Introduction

Let me begin by summarising the argument of this book in one paragraph. The first generation of European intellectuals to encounter Darwin's *The Origin of Species* grew up with a radically altered view of human nature. Accepting the animal basis of existence carried the implication that inner urges to rage, fight, pillage and rape were not the snares of the devil but biologically inescapable attributes of the human condition born of the age-old struggle for existence. One of that generation, Sigmund Freud, built a new model of the psyche and society on that premise. On his reckoning civilisation itself depended on the effective repression of the wild and potentially destructive impulses of the inner self. Others born about the same time saw parallels between the mission of imperialism to subdue savage peoples and the civilised individual's need to keep a lid on the savage urges welling up from within. A number of conservative imperialists active in the creative arts exploited that parallel in works whose aesthetic power arises from the contest between the order they upheld in their politics and the countervailing forces of savagery: a contest whose outcome is always in doubt until the last moment, partly because the agents of rebellion and disorder exercise such a weirdly compelling attraction. Joseph Conrad would term this 'the fascination of the abomination'. A subsidiary argument is that the exaggerated conservatism in politics and dress affected by these artists betrayed an outsized anxiety about succumbing to the disruptive, disorderly forces harboured deep within their being. A recurring theme in the creative work of the Edwardian imperialists is the white man with the ability to enter so completely into the inner world of subject peoples that he becomes one with them. When they encountered a real-life war hero, T. E. Lawrence, who appeared to have lived out that fantasy, they sought him out and hailed him as the saviour of empire. His refusal to play the role expected of him exposed the fallacy in the analogy they had drawn between the practice of imperialism and the individual superego's struggle to command the unruly id that lurked within the psyche.

While this study necessarily ranges across the subject matter of several disciplines, I approach my subject matter primarily as a historian of ideas, economics and politics, paying little attention to the rules that govern professional writing for literary scholars, musicologists, psychoanalysts or architects. Literary critics may well reproach me for flirting with what they call the intentional fallacy in my treatment of fiction; the musicologists and architects, for departing from the canons of formal analysis; and the psychoanalysts, for treating Freudian theory as an historical artefact rather than a demonstrable body of knowledge. My defence is that I do not aim to make substantive contributions to any of those disciplines.

Scholars of the new field of masculinity studies may find the book useful because of the very masculine character of the Edwardian imperialists and their creative works.[1] Significantly, no woman figures as the central subject of any work by these men; when women do appear they figure as objects of desire, matrons or creatures requiring protection. Even the architect Herbert Baker took scant notice of women or their domestic sphere in his buildings. On the other hand, the masculine pursuits of hunting, fishing, fighting, ruling, sailing and exploring are prominent themes. There is, moreover, no female counterpart to the late-Victorian and Edwardian literature of exotic adventure for reasons that have yet to be adequately explicated.

It should be emphasised that the book makes no claim to explain everything about the work of the artists selected for study. Its modest and limited aim is to point out that at the turn of the twentieth century the idea of imperialism resonated with the new concept of the divided psyche that Freud did so much to popularise. This gave some members of Freud's generation extra-political motivations to explore the ramifications of imperialism in creative work. The best of that work operates at a different level from the straightforward political tract. That does not, however, mean that these creations had nothing to do with the culture of imperialism. Otherwise they would not have been so popular. That they outshone simpler invocations of imperial patriotism demonstrates that the culture of imperialism was itself a complex affair. The disturbing, yet oddly thrilling idea that ordinary Americans and Europeans harboured secret, subversive inner selves that required repression akin to that inflicted on far-flung subject peoples undermined the pseudo-scientific doctrines that trumpeted the superiority of a pure white race. As Lionel Trilling put it, Freud had discovered that man contained 'a kind of hell within him from which rise everlastingly the impulses which threaten his civilization'.[2] Imagining that a dark racial stranger seething with animal passions lurked in a hidden corner of one's own being must unsettle the most outwardly self-assured white supremacist. Adolf Hitler admitted as much when he asked his table talk circle if it had ever occurred to them that the Nazi project extended to killing the Jew within themselves.

It was, of course, possible for artists to take dramatically different attitudes to imperialism as a metaphor for the suppression of a turbulent inner self. Instead of agreeing with Freud that civilisation required repression of the id, an artist might be inclined instead to forget civilisation and let the inner savage out. This proposition operates as a key marker of modernism in early-twentieth-century art. Picasso sought out the primitive in the form of African masks and fitted them to the faces of his *Demoiselles d'Avignon*. He portrayed himself as a bull and a goat. James Joyce tried to render without moral judgement the soundless stream of disconnected thoughts and words that ran through the minds of characters in his *Ulysses*. Stravinsky unleashed torrents of frenzied rhythm in *Rite of Spring*. Darius Milhaud used the jazz idioms born in Chicago, New Orleans and Harlem to invoke *La Creation du Monde*. Conservatives and imperialists did not supply much of the audience for such experiments (unlike Fascists, who conducted some well-known flirtations with modernism). Modernist tastes in art more commonly ran alongside support for internationalism and sympathy for colonised peoples.

The subjects of this book personally set their faces against modernism. That does not mean they were uninterested in innovation and experimentation. Various critics have called attention to modernist elements in the work of Conrad, Baker, Kipling and Elgar. The men themselves, however, all proclaimed in various ways their hostility to modernism. Buchan found 'the rebels and experimentalists for the most part left me cold'.[3] When Conrad beheld the collection of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings hanging in the apartment of Van Gogh's friend, Paul Gachet, he thought them the products of a lunatic asylum.[4] Elgar showed no interest in Stravinsky; he turned down invitations to meet Schoenberg and Ravel.[5] Having found classicism, Herbert Baker sought no further revelations and, as a result, found himself scorned as a vandal and a man of the past by architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner, Britain's self-appointed champion of modernism. This shared antipathy to the avant-garde was a matter of temperament rather than age. The post-impressionists were their contemporaries. Frank Lloyd Wright was only five years Baker's junior and came out of the same Arts and Crafts movement, yet struck out in dramatic new directions after 1900. Leoš Janáček, three years older than Elgar, emerged from the chrysalis of Czech musical nationalism as a modernist butterfly.

This raises the question of personality as a possible common thread linking their approach to imperialism, politics and creative work. Friends and acquaintances universally remarked on their reserved and undemonstrative demeanour. And while it is no surprise to find them photographed in the fashions of their time, they all incline towards an excessive gentlemanly punctiliousness in dress. All acquired country properties where they appeared to live like landed gentry (although only Haggard went in for practical agriculture). Conrad revelled in his Elizabethan residence, where he 'could feel like a country squire, master of his small manor house'.[6] Sculptor Jacob Epstein objected to depictions of Conrad as 'an open-necked, romantic, out-of-door type of person': 'In appearance Conrad was the very opposite. His clothes were immaculately conventional, and his collar enclosed his neck like an Iron Maiden's vice or garrotter's grip. He was worried if his hair and beard were not trim and neat as became a sea captain. There was nothing shaggy or Bohemian about him.'[7] Elgar flummoxed young Arnold Bax on their first meeting: 'Hatless, dressed in rough tweeds and riding boots, his appearance was rather that of a retired army officer turned gentleman farmer than an eminent and almost morbidly highly strung artist. One almost expected him to sling a gun from his back and drop a brace of pheasants on the ground.'[8] None affected the artistic manner. No capes, berets or patriarchal beards. No divorces or public liaisons. They steered clear of literary and artistic circles. Only Buchan and Kipling ventured into autobiography in their own lifetimes – under very unrevealing titles. Kipling offered *Something of Myself*; Buchan chose *Memory Hold-the-Door*, implying that much was concealed. Haggard left the sealed manuscript of *The Days of My Life* with instructions that it not be published until after his death. The closest Baker came to self-revelation was a book on his patron: *Cecil Rhodes, by His Architect*. Elgar found no difficulty resisting the publisher who pestered him for an autobiography.[9]

Admirers of their work marvelled at the mismatch between the public personae and the character of their creations. Henry Miller put his finger on the 'duality in Rider Haggard … An earthbound individual, conventional in his ways, orthodox in his beliefs … this man who is reticent and reserved, English to the core, one might say, reveals through his "romances" a hidden nature, a hidden being, a hidden lore which is amazing'.[10] Perceptive critics could see beneath Elgar's glacial reserve 'a man of nerves. As he raises the baton, which he holds between his thumb and first two fingers, as one might take hold of a pen, he seems to quiver with excitement … As one might expect from these manifestations of a febrile temperament, his orchestral renderings are marked by waves of emotion.'[11] Ernest Newman remarked of his violin concerto that 'human feeling so nervous and subtle as this had never before spoken in English orchestral music'.[12] Angus Wilson saw that behind the apparently unselfconscious jingoism of Kipling's patriotism lay the ability to evoke 'the most powerful nightmares of the precariousness of a ruling group'.[13] Michael Keath, who made a most insightful study of Herbert Baker's South African architectural practice, found 'his private life almost impenetrable … and a full biographical picture of Baker, the man, almost impossible to depict'.[14] A young Scot who had read his way into Buchan's fiction was moved to ask, after hearing that prim, reserved lecturer speak in public: 'Is this wonderful pagan of *The Grove of Ashtaroth*, the man who revels in travel and enterprise? And where, between the adventurer and the man of affairs, does the elder of St Columba's[15] fit in? Who is this person who wears so many masks, and under which mask may he himself be found?'[16] If others could so readily imagine a hidden self beneath the disguises, the tortured souls within must often have risen to confront them as they stood before their shaving mirrors. All are known to have suffered moods of bleak despondency. Five are known to have come close to serious mental breakdowns. Elgar's first flush of late-blooming success – the period of his *Pomp and Circumstance* marches – coincided with a period of inner blackness, when, according to his wife, he often spoke of suicide.[17] Haggard entered the slough of despond following the unexpected death of his son, Jock, a tribulation he attributed to divine retribution for his carnal sins. 'Then in truth I descended into Hell.'[18] John Buchan, after the death of his brothers, fell prey to depression and an assortment of ailments that caused him at length to consult a psychoanalyst.[19] Kipling, however deeply he may have been affected by the death of his daughter from whooping cough at age seven and his son who went missing in action on the Western Front in 1915, was in fact a lifelong melancholic. Well before he married, he suffered some sort of mental crisis that became a matter of public knowledge when papers announced that 'Mr. Rudyard Kipling has broken down from overwork.'[20] Conrad's breakdown in 1910 took him to the edge of madness, engaging in audible conversations with the imaginary characters of his novel *Under Western Eyes*.[21]

Such an arresting and literal case of the author in his work rarely comes along. It was enough to inspire Bernard Meyer to attempt a psychoanalytic biography of Conrad.[22] Others have tried a similar approach to the works of Kipling, Buchan and Haggard. Repressed homosexuality has been suggested as a motivating force in all of them. Looking for the troubling and conflicted content of their subconscious minds is tempting but ultimately fruitless. We have too little to go on. Unable to put them on the analyst's couch, we can only guess at the causes of their inner turbulence. Their childhood experiences and relations with their parents were diverse. Haggard and Elgar had mothers with literary aspirations, whom they idolised, and fathers with whom their relations were more distant. Buchan and Kipling seem to have doted on both their parents. Conrad lost an adored mother when he was a child and sat by the bedside of the dying father who had provided the whole of his education up to age eleven. Oedipal themes aplenty figure prominently in the lives and work of these artists, but they play out in different ways. Angus Wilson was right in one respect, when he wrote in regard to Kipling that 'Freudianism is too easy … He was a gentle-violent man, a man of depressions and hilarity, holding his despairs in with an almost superhuman stoicism. Manic-depressive does no more than repeat this in big words.'[23] Albert Guerard hit on another kind of psychological significance when he asked, 'Was Conrad a psychoanalytic novelist *sans le savoir*?', adding, perceptively, that 'His distaste for Freud proves no more than his distaste for Dostoievski.'[24] This goes for all the subjects of this book. They call Freud to mind less because they are suitable subjects for treatment than because they shared his fundamental assumptions about the psyche and society. They endorsed Freud's contention that repression is necessary for civilisation and extended it to the mission of empire.

Without forming a self-conscious group like the Pre-Raphaelites or the Vienna Secession, they found each other, touching each other's lives in a variety of ways. Close friends who maintained a decades-long friendship, Haggard and Kipling collaborated on the plot for his novel *The Ghost Kings*, 'writing down our ideas in alternate sentences upon the same sheet of foolscap'.[25] Elgar finally fulfilled a long-cherished hope in the midst of the First World War with his patriotic setting for Kipling's *Fringes of the Fleet*. Young John Buchan marvelled at the 'savage glory' of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*.[26] Thanks to their joint patron, Cecil Rhodes, Herbert Baker began his association with Kipling when the poet was in residence at Cecil Rhodes' Cape Town estate, where the magnate had put Woolsack Cottage (another Baker design) at the poet's disposal for the rest of his life. Later they corresponded about concepts for Rhodes Memorial. Baker renewed his acquaintance with Buchan at Elsfield, his mansion near Oxford, where the architect designed memorials for a much-loved family servant. They would also have met on many occasions at Rhodes House, Oxford, which Baker designed for the Rhodes Trust. Whether Conrad knew or cared about Baker or Elgar is doubtful, but he certainly kept up with fellow authors.

He pointedly refused, when invited, to disparage Kipling and knew his work well enough to complain in 1899 that young John Buchan's short story, 'The Far Islands', looked like a rehash of Kipling's much earlier 'Finest Story in the World'.[27] Later, Kipling and Conrad are known to have corresponded, though none of the letters appear to have survived.[28]

Individual chapters in this book explore in depth the relationship of these artists with conservatism and imperialism, movements that defy easy generalisations in this period. It might have seemed true enough in 1882, as a character declaims in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*, that

> Nature always does contrive – Fal, lal, la
> That every boy and every gal
> That's born into the world alive
> Is either a little Liberal
> Or else a little Conservative.

However, the presumptions about party affiliations that governed British politics during the long rivalry between William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli were about to shatter. Gladstone won the general election of 1880, having promised an end to overseas imperial adventures. Two years later his government invaded Egypt to ensure control of the Suez Canal – the start of an occupation that would last long into the twentieth century. By 1886 his Liberal party had split over another imperial issue, Home Rule for Ireland. The dissident Liberal Unionists comprised a most unlikely group of political bedfellows, ranging from bigoted anti-Catholics to radicals like the fiery former Mayor of Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain. At the same time serious socialism raised its head for the first time in British politics. The 1880s saw the formation of a Marxist party, H. M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, and the middle-class Fabian Society, as well as the entry into parliament of socialist Robert Cunninghame Graham, who contested the general election of 1886 for the Scottish Labour Party. For a time both the Liberal and Conservative parties courted radical support in an effort to win working-class votes. Imperialists were also to be found on all sides of politics.

The vicissitudes of public life for imperialists of this era are well illustrated in the career of Alfred Milner, whose figure became something of a rallying point for most of the characters in this book during the first two decades of the twentieth century.[29] Born in 1854 to a physician of modest means, he won a scholarship to Oxford, where he shone as a brilliant student, attracting the attention of Benjamin Jowett and T. H. Green, who were reformulating the intellectual and moral foundations of liberalism. Next he joined forces with the social and educational reformer, Arnold Toynbee. Milner would maintain a lifelong association with Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, which carried on his friend's work. He also developed a strong interest in socialism, giving lectures on the subject. Within a few years he had drifted into journalism, working for W. T. Stead's crusading *Pall Mall Gazette*. This led in turn to an unsuccessful bid to be elected to parliament as a Liberal in the general election of 1885. Indignation at the failure to save General Gordon at Khartoum and opposition to Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bill led Milner to join the Liberal Unionists in the historic split of 1886. Through the patronage of Unionist G. J. Goschen, he secured a post as Director General of Accounts in Egypt. From there he went on to a series of important public service appointments. Meanwhile his political philosophy had undergone further development, under the influence of Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (1894), which argued that nations, races and empires now competed for survival in the same way that individuals and species had done in ages past. About the same time Milner met Cecil Rhodes and some of his key associates, beginning an association with African affairs that culminated in his appointment as High Commissioner for South Africa in 1897. Here his autocratic tendencies came increasingly to the fore as he pushed inexorably for extinction of the independence of the Transvaal Republic. When negotiations failed, Milner sent British soldiers marching to Pretoria. Long before hostilities ended, he installed himself as virtual dictator of the conquered territory. Realising he had little chance of recruiting experienced men to his staff, he decided to go for youth and brains. After reading an article by John Buchan in the *Spectator*, he invited him to come to South Africa as his private secretary.[30] Just before leaving Cape Town, Milner visited Herbert Baker, encouraging him to come up to Johannesburg because 'the new colonies wanted architectural advice'.[31] A few years later he read with viceregal satisfaction Kipling's defence of his work in 'The Pro-Consuls (Lord Milner)'.

Back in England Milner persevered with the perverse mix of contrary tendencies that had marked his previous career. He was for a time numbered among the salon of so-called Coefficients whom the Fabian socialists Beatrice and Sidney Webb had gathered to discuss contemporary questions of empire and international military rivalry. Others in the company included Bertrand Russell and W. Pember Reeves, the New Zealand prime minister famed for his government's experiments in social welfare and state ownership. When Elinor Glyn published her book *Three Weeks*, which featured an adulterous affair consummated on a tiger skin, Milner sent the novelist a real tiger skin as a token of his appreciation.[32] While serving as master of the Anglo-Colonial Masonic Lodge, he maintained his links to north-east Africa as chairman of the

Bank of Egypt, even as he meddled in Spanish copper mines through the Rio Tinto Company. When the prospect of Home Rule for Ireland loomed again in 1912, Milner went to the barricades for the Ulster Unionists. In 1914 he issued a manifesto at the head of 'twenty distinguished men' who pledged to 'take or support any action that may be effective to prevent' Home Rule from being implemented. Among his first twenty were Rudyard Kipling and, surprisingly, Edward Elgar, whose imperialism overrode his Catholicism where Irish affairs were concerned. During the First World War Milner joined Lloyd George's government as minister without portfolio, charged with responsibility for home security, including the secret service and propaganda branches, where his old subordinate John Buchan performed so well. He also took a leading role in supporting Zionist dreams of a national home for Jews in Palestine; his was the hand that drafted the Balfour Declaration that laid the foundation for the future state of Israel. After the war he continued, until his death in 1925, to involve himself in imperial affairs as one of the Rhodes trustees, as the author of a scheme for granting limited independence to Egypt and as a prominent supporter of the *Round Table* journal founded by his old South African subalterns Leo Amery and Lionel Curtis.

A century on, Milner's causes appear confused and contradictory. But such was the nature of the conservatism and imperialism that won the hearts and minds of his near contemporaries, the subjects of this book. Like today's neo-conservatives, Milner retained from his early radical days a belief that the world could be permanently changed for the better. Great Britain would be the vehicle for that change, provided it could hold off the challenge of rival empires. He also knew very well the intellectual strength of the doctrines that stood in the way of his dream: nationalism, internationalism and revolutionary socialism. Milner's imperial politics thus resembled the best creative work done by his artist acolytes – marked by an increasingly desperate struggle to save the Empire from insurgent forces whose power he understood all too well because of his own fascination with them.

The subjects of this book will generally be found standing with Milner at every important political juncture, beginning with the British political crises of 1885–86. On hearing the results of the general election of 1885, which kept Gladstone in power and increased the vote of the Irish Nationalists, Conrad despaired at what he imagined was the triumph of the radicals. 'Where's the man to stop the rush of social-democratic ideas? The opportunity and the day have come and are gone! Believe me: gone for ever! For the sun is set and the last barrier removed. England was the only barrier to the pressure of infernal doctrines born in continental back-slums. Now, there is nothing!'[33]

Kipling, who had grown to hate Gladstone for the sins of his government in India, shared with Elgar the feeling that the preventable death of Gordon at Khartoum betrayed every ideal the British Empire ought to stand for.[34] Haggard commented on the election of 1886 in his draft manuscript for *She*, casting handsome young Leo Vincey as 'a red hot conservative' and proposing, as the awesome Ayesha's plan to solve the Irish problem, mass murder of all the Irish.[35] For Haggard, the betrayal of Gordon revived bitter memories of Gladstone's earlier sacrifice of Theophilus Shepstone, on whose staff he had served during the short-lived British annexation of the Transvaal in South Africa.[36] During the Boer War Buchan, Baker and Kipling were all deeply involved with Milner in South Africa, while Haggard and Elgar fretted at home that the humiliations of the 1880s were about to be revisited.[37] Elgar correctly read Kipling's poem 'Recessional', which he hoped to set to music in 1900, as a warning against complacency in the face of Boer duplicity and foreign rivals.[38] Anti-imperialists who had expected the author of *Heart of Darkness* to condemn the war were disappointed with Conrad, who feared a British defeat would encourage German ambitions. He regarded the conflict 'not so much a war against the Transvaal as a struggle against the doings of German influence'. Besides, he had little sympathy for the Boers, whom he described as an 'essentially despotic people'.[39]

Not only did Elgar and Kipling join Milner's group of 'twenty eminent men' pledged to stand by Protestant Ulster, even if it meant defying the British government, but they also took positions on the Executive Committee of the British Covenanters, the organisation Milner founded to bolster the Ulster cause.[40] Buchan did not go to those extremes, but continued passionately to oppose Home Rule for Ireland, as did Haggard. Herbert Baker was hard at work on the New Delhi capital during the Ulster crisis of 1914, but he wrote after war broke out to express his disappointment that Milner had not been included in the National Government war cabinet. Conrad pointedly refused to join an appeal for clemency on behalf of Roger Casement, who was caught smuggling German arms to Irish rebels, even though he had known and admired Casement in the Congo. The Easter Rebellion of 1916 Conrad regarded as a cowardly stab in the back when Britain was fighting for its very existence.[41] After the world war Haggard threw himself impetuously into the National Propaganda and the Liberty League – organisations dedicated to arousing public opinion against the Bolshevik menace. Kipling, Buchan and Baker continued their association with Milner and his ideals through work for the Round Table and the Rhodes Trust. Elgar continued to write occasional pieces for imperial occasions, but took no further active part in politics.

On the subject of where ultimate authority should reside within the Empire, the opinions of these men were diverse. Their commitment to democracy as a political system could at best be described as shaky. Milner maintained a barely concealed disdain for parliamentary politics, and never sought elected office after his failure in 1885 – though he was touted as a potential prime minister after the Great War. Haggard made two unsuccessful attempts to be elected and Elgar once or twice expressed regret that he had never stood for election as a Conservative candidate. John Buchan alone managed to win a parliamentary seat, though he never reached a cabinet position before bowing out to become governor-general of Canada as the newly created Baron Tweedsmuir. Baker, whose greatest success came as the favoured architect of wealthy and politically powerful patrons, took no part in electoral politics. On the eve of his departure for India to build the capitol at New Delhi, he marvelled at what could be done by imperial command: 'Hurrah for despotism' was the comment he scrawled in a letter to Lutyens. Kipling, famed for championing the common soldier and excoriated by the elite for pandering to the vulgar jingoism of the masses, seems to have nonetheless had little faith that democracy would deliver the right result. Conrad never lost his disdain for the behaviour of 'newly enfranchised idiots' in Western political systems.

For all of his haughty self-belief, Milner shared one other important personality trait with these artists: a sense of himself as an outsider. This was not in any twenty-first-century sense a matter of social class. He had been conceived out of wedlock five months before his father's marriage to the daughter of a British major general, the widow, Marie Ierne Cromie, who had been living for several years in Germany. Alfred received most of his schooling in that country prior to winning his university scholarship, experiences that set him apart from his Oxford contemporaries. Elgar also married the daughter of a major general, but nourished a neurotic sense of himself as permanently disadvantaged by his Roman Catholicism, his lack of a university education and his father's occupation as a piano tuner and music shop proprietor in a provincial city.[42] Son of a poor minister of the unfashionable Free Church of Scotland, John Buchan went on to win scholarships to the universities of Glasgow and Oxford, desperately relieved to escape the claustrophobic atmosphere of the puritanical parental home. None of the subsequent honours heaped upon him ever seemed quite enough to eclipse the obscurity of his beginnings, not even the glittering betrothal party – attended by Lord Milner – celebrating his engagement to Susan Grosvenor, cousin to the Duke of Westminster. Rudyard Kipling, whose establishment credentials seem impeccable – son of Queen Victoria's interior decorator, nephew of a famous painter and cousin of a future Tory prime minister – also saw himself as an outsider. Desperately unhappy after his parents sent him home from India to be schooled in England, he misremembered the rest of his childhood as something akin to Dickens's Oliver Twist. He fell in readily with his father's suggestion that he forgo the expenses of a university education and seek a career as a journalist in India. Even after returning to England triumphantly as the boy-wonder author of *Plain Tales from the Hills*, he nurtured the idea that a brighter, happier life awaited him some place overseas. Rider Haggard conceived of himself as a disinherited son of country gentry. Denied the university education given to his elder brothers and sent to South Africa at the age of seventeen, he used the wealth he earned from his fiction to buy back the ancestral manor. Herbert Baker also reclaimed the family estate, 'Owlets' in Kent, though his early apprenticeship in architecture followed a fairly conventional path. Notwithstanding his success in South Africa and India, he felt he would be denied the highest honours of his profession unless he left the colonies and established a practice in the metropolis. Joseph Conrad, of course, did not have to imagine himself an outsider. His affiliations with Polish nobility meant little in England, but he need not have gone to the lengths he did to distance himself from his origins, cultivating his reputation as a simple man of the sea married to an uneducated Englishwoman of humble origins.

If Alfred Milner best represented the complex and contradictory meanings of imperial patriotism for these political artists, then the man who captured their hearts and seemed likely to realise their aspirations for the future of the Empire was T. E. Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia. Another outsider, born out of wedlock to an Anglo-Irish landowner, Lawrence made his way to Oxford on his academic ability, learned Arabic and fell in love with the Middle East as an archaeologist. This experience secured his attachment to the intelligence department of the British Expeditionary Force in Cairo shortly after war broke out in 1914. His role in encouraging an Arab revolt against the Turks came to the attention of a wider public when John Buchan, then working at the Ministry of Information, suggested to the American journalist, Lowell Thomas, that he cover Lawrence's spectacular operations at Aqabah on the Red Sea.[43] After two evenings of intense conversation in 1918, Rudyard Kipling convinced Lawrence to write his own account of the campaign.[44] When Herbert Baker met the war hero for the first time in the New College Common Room at Oxford, 'it was love at first sight; he radiated some magnetic influence, such as long ago I experienced in the presence of Cecil Rhodes. I felt I would have followed him, had I been younger, in any adventurous quest.' Installed on a cot in the attic of Baker's London architectural office, Lawrence wrote much of his epic *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.[45] Further assistance came through a fellowship from All Souls College, Oxford, where Lawrence formed close friendships with Leo Amery, Lionel Curtis and other former members of Milner's South African 'Kindergarten'. All Souls seemed to many of its intimates to be 'an unofficial committee for running … the destinies of the British Empire'.[46] On weekends Lawrence would, from time to time, be seen at Buchan's country home outside Oxford in serious conversations with groups that included not only Round Table men but also heads of government departments, history lecturers and leading Fabian socialists.[47] In 1920, Lawrence first met Conrad and 'probed him on the methods of his craft'.[48] The admiration was clearly mutual, for Conrad went to some lengths to provide Lawrence with a special edition of his memoirs.[49] As far as Lawrence was concerned, Conrad was 'absolutely the most haunting in prose that ever was … He's as much a giant of the subjective as Kipling is of the objective.'[50] Elgar did not meet Lawrence until near the end of his life, but when he did, the same spark of sympathy was kindled. The younger man wrote, 'your 2nd Symphony hits me between wind and water. It is exactly the mode that I most desire, and so it moves me more than anything else – of music – that I have ever heard.'[51]

The final chapter in this book explores the reasons why Lawrence did not – could not – perform the role in which his elder admirers cast him, as creative artist and master statesman of Empire. Certainly, as many of his biographers argue, Lawrence's deeply conflicted psyche drove him to flee the limelight, give up his commission and enlist under an assumed name in the humble ranks of the British military. (Ever helpful, Buchan assisted in securing his transfer from the tank corps to the Royal Air Force.) It is reasonable to ask, however, whether he or any other man could truly have accomplished the mission on which Haggard sent the fictional Sir Henry Curtis into Africa, that Kipling set in India for Kim, that Buchan set for Sandy Arbuthnot in Asia Minor: to enter completely into the life of a subject people, make their cause one's own and win them for the Empire. At the climax of *King Solomon's Mines*, Curtis has discarded his European clothes and dressed himself in feathers and leopard skins to fight alongside Ignosi on behalf of the oppressed Kukuanas. In Elgar's oratorio the British warrior king Caractacus thanks his Roman conquerors, singing 'Grace from the Roman! Peace and rest are ours.' The Anglo-Irish boy hero of Kipling's *Kim* goes through semi-magical rituals to achieve the disguises that enable him to pass unnoticed among all the peoples of India, saving them at last from the Franco-Russian menace. In Buchan's *Greenmantle*, Sandy Arbuthnot, a Scot 'adept at getting under another's skin', adopts a disguise so perfect that he is able to ride undetected into

Constantinople at the head of Islamic horsemen bent on taking Turkey out of the war. Like Conrad's Lord Jim, Lawrence tried living out the whole adventure. He would dress like Bedouins, live like Bedouins, stir them into revolt against the Turks and secure their freedom under British sponsorship. His ambition, as he expressed it in a letter to Lord Curzon, was 'that the Arabs should be our first brown dominion, and not our last brown colony'.[52] By that he meant that they should eventually stand on the same footing within the Empire as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. 'Arabs', he continued, 'react against you if you try to drive them, and they are as tenacious as Jews: but you can lead them without force anywhere, if nominally arm in arm. The future of Mesopotamia [Iraq] is so immense that if it is cordially ours we can swing the whole Middle East with it.' His literary account of the revolt, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, recapitulates the romantic hero's journey through privation, prison and defilement in many episodes that critics point out could not have happened – so that it might appear that he had shared the lives of his Arab insurgents even unto the most repugnant details.

As Conrad presciently argued in *Lord Jim* (one of Lawrence's prewar favourites), the full imperial romance could not be lived. One could not be simultaneously master and subject, conqueror and liberator. Dreams of heroic accomplishment could never deliver the results achieved through rules and discipline. It was exciting to imagine allying one's inner savage self with real-life barbarians to achieve justice and freedom within an empire of freely associated equals. But it was nonetheless a fantasy. The imagined savage within was as unreal as the colonial subject conjured up by Orientalists. Having seen his Middle Eastern dream founder on the facts of ethnic rivalries and international diplomacy, Lawrence froze like Conrad's Jim in the face of 'Gentleman Brown's' desperadoes. The conqueror of Aqabah sat by his mother's side, sometimes 'the entire morning between breakfast and lunch in the same position, without moving, and with the same expression on his face'.[53] Despite the repeated urgings of his influential friends he vowed never again to accept any position of command. Nor did he return to the Middle East or nationalist politics.

Fantasy or no, the idea has proved artistically energising over a long period. The subjects of this study played on the analogical association they drew between the struggle to repress the irrepressible inner self and the imperial project of ruling subject peoples. Their best works rose to significant heights of achievement by exploring the ramifications of the metaphor. Whether those works achieved greatness is a separate question. Historians seldom venture aesthetic judgements these days. Reflecting the influence of post-structural and postcolonial theory, the same can be said of most scholars of art, music and literature. Yet the argument of this book demands that the aesthetic question be squarely faced.

Edward Said has not been the only critic to rank Conrad and Kipling among the authentic geniuses of English literature, but his opinions carry a special authority by dint of his lifelong struggle against the culture and politics of imperialism.[54] If the votes of consumers are any measure of quality, the ongoing popularity of these artists suggests their output was built to last. Novels by Buchan, Haggard, Kipling and Conrad continue to find film-makers eager to make new versions. Herbert Baker remains South Africa's most admired architect. Elgar's symphonies are enshrined in the standard orchestral repertoire and his first *Pomp and Circumstance* march still wraps up London's 'Last Night of the Proms'. From a philosophical perspective it is more difficult to pinpoint the nature of their achievements. Measured against Aristotle's criterion that great art holds a mirror to nature, none of the protagonists' creations would qualify. They certainly did not strive for beauty, classical proportions, eternal harmonies or depictions of lived reality. The most compelling of them belong to the category that the eighteenth-century philosophers Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant called the sublime. Their works plunge readers into unexplored and dangerous territories where the landscape – a character in its own right – frequently oppresses, overawes, even terrifies the senses. According to Burke's aesthetic theory the sublime moves us by mingling power with terror. Tracing power 'through its several gradations unto the highest of all, where our imagination is finally lost … we find terror, quite throughout the progress, its inseparable companion, and growing along with it, as far as we can possibly trace them'.[55] While comparable in its power to arouse our emotions, the sublime is in most respects the antithesis of the beautiful:

> sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates it often makes a strong deviation: beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive.[56]

Empire, conquest and the struggle for subjugation are quintessentially big themes more calculated to evoke the sublime than the beautiful. As they are everywhere accompanied by their opposites – freedom, liberation and resistance – they contain an inexhaustible creative potential. Strange to say, the *Aesthetic Theory* of the Marxist philosopher

Theodor Adorno offers more insights into the achievements of this clutch of conservative imperialists than do their ardent conservative admirers. Using the example of the composer Anton Bruckner, Adorno argued that even when an artist consciously sought to revivify a bygone Catholic spirituality, he could not avoid making something strikingly new by appropriating 'the harmonic and instrumental discoveries' of his own time.[57] Similarly, the work of the politically conservative Haggard, Kipling, Conrad and Elgar made audiences sit up with a start. Here was something new. In this sense they concur with Adorno's contention that 'all artworks, even the affirmative, are a priori polemical. The idea of a conservative artwork is inherently absurd.' Contemporary critics found 'horrible', 'shocking' and 'foolish' aspects to deplore, as they would in frankly modernist works. Again, as Adorno points out, it was only 'during World War I and prior to Stalin' that 'artistic and politically advanced thought went in tandem; whoever came of age in those years took art to be what it in no way historically had been: a priori politically on the left'.[58] The ungainly, horrific and misshapen contents that many deplored in the work of the imperialist artists conforms to Adorno's dictum that:

> The divergence of the constructive and the mimetic, which no artwork can resolve and which is virtually the original sin of aesthetic spirit, has its correlative in that element of the ridiculous and clownish that even the most significant works bear and that, unconcealed, is inextricable from their significance. The inadequacy of classicism of any persuasion originates in its repression of this element; a repression that art must mistrust.[59]

Even as Herbert Baker heaped praise on architectural classicism, he loaded his buildings with tacky plaques, faked antique patinas and mismatched historical styles. Time and again Elgar inserted bad jokes, political satire and stylistic pastiche into his music without apparent embarrassment. Passed over as Poet Laureate because of the alleged vulgarity in his work, Kipling did not repent but flung more of the same into his genteel critics' faces.

From a psychological point of view, the imperialist artists paradoxically conform to the personality type Adorno singles out as least likely to respond to innovation:

> Empirically it has been confirmed that inhibited, conventional, and aggressive-reactionary individuals tend to reject 'intraception' – self-awareness – in any form, and along with it expression as such, as being all too human. They are the ones who, in a context of general estrangement from art, declare themselves with particular resentment against modernism.[60]

And yet, in these particular creators, something insistent and contradictory kept peeping out of their buttoned-up quotidian personae. To reiterate, the argument of this book is that the fount of their creative imagination was precisely their inability to hold a lid on the inner 'savage' self that stood opposed to all their fervently expressed support for order and discipline – which so closely mimicked the appealing but hopeless mission of imperialism in world affairs. Their best works rose to impressive heights as the result of the almost unbearable tension and contradiction at their heart. That is what enables them to generate the 'shudder' that Adorno identifies as the hallmark of genuine artworks since the time of Poe and Baudelaire. Whatever the expressed intentions of their makers, their art 'always desired dissonance'. With them it is pre-eminently true that 'What crackles in artworks is the sound of the friction of the antagonistic elements that the artwork seeks to unify.'[61] In the hierarchy of creative genius, 'the rank of an artwork is defined essentially by whether it exposes itself to, or withdraws from, the irreconcilable … Those works are deep that neither mask the divergent or antagonistic nor leave it unreconciled.'[62]

From this perspective the imperialist artists share more with their modernist contemporaries than they or posterity have generally acknowledged. It is a mistake to pit them against each other – one faction clinging to the past, the other hurrying towards the future. Both were authentic products of their age. If, 'after the fall of formal beauty, the sublime was the only aesthetic idea left to modernism', so it was the moving spirit of their differently constituted creative agenda.[63] The real champions of the past were salon painters of the Royal Academy such as Alma Tadema and Leighton, establishment critics like Ruskin, professors of music and architects trapped in the conceits of the Gothic revival. As Adorno expressed it, 'academic works are bad because the elements their logicality should synthesize engender no counter-impulses and in fact do not exist. The work undertaken by their unity is superfluous, tautological, and, insofar as it appears as the unity of something, inconsistent.'[64] Although avowed supporters of the constituted political order, the imperialist artists set their face against the established verities, regulations and pattern books of their own fields. At a gut level imperialism appealed to them as the creed of their times that echoed all the dissonant and contrary impulses they felt in their inmost selves. Their age spoke through them because:

> The historical moment is constitutive of artworks; authentic works are those that surrender themselves to the historical substance of their age without reservation and without the presumption of being superior to

> it. They are the self-unconscious historiography of their epoch; this, not least of all, establishes their relation to knowledge.[65]

Doubtless a time will come when the works of the imperialist artists cease to arouse, thrill, horrify or delight audiences. Judging from books in print, adaptations for stage and screen, concert performances, academic studies and the critical admiration of today's practitioners of art and architecture, that day is not yet come. Though we may no longer be gripped by the mixture of fear and fascination that early-twentieth-century readers felt when first looking into Freud, imperialism lives – fraught as ever with misguided idealism, impossible ambitions and frightful retributions. Its power to inspire artistic imaginations of all political complexions remains undimmed.

Notes

1 Historical works on masculinity have begun to accumulate on library shelves previously populated by feminism and women's studies. R. W. Connell's *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) helped to set the theoretical parameters of the field. A landmark in African history was a 1998 issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* devoted to the subject of various historical forms of masculinity; 24 (1998).

2 Cited by Dorothy Ross in 'American modernities, past and present', *American Historical Review* 116 (2011), 707. From L. Trilling, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Viking, 1965), p. 103.

3 John Buchan, *Memory Hold-the-Door* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1940), p. 202.

4 Letter to Marguerite Poradowska, 2 July 1891, in F. R. Karl and L. Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. I: 1861–1897* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 84–5. The incident is further discussed in Eloise Knapp Hay, 'Joseph Conrad and impressionism', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34 (1975), 139. Gene Moore has argued that what Conrad saw was Dr Gachet's consulting rooms in Paris, filled with paraphernalia associated with the treatment of madness rather than the paintings that filled his home at suburban Auvers; that leaves unexplained the question of why his relative should be temporarily living in the consulting rooms. See 'Conrad, Dr Gachet, and the "school of Charenton"', *Conradiana* 25 (1993), 163–77.

5 Hugh Wood, 'The hopes and glories of Edward Elgar', *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 March 2008.

6 Zdzislaw Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 365.

7 Jacob Epstein, *Epstein: An Autobiography* (London: Hulton Press, 1955), p. 74.

8 Arnold Bax, *Farewell, My Youth* (London: Longmans Green, 1943), pp. 29–31.

9 Percy Young, *Elgar, O.M.: A Study of a Musician*, 2nd edn (London: White Lion, 1973), pp. 251–2.

10 Henry Miller, *The Books in My Life* (London: P. Owens, 1952), p. 93.

11 Jerrold Northrup Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 556.

12 Quoted in Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2007), p. 135.

13 Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 72.

14 Michael Keath, *Herbert Baker: Architecture and Idealism 1892–1913, The South African Years* (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1992), p. viii.

15 The Church of Scotland congregation in London, of which Buchan was a leading member.
16 Quoted in Janet Adam Smith, *John Buchan and His World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), p. 85.
17 Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 358.
18 H. Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life*, ed. by C. J. Longman, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1926), 2:43.
19 Buchan's biographers invariably report this along with the psychoanalyst's opinion that he was entirely free of neuroses. This does not mean that he had not suffered a serious breakdown.
20 Wilson, *Strange Ride*, p. 159.
21 Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, pp. 357–8.
22 *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).
23 Wilson, *Strange Ride*, p. 342.
24 Albert Guerard, Jr, *Joseph Conrad* (New York: New Directions, 1947), p. 30.
25 Haggard, *The Days of My Life*, 2:124.
26 Janet Adam Smith, *John Buchan* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965), p. 142.
27 Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 205.
28 Frederick R. Karl, *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), p. 472. See also Wilson, *Strange Ride*, p. 325, which records an incident in which Kipling discussed Conrad's work with a Polish diplomat.
29 There have been many biographies and studies of Milner, but for a superb thumbnail sketch of his career, see Colin Newbury, 'Milner, Alfred, Viscount Milner (1854–1925)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, October 2008 (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35037, accessed 12 July 2016).
30 Buchan, *Memory Hold-the-Door*, pp. 95–103.
31 Keath, *Herbert Baker*, p. 84.
32 So did Lord Curzon, former Viceroy of India; Anthony Glyn, *Elinor Glyn: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p. 126.
33 Conrad to Spiridion Kliszczewki, 19 December 1885, in Karl and Davies, *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. I: 1861–1897*, pp. 15–17. Conrad was not to know that Joseph Chamberlain, whom he blamed for stirring up the 'newly enfranchised idiots' of the working class, would strike out on the Unionist path in the crisis of the following year.
34 Wilson, *Strange Ride*, p. 151.
35 Norman Etherington (ed.), *The Annotated She* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. xx. Haggard removed these passages before publication.
36 Haggard, *Days of My Life*, 1:80.
37 Haggard, *Days of My Life*, 2:79.
38 Moore, *Edward Elgar*, p. 338.
39 Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 161.
40 A. M. Gollin, *Proconsul in Politics: A Study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power* (London: Anthony Blond, 1964), p. 212. Kipling also contributed the immense sum of £30,000 to the Covenanters; John Evelyn Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner: The Man of No Illusions, 1854–1925* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958), p. 287.
41 Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, p. 414.
42 David Cannadine has skilfully deconstructed Elgar's self-image in 'Orchestrating his own life: Sir Edward Elgar as an historical personality', in Nicholas Kenyon (ed.), *Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait* (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 1–35.
43 Lawrence James, 'Lawrence, Thomas Edward [Lawrence of Arabia] (1888–1935)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, January 2008, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34440 (accessed 25 August 2008).
44 David Gilmour, *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), pp. 285–6.

45 Herbert Baker, in A. W. Lawrence, *T. E. Lawrence by His Friends* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 248–9.
46 Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: The 'Kindergarten' in Edwardian Imperial Affairs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), p. 53.
47 F. Madden and D. K. Fieldhouse (eds), *Oxford and the Idea of Commonwealth* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 17.
48 Herbert Baker, in Lawrence, *T. E. Lawrence by His Friends*, p. 250.
49 T. Hoenselaars and G. M. Moore, 'Joseph Conrad and T. E. Lawrence', *Conradiana* 27 (1995), 3.
50 David Garnett (ed.), *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), pp. 301–2.
51 T. E. Shaw [Lawrence] to Elgar, 12 October 1932, in J. N. Moore (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 456.
52 Lawrence to Curzon, 27 September 1919, in Garnett, *Letters of T. E. Lawrence*, pp. 291–2.
53 Related to Edward Garnett by Lawrence's mother, in ibid., p. 294.
54 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 32, 181.
55 Edmund Burke, *On Taste, On the Sublime and Beautiful, Reflections on the French Revolution, A Letter to a Noble Lord* (New York: P. F. Collier, 1909), p. 55.
56 Ibid., p. 106.
57 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. by Gretel Adorn and Rolf Tiedemann, transl. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: The Athlone Press, 1997), p. 192.
58 Ibid., p. 254.
59 Ibid., pp. 118–19.
60 Ibid., p. 115.
61 Ibid., pp. 20, 110, 177.
62 Ibid., p. 190.
63 Ibid., p. 197.
64 Ibid., p. 188.
65 Ibid., p. 182.