the evolving nature of particular ‘biographical

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<sup>29</sup> John M. MacKenzie, ‘T. E. Lawrence: The Myth and the Message’, in *Literature and Imperialism*, ed. Robert Giddings (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 151.

<sup>30</sup> MacKenzie, ‘T. E. Lawrence’, 151.

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, ‘Introduction: Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives’, in *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives*, eds. Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1–21.

<sup>32</sup> MacKenzie, ‘David Livingstone: The Construction of the Myth’, 31; and MacKenzie, ‘Heroic Myths’, 115.

<sup>33</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Heroic Myths’, 124.

industr[ies]', which over the long durée could significantly reshape the meaning of politically powerful myths.<sup>34</sup>

From this key observation emerges a picture of a genre with considerable longevity. In MacKenzie's discussions of imperial afterlives, it becomes clear that the heroic life remained a mainstay of imperial literature until decolonisation, albeit with constant adaptation to the needs of the moment. This perspective on the genre has been elaborated upon in subsequent scholarship. My own survey of Livingstone's posthumous reputation situates the numerous biographies of the explorer in their socio-political context over a long period, showing how the imperial and national *mise en scène* influenced his textual reconstruction.<sup>35</sup> Adopting a 'metabiographical' methodology, this work focuses on what Nicolaas Rupke calls the 'ideological embeddedness of biographical portraits'. It is interested not simply in the subjective interpretations of individual biographers, but in the broader 'collective' patterns of meaning active in particular periods.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, my study of Livingstone's 'lives' aims to do more than identify prevailing images by also interrogating the political stakes of diverging representations. Competing versions of Livingstone co-existed at the same time, but they shared an interpretive context and took their meaning in relation to their imperial environment.

MacKenzie's account of heroic reputations – and the heroic life genre – has also been further developed by Berny Sèbe. In his comparative study of imperial heroes in Britain and France, Sèbe investigates the 'mechanics of hero making', or the ways in which they were 'promoted' and

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<sup>34</sup> MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone: The Construction of the Myth', 33; and John M. MacKenzie, 'David Livingstone and the Worldly Afterlife: Imperialism and Nationalism in Africa', in *David Livingstone and the Victorian Encounter with Africa*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1996), 203.

<sup>35</sup> Justin D. Livingstone, *Livingstone's 'Lives': A Metabiography of a Victorian Icon* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Nicolaas A. Rupke, *Alexander von Humboldt: A Metabiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 215 and 208.

‘disseminated’ by the development of print capitalism and mass media in the late nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> While Sèbe emphasises that the heroic cult depended on a range of ‘promotional channels’, he articulates the critical role that heroic publications played as improvements in mechanisation facilitated cheaper and quicker printing. If the press – with the rise of the new journalism and the illustrated newspaper – was instrumental in the initial formation of imperial heroes, it was printed books that prolonged their activity and turned ‘an ephemeral reputation into an enduring one’.<sup>38</sup> What Sèbe particularly adds to the discussion is an account of the ‘business’ of hero-making, the ‘capitalist drive’ that underpinned the culture industry responsible for perpetuating imperial myths. Alongside ideological and moral motivations, the construction of reputations was often a commercial enterprise for authors and publishers alike; heroic texts were efforts to negotiate the literary market and meet consumer preference.<sup>39</sup>

Despite this scholarship that has built on MacKenzie’s work, however, heroic and imperial ‘lives’ have received little attention from scholars interested in biographical writings. This is perhaps surprising, given that the theory and practice of biography has become a major area in literary studies. Critical discussions have, for instance, opened up questions of form, examining the proximity between biography and fictional and historical narratives. Biography is sometimes cast as a ‘hybrid’ or in-between genre with conflicting imperatives;<sup>40</sup> biographers may operate on an empiricist basis and aim to represent accurately the life in question, but they are also under a creative obligation to construct a compelling narrative. The impossibility of neutrality, moreover, and the inevitably incomplete record from which a life-narrative is constructed, mean that even the most ambitious biography is selective and partial.<sup>41</sup> These discussions,

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<sup>37</sup> Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists*, 3–4.

<sup>38</sup> Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists*, 132, 66–67.

<sup>39</sup> Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists*, 17, 296.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Michael Benton, *Literary Biography: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), xv–xvi, 30, and 35.

<sup>41</sup> Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12; and Miranda Seymour, ‘Shaping the Truth’, in *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, eds. Peter France and William St. Clair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 255 and 264.

however, have seldom engaged with the sort of popular and often transient biography on which imperial reputations thrived. Since much of this scholarship has developed under the auspices of ‘life-writing’, a field largely composed of literary scholars, attention has primarily been devoted to literary biography and autobiographical discourse; the nature of the field has resulted, suggests Ben Pimlott, in the wider neglect of ‘biographies of scientists or statesmen’ in the developing scholarly literature.<sup>42</sup>

There is, then, opportunity for greater conversation between imperial history and literary studies in order to produce more critical work on biographies of public and political figures, in particular those whose reputations were most ideologically charged. Taking a MacKenziean long view of heroic biography highlights the scope for historicist literary analysis. The persistence of the genre invites critics to assess the ways that the changing aesthetic and literary modes of biographical practice affected the narration of empire’s heroes. Critics might also follow biographical afterlives beyond the end of empire. In a recent volume, Max Jones and his co-authors prompt us to consider the ‘decolonising of imperial heroes’, or the process of reappraisal in the post-imperial period, which proves more complex and multidirectional than might be anticipated. Examining more recent patterns of ‘memorialisation and reinvention’ in biographical form, which range from postcolonial critique to imperial nostalgia, would offer fresh insight into the ongoing remembrance of the imperial past.<sup>43</sup>

### ***iii. Witnessing the World: Guide Books and the Missionary Record***

MacKenzie’s scholarship devotes attention to textual forms that witness the wider world and mediate it to domestic audiences. While this theme emerges in the juvenile adventure fiction and historical ‘lives’ already discussed, it is clearer in his examination of two literary modes designed to provide on-the-spot

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<sup>42</sup> Ben Pimlott, ‘Brushstrokes’, in *Lives for Sale: Biographers’ Tales*, ed. Mark Bostridge (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), 166.

<sup>43</sup> Max Jones, Berny Sèbe, John Strachan, Bertrand Taithe, and Peter Yeandle, ‘Decolonising Imperial Heroes: Britain and France’, in *Decolonising Imperial Heroes*, eds. Max Jones, Berny Sèbe, John Strachan, Bertrand Taithe, and Peter Yeandle, special issue of the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42 (2014), 809.

accounts of distant arenas. In his study of both Protestant missionary writings and British travel guides, MacKenzie examines crucial imperial genres that had previously received little substantial critical assessment.

MacKenzie's work on these genres reveals a preoccupation with spatial imaginations; 'imaginative geographies' – the meanings that texts give to place and landscape – are at the centre of his analysis.<sup>44</sup> In 'Missionaries, Science and the Environment in Nineteenth-Century Africa' (2003), MacKenzie examines how, 'in memoirs and biographies, missionaries constructed the African environment in ways they clearly regarded as central to their religious message'. He notes, for example, that much late-nineteenth-century African missionary writing drew on the garden as a 'powerful environmental metaphor'.<sup>45</sup> For missionaries, the 'garden represented geometric order, hydrographic and botanical experimentation'. It signified the arrival of modernity, the imposition of European orderliness, and the domestication of a resistant landscape. And yet the garden was primarily 'horticultural rather than agricultural'. It was a space that was aesthetic in nature rather than devoted solely to subsistence, signifying the nurturing investment that missionaries were making in the betterment of Africa and its peoples. Rich in biblical resonance, it inevitably recalled the book of Genesis; in bringing cultivation to a metaphorical desert, the emergence of a garden 'represented the rediscovery of an Edenic vision'.<sup>46</sup>

MacKenzie also explores the metaphorical value of European engineering and architecture in their appearances in the missionary record, where the European preference for straight lines is contrasted to the southern African tendency to construct circular buildings. To missionaries in Nyasaland, linear

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<sup>44</sup> John M. MacKenzie, 'Missionaries, Science and the Environment in Nineteenth-Century Africa', in *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880–1914*, ed. Andrew Porter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 130. On 'imaginative geographies' as '[r]epresentations of other places – of peoples and landscapes', see Derek Gregory, 'Imaginative Geographies', in *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), eds. Derek Gregory, Ron Johnston, Geraldine Pratt, Michael J. Watts, and Sarah Whatmore (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 369–71.

<sup>45</sup> MacKenzie, 'Missionaries, Science', 107 and 109.

<sup>46</sup> MacKenzie, 'Missionaries, Science', 110.

constructions ‘negat[ed] the unbridled circularity of nature’; ‘the road, the bridge, and the brick building’ were structures with ‘the power to keep nature at bay’. There was, moreover, a metaphysics at work in which straightness signified the ‘rational and logical’ as well as ‘simple and revelatory theology’.<sup>47</sup> For MacKenzie, a moral geography underpinned missionary design. In some writings, buildings were ‘described as books’ bearing ‘lessons and messages’ for the local populace. The ‘siting’ of missionary buildings, as well, could be endowed with moral significance. Where the land had previously been the site of ‘dark deeds’, missionaries could capitalise on the distinction between past and present and overlay the landscape with the redemptive meanings brought by new churches and buildings.<sup>48</sup>

MacKenzie was thus among the first scholars to take missionary textuality seriously.<sup>49</sup> He did not simply draw on missionary records as repositories of historical information, but rather paid close attention to their representative practices and significant metaphors. Indeed, although scholarship on missionaries has been developing steadily for several decades, there is still little work devoted specifically to their writings.<sup>50</sup> There have, to be sure, been some important contributions, notably Anna Johnston’s

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<sup>47</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Missionaries, Science’, 116.

<sup>48</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Missionaries, Science’, 120–21.

<sup>49</sup> MacKenzie was also among the first to address the connections between nineteenth-century missionaries and modern science. See also David N. Livingstone, ‘Scientific Inquiry and the Missionary Enterprise’, in *Participating in the Knowledge Society: Research Beyond the University Walls*, ed. Ruth Finnagan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50–64. For another discussion of missionary science in southern Africa, see Georgina H. Endfield and David J. Nash, ‘Drought, Desiccation and Discourse: Missionary Correspondence and Nineteenth-Century Climate Change in Central Southern Africa’, *Geographical Journal* 168 (2002), 33–47. Endfield and Nash examine missionary records as repositories of climate data and analyse the interpretive frameworks through which missionaries understood environmental change.

<sup>50</sup> The Comaroffs, who situated missionaries as ideological agents of colonialism, did much to lead research on missions and empire. See Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution (vol. 1): Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of

discussion of the ‘hybrid genres’ of missionary discourse, which in her view incorporate ‘ethnography, linguistics, and geographical description’.<sup>51</sup> But assessment of the diversity and longevity of missionary output, including memoir, journalism and fiction, has been in short supply, in spite of the fact that such publications were long among the most significant sources of information about distant parts of the globe.<sup>52</sup> MacKenzie positioned his own work in a developing body of scholarship that was complicating previous studies of missionaries that had reduced them without qualification to agents of imperialism.<sup>53</sup> Future research might take a similar approach to missionary textuality, attending to its participation in imperial discourse while remaining alert to its complicated socio-politics. Reading missionary writings requires attention not only to their investment in an imperial worldview – and their preoccupations with religious and social conversion – but to what Dana Robert identifies as an aspiration to ‘convert’ the institutions and ideologies of colonialism itself.<sup>54</sup>

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Chicago Press, 1991). Other important contributions include Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); A. N. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); and Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Anna Johnson, *Missionary Writing and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32. For other discussions of missionary literature, see Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourse: Negotiating Difference in the British Empire, C. 1840-95* (New York: Palgrave, 2012); and Robbie McLaughlan, *Re-imagining the ‘Dark Continent’ in Fin De Siècle Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 24–39.

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey Cox suggests that across the nineteenth century, the ‘most important popular source of information about non-Western people...came from churches, chapels, and Sunday Schools’. Jeffrey Cox, ‘Were Victorian Nonconformists the Worst Imperialists of All’, *Victorian Studies* 46 (2004), 246.

<sup>53</sup> MacKenzie, ‘Missionaries, Science’, 129.

<sup>54</sup> Dana L. Robert, ‘Introduction’, in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4 and 20.



MacKenzie's interest in spatial representation emerges once more in his recent work on British guide books. These texts, which flourished from the 1830s, 'unveil a complete mindset' in their aspiration to 'offer the first complete descriptions of the territories and regions to which they were devoted'. What particularly interests MacKenzie are the meanings that the 'gazetteering gaze' of guide books work to establish.<sup>55</sup> Taking the handbooks to India published by John Murray as an example, he argues that their organisation by railway tour had the effect of mapping a British 'network' onto the sub-continent; as depicted in the guidebook, India was to be experienced through a western technology of modernisation. The destinations that were prioritised, moreover, tended towards those that were closely connected to the British presence; in privileging 'imperial sites of memory' in architecture and sculpture, the guidebooks imposed a British geography of significance on the Indian landscape.<sup>56</sup> These priorities were clearly shaped by a British view of history. The guidebooks continually historicised the locations of the tour, and by zeroing in on sites of imperial import endorsed a narrative of progress and modernity that provided 'legitimising reassurance' to British readers. For MacKenzie, the travel guide was an imperial genre that manifested a 'relentless textualisation of dominion'.<sup>57</sup>

As in his discussion of missionary discourse, MacKenzie once again investigated the cultural functions of a body of texts that had received little analysis for their expression of imperial ideology. Over the past twenty years, work on colonial travel and empire has flourished, with travel genres serving as fertile sources for both those committed to postcolonial reading practices and those concerned with exploring their limitations.<sup>58</sup> Yet while the prescriptive gaze of the guidebook has interested scholars of

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<sup>55</sup> John M. MacKenzie, 'Empires of Travel: British Guide Books and Cultural Imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries', in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity, and Conflict*, ed. John K. Walton (Clevedon, Buffalo: Channel View, 2005), 21.

<sup>56</sup> MacKenzie, 'Empires of Travel', 24–25.

<sup>57</sup> MacKenzie, 'Empires of Travel', 25–26.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London: Zed Books, 1999); James S. Duncan and Derek Gregory, eds., *Writes of Passage: Reading*

tourism, the imperial contexts of the genre's development have not been given the scrutiny they deserve.<sup>59</sup> In part, this is because the field of travel writing studies has generally privileged subjective experience, showing preference for modern travel books with strong prose narratives and first-person retrospective narration. What Carl Thompson identifies as 'functional forms of travel account' are either excluded on the basis of a restricted definition of 'travel writing' or overlooked in favour of narratives with more stylistic appeal.<sup>60</sup> MacKenzie's effort to dissect the 'geographical exhibitionary complex' at the heart of the guidebook, then, marks an important effort to evaluate one such functional form and the means by which it transmitted imperialist mentalities.<sup>61</sup> It is also significant that his discussion is not confined solely to the cultural and political effects of the travel guide during the period of high empire. In turning to an under-studied genre, MacKenzie once again argues for its protracted duration and for the longevity of the ideology it conveys. Since imperial guidebooks remained largely consistent in form and perspective until the 1950s and 60s, they consolidate his longstanding argument that the imperial worldview continued beyond the Second World War and even into the era of decolonisation.<sup>62</sup>

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*Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 1999); and Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, eds., *Travel Writing, Form and Empire; The Poetics and Politics of Mobility* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> For scholarship on the guidebook, see Barbara Schaff, 'John Murray's Handbooks to Italy: Making Tourism Literary', in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 106–18; and Gráinne Goodwin and Gordon Johnston, 'Guidebook Publishing in the Nineteenth Century: John Murray's *Handbooks for Travellers*', *Studies in Travel Writing* 17 (2013), 43–61.

<sup>60</sup> Thompson astutely notes that the distinction between 'aesthetic and functional' forms of travel text is simplistic and problematic. He also discusses the respective merits and problems of 'exclusive and inclusive' definitions of travel writing. Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 15 and 13-27.

<sup>61</sup> MacKenzie, 'Empires of Travel', 35.

<sup>62</sup> MacKenzie, 'Empires of Travel', 35-36. See also John M. MacKenzie, 'Empire Travel Guides and the Imperial Mind-set from the Mid-Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Centuries', in *The British*

In his discussions of both missionary writing and guidebooks, MacKenzie reveals an impetus to interrogate textual forms that would not conventionally attract imperial historians or indeed literary critics. Yet his analyses of these rather overlooked source materials afford insight into the moral and political meanings that they overlay on the landscapes that they purport to witness. Ultimately, MacKenzie is attentive to the ways that these genres order and mediate the world for their readers. By taking an extended historical view, he is attuned to the implicit politics that they carry across the long durée, as their representative practices and formal features retain significant continuities over time.

#### *iv. New Directions*

Engagement with textuality has long been a feature of MacKenzie's work; in one of his earliest books, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (1986), co-authored with Jeffrey Richards, he offers a synoptic survey of the representation of the train station in literature and film from Émile Zola to contemporary cinema.<sup>63</sup> Under MacKenzie's editorship, moreover, Manchester University Press's *Studies in Imperialism* series has frequently included literary perspectives, such as Robert H. Macdonald's *The Language of Empire* (1994), Jeffrey Richards's edited collection *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (1989), and Tim Youngs's *Travellers in Africa* (1994).<sup>64</sup> Such titles are in the minority amidst a

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*Abroad since the Eighteenth Century Volume 2: Experiencing Imperialism*, eds. Martin Farr and Xavier Guégan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 116–33.

<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 340–83.

<sup>64</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880–1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); and Tim Youngs, *Travellers in Africa: British Travelogues, 1850–1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). More recent literary perspectives include my own *Livingstone's 'Lives'* and Carol Polsgrove's *Ending British Rule in Africa: Writers in a Common Cause* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

preponderance of more traditional historical works, but their presence reflects MacKenzie's interest in literary representation and tendency to range widely across textual sources.

In this chapter, my aim has been to disclose something of MacKenzie's literary imagination. In reading his work from the perspective of a literary critic, I have sought to chart a course through his scholarship that both registers his influence on the study of popular imperial literature and identifies areas where more work is needed. By addressing imperial fiction, MacKenzie launched research into a neglected genre and fostered discussion of imperial masculinity, the culture of adventure, and the ideological work enacted by juvenile and popular texts. His analysis of the heroic myth likewise provoked discussions of the print media that promoted imperial reputations and of particular biographical 'industries' that sustained them. In exploring the missionary record and travel guides, MacKenzie exposed the imaginative power of seemingly unimaginative texts, and stimulated the interrogation of cultural forms that mediated the imperial world to domestic audiences.

MacKenzie's work, of course, is less a point of termination than one of invitation; it does not conclude discussions but rather offers directions for future research. Indeed, MacKenzie's contributions highlight areas of imperial textuality that require further scrutiny and which might be taken up in literary studies. Despite a general turn toward popular culture, literary scholars are yet to devote significant attention to the wider corpus of imperial adventure fiction, to the commemorative and political function of imperial biography, or to artefacts like the missionary memoir or travel guide. Following the declaration in the 1990s that 'all texts are our province', literary studies has not been restrictive in its purview, but the relative disregard of such sources perhaps reflects a misplaced sense that they offer few challenges or rewards to practitioners of close reading.<sup>65</sup> It is also due, no doubt, to the fact that literary scholars interested in empire have been more inclined to take direction from postcolonial criticism than imperial history. Such orientation, I would suggest, is a legacy of the polarisation of colonial discourse analysis

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<sup>65</sup> Catherine Belsey, 'All Texts are our Province', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 30 January 1988. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/all-texts-are-our-province/105709.article>.

and imperial history that resulted from their early interactions, following what many historians perceived as an unwelcome intrusion into their discipline.<sup>66</sup>

In MacKenzie's case, despite the fact that his early work on popular literature anticipated later postcolonial scholarship, his book-length riposte to Edward Said ensured that he was interpreted in some quarters of literary and cultural studies as an exemplar of conservative and traditional imperial historiography.<sup>67</sup> There is, of course, an irony in this perception, given that MacKenzie's emphasis on the influence of empire on British metropolitan culture was widely regarded within imperial history as a new and radical departure. As Leonardi has recently argued, moreover, MacKenzie's relationship with postcolonialism is actually more complex than simply oppositional. His challenge to Edward Said should be read as refinement rather than outright rejection, an effort to 'complicate rather than to reverse Said's depiction'.<sup>68</sup> Although MacKenzie's criticism of a field that he sees as homogenising and insufficiently historicist should not be minimised, his insistence on the pervasive and implicit effects of imperial power

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<sup>66</sup> For a nuanced early discussion of what some historians saw as the 'colonization of imperial studies' by postcolonial scholars, see Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24 (1996), 345–63.

<sup>67</sup> Bart Moore-Gilbert, for instance, suggests that MacKenzie's response to postcolonialism reveals 'the deep antipathy which the conservatives feel towards what they view as an upstart'. Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Postcolonial Cultural Studies and Imperial Historiography: Problems of Interdisciplinarity', *Interventions* 1 (1999), 399. Ali Behdad sees in MacKenzie 'a marked suspicion of theory'. Ali Behdad, 'Orientalism Matters', *Modern Fiction Studies* 56 (2010), 710. Taoufiq Sakhkhane describes MacKenzie as representative of an 'exclusivist mentality prevalent in Western academia', where disciplines are 'privileged fiefdoms'. Taoufiq Sakhkhane, *Spivak and Postcolonialism: Exploring Allegations of Textuality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11. For a discussion of the quite different representations of MacKenzie that emerged in response to his criticism of Edward Said and during his debate with Bernard Porter, see Leonardi, 'Power of Culture', 58–60.

<sup>68</sup> Leonardi, 'Power of Culture', 58.

and his ‘understanding of imperialism and colonialism *as* culture’ clearly resonate with perspectives in postcolonial studies.<sup>69</sup>

More widely, of course, the boundaries between postcolonialism and imperial history have become increasingly porous. The ‘new imperial history’, which has developed over the past two decades, emerged out of the postcolonial turn and brought with it a new ‘theoretical and political orientation’.<sup>70</sup> This interdisciplinary research has sought to challenge established modes of historical enquiry and expand their remit, not least by foregrounding concerns including gender, race, class, and space.<sup>71</sup> But if the result of this work is that postcolonial studies and imperial history can no longer be regarded as entirely distinct approaches to empire’s past, literary scholars could extend this exchange on their part by developing research avenues on textuality promoted by historians. As I have sought to show in this chapter, taking a cue from MacKenzie’s approach to popular imperial writing would encourage a wider interrogation of genres that seldom receive critical analysis and currently occupy only marginal space in literary histories.<sup>72</sup> Taking these texts more seriously as sites of colonial discourse, and securing their place in postcolonial literary studies, would enrich our perspective on the imperial archive and the textual cultures of empire.

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<sup>69</sup> Leonardi, ‘Power of Culture’, 63 and 51.

<sup>70</sup> Alan Lester, ‘Spatial Concepts and the Historical Geographies of British Colonialism’, in *Writing Imperial Histories*, ed. Andrew S. Thompson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 120–21. A detailed assessment of the influence postcolonial studies has had on imperial history is offered in Dane Kennedy, ‘Postcolonialism and History’, in *Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Graham Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 467–88.

<sup>71</sup> Lester discusses the overlap and tensions between the ‘new imperial history’ and approaches in the Studies in Imperialism series. Lester, ‘Spatial Concepts’, 120–24.

<sup>72</sup> Brantlinger’s *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* is notable for its range of sources, which include missionary records, emigration narratives and historical biography. Patrick Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Closer convergence between literary studies and imperial history would also open several more specific avenues for research on popular imperial literature. For instance, the ‘four-nations’ approach to empire that MacKenzie has done much to champion could equally be opened to questions of literary production and representation. This project complicates the subject of ‘British’ imperial history by emphasising the distinctive relationships that each of Britain’s constituent nations had with empire and with each other. Arguing that involvement in empire consolidated distinct national identities rather than dissolving them in favour of a broader British identity, the four-nations approach moves beyond ‘simple bilateral metropole-periphery relations’ and instead orients analysis to the ‘multilateral relationships’ that constituted the imperial project.<sup>73</sup> Critical approaches to imperial texts might do more to identify the similarities and differences among the respective imperial literary traditions of each of the British archipelago’s four nations. Without overlooking the patterns of racial othering that have occupied criticism (for good reason), they might also investigate the ways in which imperial settings and plots provide space to negotiate intra-British identities.<sup>74</sup>

In a similar vein, MacKenzie’s efforts to develop comparative work on empires could also provoke further study. This comparative perspective has primarily addressed European imperialisms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but has also begun to range across historical periods and national

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<sup>73</sup> John M. MacKenzie, ‘Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English Worlds? A Four-Nation Approach to the History of the British Empire’, *History Compass* 6 (2008), 1244.

<sup>74</sup> Simon Potter has developed a four-nations approach to the press as a means of reporting the British Empire. See Simon J. Potter, ‘Introduction: Empire, Propaganda and Public Opinion’, in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857–1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004), 11–22. In the same collection, MacKenzie argues for the importance of ‘pluralistic’ analysis of the Irish, Scots, Welsh and English newspaper coverage of empire. John MacKenzie, ‘The Press and the Dominant Ideology of Empire’, in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857–1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004), 37.

contexts.<sup>75</sup> Literary critical work could extend this research, by situating modern British imperial literature in an international environment in a period of competing imperialisms. Such work would compare the forms and genres that disseminated imperial ideology in particular nation states, as well as their respective thematic concerns and representational practices. It would, moreover, identify trans-European patterns of composition, publication and consumption, as well as the distinguishing features of various national traditions. Ultimately, such comparison would serve to highlight shared imperial sensibilities and to focalise the construction of distinctive national-imperial identities.<sup>76</sup> In following MacKenzie's directive that imperialism did not consist only of dominative racial relationships, both four-nations and comparative approaches to imperial literary production might productively supplement prevailing postcolonial perspectives.

Finally, literary studies might engage more fully with scholarship that argues for the 'persistence of empire in metropolitan culture'.<sup>77</sup> This is perhaps the most significant theme interweaving its way through MacKenzie's work on imperial textuality. His varied analyses – of adventure fiction, heroic biography, missionary writing and travel guides – directly signal the diverse genres that transmitted and popularised the imperial ethos. But the importance of this approach is heightened by his recurring claim

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<sup>75</sup> For MacKenzie's interest in comparative studies of European imperialism, see John MacKenzie, ed., *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). His inclination towards a broader comparative approach is exemplified by the recent *Encyclopedia of Empire*, which covers empires from the ancient to the modern world. John M. MacKenzie and Nigel R. Dalziel, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Empire* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2016).

<sup>76</sup> Elements of a comparative perspective appear in Martyn Cornick, 'Representations of Britain and British Colonialism in French Adventure Fiction, 1870–1914', *French Cultural Studies* 17 (2006), 137–54. Cornick examines the ways in which French adventure fiction constructed a national-imperial identity in opposition to the British.

<sup>77</sup> John M. MacKenzie, 'The Persistence of Empire in Metropolitan Culture', in *British Culture and the End of Empire*, ed. Stuart Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 21–36.



that these genres were enduring phenomena whose later manifestations should not be discounted. Critics might follow MacKenzie's prompting by embarking on a more serious investigation of what we could call late imperial genres than has been undertaken to date. Research on British literature at the 'end of empire' is only now developing apace. Matthew Whittle observes in his recent work on post-war fiction that responses to the complex contexts of decolonisation and Britain's uneven imperial decline – often by former members of the colonial service – have generally been regarded as peripheral to the literary developments of the 1950s and 60s and accordingly afforded little consideration.<sup>78</sup> While postcolonial criticism has focused on the depictions of empire in British writings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the subsequent development of anticolonial literature in post-colonial states, it has done much less to interrogate the impact that Britain's declining empire had on the metropolitan literature of the late imperial period.<sup>79</sup> The situation is of course compounded in the case of neglected genres like adventure narratives, imperial biographies, and missionary memoirs which all persisted, often in nostalgic forms, into the mid-twentieth century and beyond. Much more work is certainly needed on their iterations in the context of decolonisation. If decolonisation is best understood not as a direct or continuous passage towards imperial retreat but rather one marked by 'unevenness and uncertainty' – or, as MacKenzie puts it, by a 'complicated mix of implosions, explosions, and small sputterings' over several decades – literary studies might offer critical accounts of how late imperial forms registered and responded to this changing global environment.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Matthew Whittle, *Post-War British Literature and the 'End of Empire'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 4 and 8.

<sup>79</sup> Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, 5–6.

<sup>80</sup> Whittle, *Post-War British Literature*, 12; and MacKenzie, 'Persistence of Empire', 23.