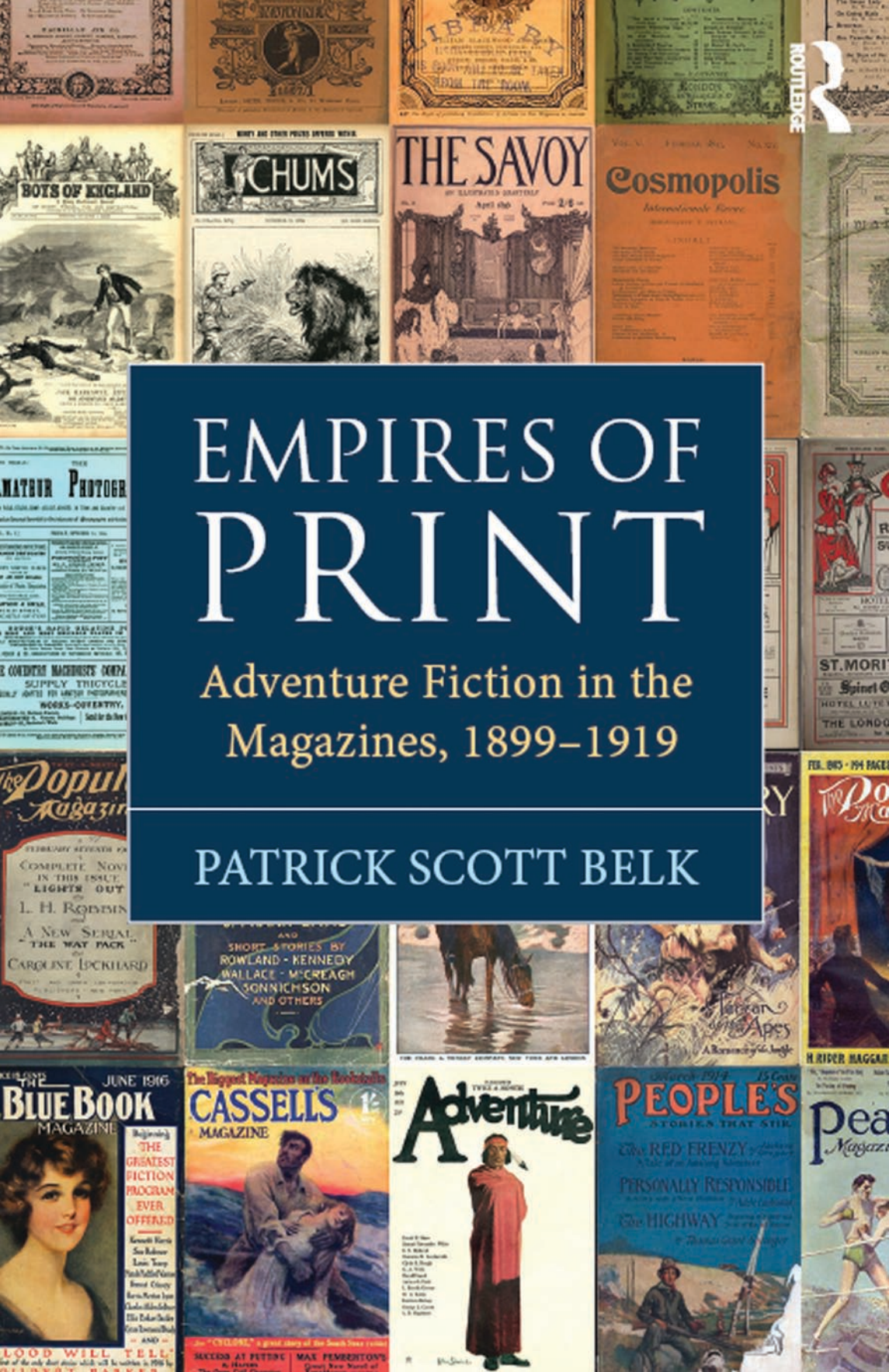


EMPIRES OF PRINT

Adventure Fiction in the
Magazines, 1899–1919

PATRICK SCOTT BELK



Empires of Print

At the turn of the twentieth century, the publishing industries in Britain and the United States underwent dramatic expansions and reorganization that brought about an increased traffic in books and periodicals around the world. Focusing on adventure fiction published from 1899 to 1919, Patrick Scott Belk looks at authors such as Joseph Conrad, H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle, and John Buchan to explore how writers of popular fiction engaged with foreign markets and readers through periodical publishing. Belk argues that popular fiction, particularly the adventure genre, developed in ways that directly correlate with authors' experiences, and shows that popular genres of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emerged as one way of marketing their literary works to expanding audiences of readers worldwide. Despite an over-determined print space altered by the rise of new kinds of consumers and transformations of accepted habits of reading, publishing, and writing, these changes in British and American publishing at the turn of the twentieth century inspired an exciting new period of literary invention and experimentation in the adventure genre, and the greater part of that invention and experimentation was happening in the magazines.

Patrick Scott Belk is Assistant Professor of English in the Multimedia and Digital Culture program at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, USA, principal investigator for The Pulp Magazines Project, and webmaster for the Joseph Conrad Society UK.



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Adventure Fiction in the
Magazines, 1899–1919

Patrick Scott Belk

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*To Joe Kestner, for your passion, limitless spirit of
adventure, and unwavering mentorship over the years,
I warmly dedicate this first monograph.*



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Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xv
 Introduction: Print in Transition: Magazines, Adventure, and Threats of New Media, 1880–1920	 1
 1 Empires of Print: An Imperial History of Late Nineteenth- Century Periodical Expansion	 16
<i>Part I: “The History of Text Involves the History of its Dissemination”</i>	17
<i>The Imperial Press Conference of 1909</i>	21
<i>Periodical Expansion, Publishing Networks</i>	28
<i>Periodical Expansion and the Media Empire</i>	36
<i>Part II: Popular Adventure Fiction and the Nineteenth- Century Periodical Form</i>	40
<i>“My Empire is of the Imagination”</i>	47
 2 Imperial Technologies: Adventure and the Threat of New Media in Conrad’s <i>Lord Jim</i> (1899)	 63
<i>Conrad as a Blackwood’s Author</i>	65
<i>Blackwood’s at the Turn of the Century</i>	74
<i>Serializing Lord Jim’s Patusan Section</i>	77
 3 Transatlantic Crossings: The Technological Scene of H.G. Wells’s <i>Tono-Bungay</i> (1909)	 92
<i>The Materiality of Texts and Simultaneous Transatlantic Serialization</i>	103

	<i>Collating and Comparing Two “First” Appearances: Title-Level</i>	105
	<i>Collating and Comparing Two “First” Appearances: Issue and Constituent-Level</i>	107
	<i>Conclusion</i>	117
4	Spectacular Texts: Conan Doyle’s Essays on Photography and <i>The Lost World</i> (1912)	129
	<i>Part I: Essays on Photography</i>	136
	<i>Part II: Picturing the Lost World</i>	146
5	Deciphered Codes: John Buchan in <i>All-Story Weekly</i> (1915) and <i>The Popular Magazine</i> (1919)	163
	<i>The Pulp Buchan</i>	165
	<i>British Institutions, American Pulps</i>	172
	<i>A Master of Pace: The Thirty-Nine Steps (1915)</i>	177
	<i>Breaking the Pulp Code: Mr. Standfast (1919)</i>	179
	<i>Conclusion</i>	186
	Conclusion: Lost in Transit: Sax Rohmer, Conan Doyle, and Baroness Orczy’s <i>Eldorado</i> (1913) in Africa	194
	Appendix A: British and American Books, Magazines, and Newspapers: Titles by Year (1860–1922)	201
	Appendix B: Representative Authors’ Payments for First UK & U.S. Serial Rights (1884–1938)	204
	Appendix C: Average Delivery Time of Mail Packet Steamers by Decade (1840–1920)	208
	Appendix D: Major International Copyright Legislation Affecting Authors (1880–1920)	209
	Appendix E: Commercial Statistics of the Principal Countries of the World (1904–06)	210
	Appendix F: American Pulp Magazine Circulations (1900–22)	214

Appendix G: Advertising Ratios in Representative British and American Magazines (1919)	216
Appendix H: List of Magazines, Newspapers, etc., Found Loose (<i>Kenya Gazette</i> , May 1913)	217
Appendix I: Combined Monthly Totals from “List of Magazines, Newspapers, etc.,” <i>Kenya Gazette</i> , 1900–22	218
<i>Bibliography</i>	219
<i>Index</i>	241

Figures and Tables

Figures

I.1	Commercial Routes of the World (The Office of <i>The Times</i> , circa 1900)	2
I.2	(Clockwise, From Top Left) N.S.W. Bookstall Co. Ltd. (Sydney, 1920); W.H. Smith & Son 4d Magazine Wrapper (1901); New Zealand ½d Newspaper Wrapper (1909); and Newsstand and Luncheon Counter (Vancouver, 1924)	3
I.3	Six Covers: <i>Munsey's Magazine</i> (June 1906); <i>The All-Story</i> (October 1912); <i>The Popular Magazine</i> (February 1905); <i>Pearson's</i> (April 1897); <i>The Royal Magazine</i> (December 1898); and <i>The Strand Magazine</i> (April 1912)	4
I.4	Edgar Rice Burroughs, "Tarzan of the Apes," Unidentified American Newspaper (circa 1912)	7
I.5	Two Covers: <i>The English Review</i> (December 1908) and <i>The Popular Magazine</i> (November 1908)	9
1.1	The Illinois, U.S. Mail Steamer (1906); U.S. Mail Railway Post Office (1930); Workers on a Telegraph Line (circa 1890); Post Office, Mombasa, Kenya (1905); Railway Workers Unloading Mail (circa 1930); UK Bicycle Postmen (1900); Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya (1905); and U.S. Postmen (1915)	20
1.2	Australian and New Zealand Delegates at the Imperial Press Conference; Members in Front of Hollow Tree in Stanley Park (June 4, 1909)	21
1.3	Four Colonial Newspaper Wrappers, Including "The Australian Stamp Collector" (Addressed to Chicago, USA [1895]); and "The Daily Chronicle" (Addressed to Paramaribo, Surinam, Bearing 1889 1c [1890, 12 December printed])	24
1.4	Four Covers: <i>Munsey's Magazine</i> (October 1907); <i>The Argosy</i> (December 1907); <i>The Scrap Book</i> (April 1906); and <i>The All-Story Magazine</i> (April 1906)	29

1.5	Lady Barker, <i>Station Life in New Zealand</i> . London: Macmillan & Co., 1886. Macmillan's Colonial Library, Number 1	31
1.6	H. Rider Haggard, <i>Ayesha: The Return of 'She'</i> , Vols. 1 & 2. Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1905	33
1.7	Eight Covers: <i>The Cornhill Magazine</i> (January 1897); <i>Blackwood's Magazine</i> (July 1885); <i>All the Year Round</i> (January 1891); <i>Longman's Magazine</i> (November 1887); <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> (November 1880); <i>Harper's New Monthly Magazine</i> (March 1886); <i>Scribner's Magazine</i> (January 1887); and <i>The English Illustrated Magazine</i> (January 1886)	35
1.8	<i>Boy's Own Paper</i> (December 1887); <i>Chums</i> (June 24, 1896); and <i>The Halfpenny Marvel</i> (December 20, 1893)	41
1.9	"The Missionary's Escape from the Lion," <i>Missionary Travels</i> (1857) and "He Strode Quickly Forward, with Revolver Pointed at the Lion," Cover of <i>Chums</i> (October 18, 1905)	46
2.1	Malay Archipelago or East India Islands, J. and F. Tallis, from the <i>Illustrated Atlas of the World</i> , 1851	63
2.2	"Tuan Jim: A Sketch" Manuscript Page; First Page of <i>Lord Jim: A Sketch</i> , in <i>Blackwood's Magazine</i> (October 1899); and First UK Edition of <i>Lord Jim</i> (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1900)	64
2.3	<i>The Savoy</i> (April 1896); <i>Cosmopolis</i> (February 1897); Page from First UK Edition of <i>The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"</i> with a Note from Conrad: "The suppressed preface printed by Henley as afterword in his N.R. (<i>New Review</i>). To R. Curle—J. Conrad"; and Photograph Portrait of William Ernest Henley	67
2.4	The <i>Torrens</i> , on which Conrad Served as First Mate from London to Adelaide, Australia (November 21, 1891–July 26, 1893); the <i>Otago</i> , of which Conrad Was Appointed Captain (January 19, 1888); the S.S. <i>Somerset</i> , which Towed Conrad's Ship, the <i>Palestine</i> (March 15, 1883); and the <i>Roi des Belges</i> , in which Conrad Sailed up the Congo River (1890)	70
2.5	Six Covers: <i>Blackwood's Magazine</i> from November 1825; July 1885; February 1899; July 1915; September 1948; and December 1958	76
2.6	Reader's Map of Patusan; <i>The Jeddah</i> ; "British and Foreign" Telegraph Reports, <i>Otago Witness</i> , Issue 1501, August 21, 1880, Page 11; Girolamo Ruscelli, <i>India Tercera Nuova Tavola</i> , One of the First Maps of Southeast Asia (Venice, 1561); and Photograph Portrait of Jim Lingard	

	(1861–1921), who May Have Partially Inspired the Character of Conrad’s Lord Jim	80
3.1	Map of the “British All Red Line” (1902), from George Johnson’s <i>The All Red Line: The Annals and Aims of the Pacific Cable Project</i> (1903)	97
3.2	“Cook’s, Clark’s, etc. Travel Advertisements,” Back Matter. <i>Harper’s Magazine</i> Vol. 121 (August 1910), New York and London: Harper & Brothers, p. 15	99
3.3	<i>Cook’s Oriental Travellers’ Gazette</i> (January 1892) and “Around the World,” Hamburg-American Line Poster (October 1912)	102
3.4	“Weltverkehrs-Karte,” Bibliographical Institute: Leipzig, 6th Edition Prepared for <i>Meyers Encyclopedia</i> (1907)	113
3.5	Three Covers: <i>The Railroad Man’s Magazine</i> (October 1906); <i>The Ocean</i> (December 1907); and <i>The Live Wire</i> (May 1908)	117
4.1	Promotional Poster and Four Film Stills from <i>The Lost World</i> (First National Pictures, 1925)	131
4.2	<i>The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Paper</i> (January 8, 1887) and “The Funffingerspitze from the South,” from a Photograph by George P. Abraham, “A Night Adventure on the Funffingerspitze,” <i>The Strand Magazine</i> (October 1912), p. 256	134
4.3	Conan Doyle, “After Cormorants with a Camera,” <i>The British Journal of Photography</i> (October 14, 1881), p. 533; and Cover of <i>The Amateur Photographer</i> (October 10, 1884)	142
4.4	“The Southern Cross Antarctic Expedition” (<i>The Strand Magazine</i> , September 1900); and “The Palace of the Dalai-Lama at Lhasa” (<i>National Geographic Magazine</i> , January 1905)	145
4.5	“The Members of the Exploring Party” and “A Distant View of the Plateau” (<i>The Strand Magazine</i> , April 1912)	150
4.6a	Harry Rountree, Illustrated Frontispiece, <i>The Lost World</i> , “The Leader of the Explorers, with some of their Adventures” (<i>The Strand Magazine</i> , April 1912)	152
4.6b	Harry Rountree, Illustrated Frontispiece, <i>The Lost World</i> , “The Leader of the Explorers, with some of their Adventures” (<i>The Strand Magazine</i> , April 1912)	153
5.1	Four Covers: <i>The Captain</i> (September 1901); <i>Blackwood’s Magazine</i> (July 1915); <i>Land & Water</i> (July 10, 1919); and <i>London Magazine</i> (February 1923)	168
5.2	Six Covers: <i>Adventure</i> (March 1911); <i>All-Story Weekly</i> (June 5, 1915); <i>Argosy All-Story Weekly</i> (June 14, 1924); <i>The Popular Magazine</i> (January 7, 1919); <i>Argosy</i>	

	(December 10, 1938); and <i>Famous Fantastic Mysteries</i> (December 1949)	169
5.3	<i>The Thirty-Nine Steps</i> , 1st UK Edition Dust-Wrapper (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1915)	173
5.4	First Issue of “Something New,” <i>The All-Story Magazine</i> (January 1905)	175
5.5	Four Covers: <i>The Popular Magazine</i> from January 7; January 20; February 7; and February 20, 1919	183
AG.1	Advertising Ratios, Representative Issues of British and American Magazines (1919)	216
AH.1	“List of Magazines, Newspapers, etc found loose at the Mombasa and Nairobi Post Offices,” <i>Kenya Gazette</i> , May 15, 1913, pp. 455–57	217
AI.1	Combined Monthly Totals from “List of Magazines, Newspapers, etc.,” <i>Kenya Gazette</i> , 1900–22 (with 2 Period Moving Avg. Trendline)	218

Tables

A.1	British and American Books, Magazines, and Newspapers: Titles by Year (1860–1922)	201
B.1	Representative Authors’ Payments for First UK & U.S. Serial Rights (1884–1938)	204
C.1	Average Delivery Time of Mail Packet Steamers by Decade (1840–1920)	208
D.1	Major International Copyright Legislation Affecting Authors (1880–1920)	209
E.1	Commercial Statistics of the Principal Countries of the World (1904–06)	210
F.1	American Pulp Magazine Circulations (1900–22)	214

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To Shirley Edrich at I.D. Edrich Books, London, and John Gunnison at Adventure House, Silver Spring, Maryland, thank you for all the magazines.

Abbreviations

ARL	All Red Line
ASM	<i>All-Story Magazine</i>
BJP	<i>British Journal of Photography</i>
BOP	<i>Boy's Own Paper</i>
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CF	Conrad First
CL	<i>Collected Letters</i>
EPU	Empire Press Union
ER	<i>English Review</i>
FNP	First National Pictures
HAL	Hamburg-American Line
ICA	International Copyright Act
ICS	International Correspondence Schools
ILN	<i>Illustrated London News</i>
KFS	King Features Syndicate
MJP	Modernist Journals Project
NBA	Net Book Agreement
NR	<i>New Review</i>
NSW	New South Wales
NYT	<i>New York Times</i>
OSC	Oceanic Steamship Company
PM	<i>Popular Magazine</i>
PMP	Pulp Magazines Project
PO	Post Office
RDF	Resource Description Framework
RED	Reading Experience Database
RM	Royal Mail
S&S	Street & Smith Corporation
SQM	Standard Quality Monthly
UFS	United Feature Syndicate



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Introduction

Print in Transition: Magazines, Adventure, and Threats of New Media, 1880–1920

From 1880 to 1914, the publishing industries in Great Britain and the United States underwent dramatic expansions and reorganization. By 1900, the annual production of new books in Britain had climbed to nearly 6,000, up from just 370 titles a century before;¹ by 1914, this figure had doubled.² In the field of periodical production, the total number of annually published titles, not including newspapers, more than tripled, from 3,200 to more than 10,000 by the start of the First World War³ (see [Appendix A](#)). In roughly the same period, the number of Post Office Directory listings for professional literary agencies in London rose from just 2 or 3 in the early 1880s to more than 30 by 1913,⁴ a tenfold increase reflecting the industry's growing demand for skilled managers to facilitate and direct the increasingly international flow of a rapidly expanding volume of printed material. Alongside newspaper syndicates and authors' societies, literary agents helped navigate the complexities of an increasingly fragmented print culture field, which, by 1925, could include 26 different rights to a single work.⁵

These seismic shifts in literary production at the turn of the twentieth century had far-reaching effects beyond the British and American publishing industries and transatlantic print cultures of the period. Anxieties of “overproduction and Darwinian competition among novels, journals, and newspapers”⁶ in late-Victorian Britain, for example, were paralleled in Australia in the mid-1920s, when a “significant presence of English and American magazines” on Australian bookstalls “was seen as a threat to local industry” and the “national character of an emerging culture.”⁷ The collapse of the three-decker novel in 1894 may have signaled Mudie's recognition that this new era in global trafficking of affordable reading matter had arrived. In 1899, the UK's Net Book Agreement (NBA) attempted to rein in some forms of supply more efficient than others,⁸ but the industry-wide measure—which was regarded by *The Times*'s general manager, C.F. Moberly Bell, as “simple extortion”—would do little to check the early twentieth century's “unfettered free trade in books,” and especially that “great mass of popular literature,” that is, fiction.⁹ Book and periodical production rates climbed, prices fell, publishers diversified, and technological capacities expanded. In 1901, G.M. Trevelyan warned that a “white peril”

2 Introduction: Print in Transition

would inundate British and American cities beneath a sea of “[j]ournals, magazines, and the continued spawn of bad novels.”¹⁰ Trevelyan’s image of these drowned urban centers had its counterpoint in the tentacle-like extension of the modern trade, transportation, and distribution networks that helped channel this alarming accumulation of print culture materials ever farther afield.

By 1900, most leading publishers in London, New York, and Edinburgh had established some form of printing, binding, distribution, or sales operations overseas. In many cases, these highly organized networks of export agents, news dealers, post office (PO) masters, and subscription managers extended as far away as Johannesburg, Melbourne, Calcutta, and San Francisco. They orchestrated multiple-market media campaigns; helped synchronize complex overseas legal and contract negotiations; and together they created the phenomenon of the modern best-seller.¹¹ Of course, the competition between publishers for shared global media markets could be fierce, but, despite rivalries at this level of commercial production, reading communities in Australia, India, England, and South Africa developed common literary vernaculars with their counterparts living many thousands of miles away, in New Zealand, Barbados, Hong Kong, and across the

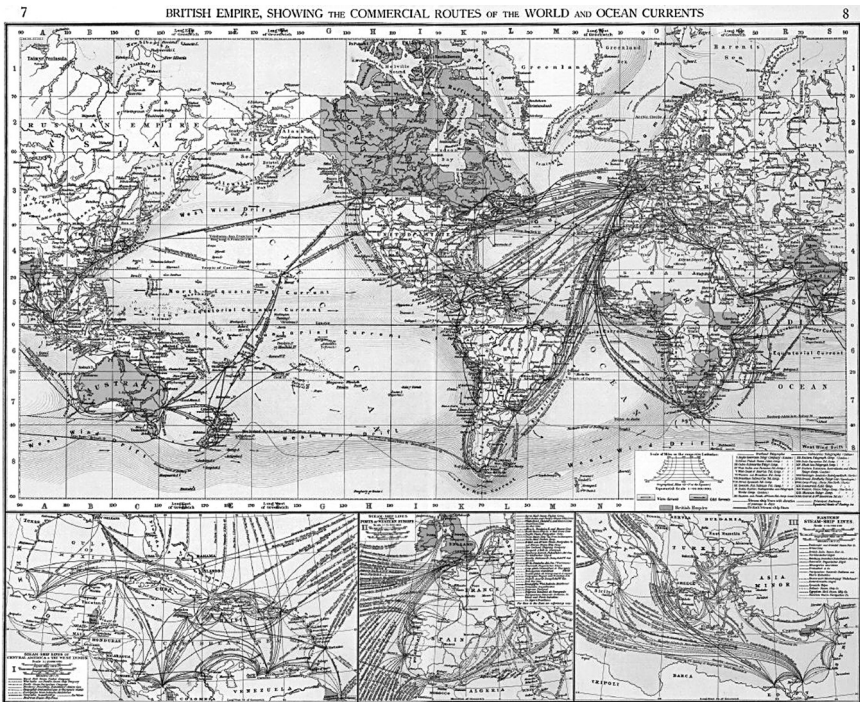


Figure 1.1 Commercial Routes of the World (The Office of *The Times*, circa 1900).

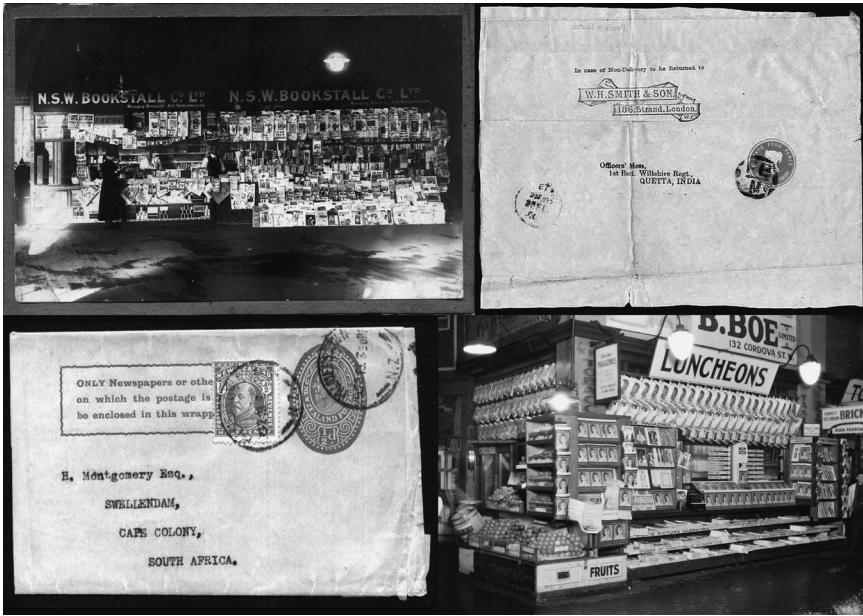


Figure 1.2 (Clockwise, from Top Left) N.S.W. Bookstall Co. Ltd. (Sydney, 1920); W.H. Smith & Son 4d Magazine Wrapper (1901); and Newsstand and Luncheon Counter (Vancouver, 1924); New Zealand 1/2d Newspaper Wrapper (1909).

American Midwest. At a time when the emergent technologies of film and radio were still in their infancy, long before television or the Internet were even on the horizon, both old-established¹² firms such as William Blackwood & Sons (UK) and new, large-scale commercial publishers of the 1890s such as the Frank A. Munsey Company (US) were already exploring and shaping the early contours of globalization. Their pioneering efforts brought textbooks, magazines, and paperback reprints shipped and bound for timely delivery to overseas markets, which were sold to “an increasingly imperial, global audience for novels and other [. . .] books produced by British [and American] publishers.”¹³

Today’s megalthic, multinational media entertainment corporations are a far cry from the operations of Blackwood and Munsey at the turn of the twentieth century, but the difference is one of degree, rather than kind. Although most readers today would not readily associate celebrity authors such as H. Rider Haggard, H.G. Wells, or Conan Doyle with sweeping technological changes in global modernity and large-scale revolutions in early twentieth-century print culture, it was best-selling professional writers like them—along with their agents, editors, and commercial publishers—who rode the wave of sea-changes taking place in modern book and periodical

4 Introduction: Print in Transition

publishing. And they continued to dominate global print media markets well into the twentieth century. With the trend toward revisionist histories of Anglo-American modernism of the past two decades offering valuable new insights into modernism's complex engagements with new media, celebrity culture, and the commercial marketplace,¹⁴ it is important to keep in mind that few authors of the period ever approached a level comparable with Haggard's literary success, Wells's intellectual and cultural clout, or Doyle's influence on the international press—and certainly not with their commercial viability (see [Appendix B](#)).

From their publishers' central offices in London, Edinburgh, and New York, authors of popular literary fiction sold commercially, and their



Figure 1.3 Six Covers: *Munsey's Magazine* (June 1906); *The All-Story* (October 1912); *The Popular Magazine* (February 1905); *Pearson's* (April 1897); *The Royal Magazine* (December 1898); and *The Strand Magazine* (April 1912).

works were marketed aggressively on the global scale. By 1900, this business involved several new, discrete British, American, colonial, and continental territorial markets.¹⁵ Across an increasingly diversified range of major new media markets, such as film and reprint publishing, they were courted by American magazine editors such as Charles Agnew Maclean (*The Popular Magazine*; Street & Smith [S&S] Corporation) and Robert H. “Bob” Davis (*Munsey’s Magazine*, *The All-Story*; The Frank Munsey Co.); and championed by British editors Percy Everett (*Pearson’s Magazine*, *The Royal Magazine*; Pearson Ltd.) and H. Greenhough Smith (*The Strand Magazine*; George Newnes Ltd.). These were four of the most influential editors and most widely read fiction magazines in Great Britain and the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁶

Literary agencies, particularly A.P. Watt & Son (1883–1924); newspaper syndicates, such as W.F. Tillotsons, S.S. McClure, King Features Syndicate, and United Feature Syndicate; the Society of Authors (UK) and Authors’ League of America facilitated further the widespread dissemination of their stories, often reaching hundreds of thousands of readers of romance, westerns, mysteries, and adventure fiction around the world.

Many of the most profitable literary properties of the day have long been forgotten. Few readers now, besides a handful of scholars, recognize the names Charles Garvice, Marie Corelli, or Hall Caine.¹⁷ Others have demonstrated a remarkable degree of cultural endurance, however, and, as much as they were shaped by the late-Victorian era, continue to help shape the course of the twentieth century’s new media and electronic cultures. Their direct influence can be seen, for example, in a cross-section of Hollywood films (*Sherlock Holmes*,¹⁸ *John Carter*, *King Kong*, and *Conan the Barbarian*), radio programs of the 1930s (‘Flash Gordon’ and CBS’s ‘Detective Story Hour’), today’s comic books (*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*), TV shows (‘The Lone Ranger’), and video games (from Atari’s *Pitfall!* to Xbox’s *Call of Cthulhu*). Blockbuster films of today demonstrate the longevity of literary forms popularized by them in newspapers and magazines over a century ago, and tomorrow’s sequels will attempt to recapture these same magic formulas yet again. Iconic Hollywood “tomb raiders” such as Indiana Jones, Lara Croft, and Rick O’Connell are all drawn straight out of American pulp magazines and Saturday matinee serials of the 1930s,¹⁹ which borrowed extensively from literary traditions handed down through Haggard, Doyle, R.L. Stevenson, C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne, and H. de Vere Stacpoole.²⁰ Some of the first silent film adaptations of *King Solomon’s Mines* (1918),²¹ *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920),²² *The Blue Lagoon* (1923), and *The Lost World* (1925) were also the major critical and commercial blockbusters of their day. Adaptations in film, radio, and subsequent new media of the twentieth century “gave a new lease of life”²³ to the works of these popular authors, and, as Nicholas Daly points out, classic novels such as *Treasure Island*, *King Solomon’s Mines*, *She*, and *Dracula* have not been out of print since.²⁴

This study shows that a cross-fertilization of adventure fiction, periodical publishing, and the “new mass entertainment culture” was already at work in the late-Victorian popular “revival of romance” itself.²⁵ The emergent forms deployed in romance and adventure fiction at the turn of the twentieth century, moreover, developed in direct response to the practice of serialization in the popular and well-established magazines of the day. Exploring the high-stakes professional field of publishing, marketing, and circulating works of popular fiction in the early twentieth century, *Empires of Print: Adventure Fiction in the Magazines, 1899–1919* shows how popular authors not only competed commercially in an expanding global market, but also actively and successfully participated in key developments transforming print and periodical publishing. It demonstrates how massive readerships around the world shared reliable access to contemporary popular fiction through key periodical forms, and argues that the emergence of distinctive tropes and character types in popular fiction at the turn of the twentieth century is inseparable from authors’ negotiations of these global markets. Focusing on adventure fiction in the magazines, it suggests further that authors’ complex engagements with the foreign markets through periodical publication inspired them to create and develop new modern subjectivities, successfully adapting conventions of nineteenth-century adventure fiction in order to navigate modernity’s new media landscapes and changing cartographies and engage its new technologies.

Popular adventure fiction emerges from this account of modern periodical publishing as something more complicated and more sophisticated than just “light holiday literature.”²⁶ I argue instead that popular fiction from the turn of the twentieth century—with the emphasis on *adventure* fiction, in particular—must be viewed critically through the lens of the modern media landscape. It developed in ways directly correlative to authors’ experiences in the periodical publishing market, and its proliferating subgenres emerged as one way of marketing their works in this over-determined print space, altered by the rise of new kinds of consumers and transformations of accepted habits of reading, publishing, and writing.²⁷

In the process, this study also examines the production and circulation of the magazines that first carried these popular new forms of adventure fiction and modern best-sellers to nearly every known corner of the world. It illuminates an alternate history and reading of imperial romance at the turn of the twentieth century, relocating this enormously popular genre within the expanding volumes of print and visual material of the period. It shows how the themes and emergent forms deployed by romance and adventure writers developed in direct response to serialization in old-established magazines such as *Blackwood’s*, rough-paper pulps such as *The All-Story*, and illustrated general-interest monthlies such as *The Strand*. Asserting that large-scale expansions of the global trade in literary publishing dramatically altered the conceptual horizons of modern adventure fiction in magazines, I ask how writers Joseph Conrad, Wells, Doyle, and John Buchan responded

to this crisis, and I discover that it was often through new and emerging literary genres that extended the limits and enlarged the contours of modern adventure fiction's imaginary domains.

The book is divided into five chapters, each focusing on a different set of adventure texts, and arranged chronologically in order of the texts' first serializations. Chapter 1, "Empires of Print: An Imperial History of Late Nineteenth-Century Periodical Expansion," gives a brief historical overview of the expansion of overseas markets and publishers' attempts to supply those markets from 1880 to 1914. This chapter surveys some of the periodical forms in which readers may have encountered adventure fiction during the nineteenth century. It also argues that a close, symbiotic relationship existed between magazines and adventure fiction, and that this relationship would play a critical role in the literary debates between Romance and Realism at the turn of the century. As new and emerging markets were developed worldwide, publishers such as Macmillan, Bell, and Blackwood & Sons established networks of distribution to supply these markets with up-to-date shipments of print and periodical reading material. The globalization of literary culture had not yet been fully realized, but, as this chapter shows, by the late nineteenth century, the tastes and reading habits of British and American readers were dependent on, and in some cases dictated by,

BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS.

NOT LIKE ANY OTHER STORY THAT YOU HAVE EVER READ.

CHAPTER I.
Out To Sea.

I had this story from one who had no business to tell it to me, or to any other. I may credit the suggestive influence of an old village upon the narrator for the beginning of it, and my own skepticism during the days that followed for the balance of it.

FOR PROMPT AND RELIABLE HAT REPAIRS.

Call at
Kenton Hat Factory
31 Madison Ave., Covington
Phone S. 3087-L.

ALL KINDS OF
Coverings for Wagons and
Buggies, Stom Aprons, etc.

Thoman's
36 Pike St., Covington, Ky.

**LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE
RAILROAD**
(Effective Nov. 11, 1912)

City.	Departs	Arrive.
Covington	8:00 a.m.	8:30 a.m.
Nashville	8:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
Memphis	9:00 a.m.	9:30 a.m.
St. Louis	9:30 a.m.	10:00 a.m.
Chicago	10:00 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
St. Paul	10:30 a.m.	11:00 a.m.
Minneapolis	11:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.
Portland	11:30 a.m.	12:00 p.m.
Seattle	12:00 p.m.	12:30 p.m.
Vancouver	12:30 p.m.	1:00 p.m.
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Seattle	1:30 p.m.	2:00 p.m.
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Portland	2:30 a.m.	3:0

the preferences and buying habits of foreign, international, and colonial readers living in large, increasingly more lucrative markets overseas.²⁸ This chapter's expanded portrait of modern periodical print culture acknowledges the horizontal and global production of magazines in the early twentieth century, and subsequent chapters examine key texts by individual authors more closely, situating them against this wider material background.

Chapter 2, "Imperial Technologies: Adventure and the Threat of New Media in Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1899)," examines the original periodical context of Conrad's *Lord Jim*, first published as a protracted serialization in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* from October 1899 to November 1900. This chapter argues that *Lord Jim* anticipates the threatened displacement of an older, heroic, and mythic literary tradition by the spread of worldwide information networks that, in 1902, had fully encircled the Earth's surface with crisscrossing lines of telegraph cables.²⁹ This erasure is registered on the four interrelated subgenres of late nineteenth-century adventure fiction featured in the novel: imperial romance, exotic love story, pirate tale, and the lost world romance. *Lord Jim* acknowledges the widespread cultural currency of a robust and multifaceted literary tradition. It draws on conventions of adventure literature derived from sea stories, travel books, confessional diaries, captivity narratives, and discovery journals of the past two centuries, while it interrogates this tradition's contingency and diminishing possibilities in an increasingly integrated, more mobile world. This position poses complications for an author of sea stories and adventures whose career depended on expanding new markets for periodical publication, but it also marks the creative tension between *Lord Jim*'s Patusan section and the material context of its serialization in a magazine such as *Blackwood's*, which not only "took [Conrad's] name wherever the English language is read,"³⁰ but also aimed to develop new, larger, and ever-growing markets of those readers worldwide. Finally, with this chapter I show how reading *Lord Jim* in its original periodical context adds an important dimension to the novel's notoriously complex composition history, and I argue that *Blackwood's* own transitional identity at the turn of the twentieth century offers a cogent explanation for the novel's "structural rift,"³¹ or what the author called its "plague spot . . . [the] division of the book into two parts."³²

Chapter 3 then considers the uneven, shifting development of adventure fiction during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In "Transatlantic Crossings: The Technological Scene of H.G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay* (1909)," I begin by reassessing H.G. Wells's comic portrayal of Conradian adventure fiction in Part Three of *Tono-Bungay*, "How I Stole the Heaps of Quap from Mordet Island." Several scholars have already shown how Wells's unflattering caricature of the "Roumanian [*sic*] captain" suggests an attitude of contempt toward Conrad, his style, and subject matter. In command of the doomed sailing vessel, the *Maud Mary*, the captain "had learnt the sea in the Roumanian navy, and English out of a book."³³ Andrew

Glazzard labels the episode “an extended piece of Conradese” and concludes that, “recollections of Conrad in *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934) confirm *Tono-Bungay*’s captain was based on [him].”³⁴ According to Wells’s narrator, George Ponderevo, he was “an exceptionally inefficient captain”; was “perpetually imagining danger”; and, in the end, he must be “bought off.”³⁵ I note, however, that there were two distinctly different “first” appearances of Wells’s novel, through its simultaneous transatlantic serialization in both Ford Maddox Hueffer’s *The English Review* (UK) and S&S Corporation’s *The Popular Magazine* (US); any reading of the novel’s material history, print culture, or first periodical contexts should therefore take into account this expanded field of modern literary production.

Finally, I argue that this critique of the Conradian adventure story should be read alongside contemporary advertisements for around-the-world holiday cruise ships, express tour packages, resort hotels, and deluxe travel accommodations. Wells’s dark, comical dramatizations of familiar colonialist themes—violence, escape, and surveillance in the jungle—are here more likely regarded as an attempt at relocating Conrad’s romantic posturing within the shifting signs and representations of foreign and faraway places found in the posters, travel brochures, and popular illustrated magazines of the period.

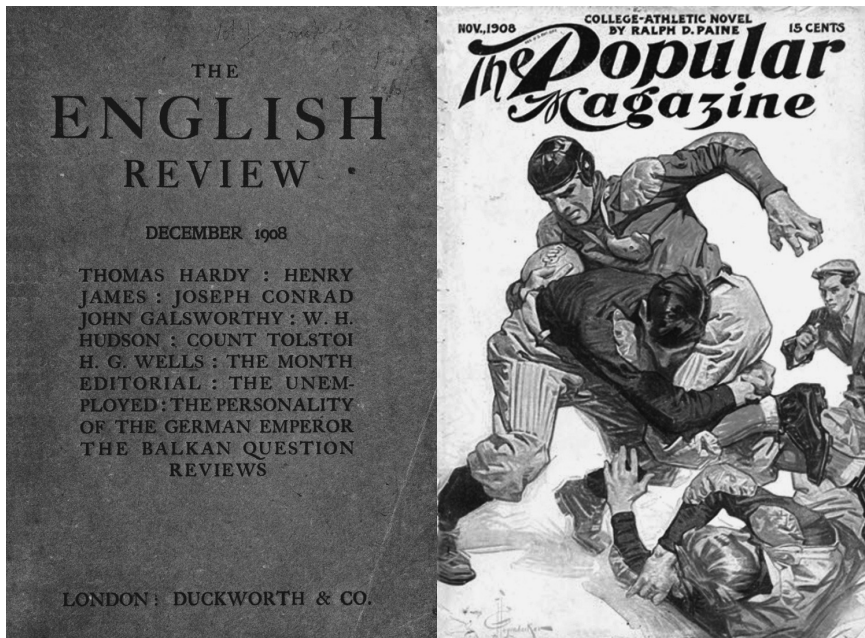


Figure 1.5 Two Covers: *The English Review* (December 1908) and *The Popular Magazine* (November 1908).

My [fourth chapter](#), “Spectacular Texts: Conan Doyle’s Essays on Photography and *The Lost World* (1912),” foregrounds relationships that existed commercially and professionally between print and competing forms of popular media in the early twentieth century. It examines Doyle’s expert command of modern publicity, his fascination with spirit photography, and his knowledge of innovative photographic techniques. It shows how Doyle mobilized international celebrity, the American press, film, and trick photography in order to cast doubt on scientific materialism, and argues that new media technologies could also help reinstate a diminishing body of evidence for geographical frontiers separating civilization from the unknown. It examines the first periodical publication of Doyle’s *The Lost World*, which was serialized in *The Strand Magazine* from April to November 1912, and argues that Doyle appropriates photography and its representation in the popular illustrated magazine as a seemingly objective form of proof and documentary evidence. In doing so, Doyle postulates new imaginary avenues for escape and transgression in the modern world. Modernity is not a threat, but an opportunity to reveal hidden avenues and to unlock other worlds. This chapter emphasizes that paper, printing, publishing, and authorship did not exist in a vacuum, but that print and new media were complementary forms of a “new mass entertainment culture.”³⁶ Books, magazines, and newspapers gave cinema and radio some of their earliest plots, stories, and iconography. From 1911 to 1938, 60 consumer magazines and nearly 90 trade and in-house publications were devoted to cinema, movie stars, and movie production.³⁷ Some early titles included *Photoplay* (1911), *Picture Play* (1915), and *Screen Play* (1925), and “[t]hroughout the twenties, thirties and forties, new titles were forever appearing on newsstands . . . proliferation of movie magazines . . . continued into the 1940s.”³⁸ Magazines and cinema shared “similar subject matter . . . [and this created their] complementary effect, rather than a displacement effect.”³⁹ New electronic media technologies such as cinema and radio—in addition to the airplanes, telephones, tanks, spiritualism, and celebrity culture—were just some of the many variations and multiplying indices of modern life, offering volumes of new books, magazines, and newspapers a diversified range of new subjects in which to specialize.

The convergence of modern media, where every story gets told across multiple platforms, is also the subject of the [fifth](#) and final [chapter](#) of this book, “Deciphered Codes: John Buchan in *All-Story Weekly* (1915) and *The Popular Magazine* (1919).” This chapter examines Buchan’s wartime spy novels, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) and *Mr. Standfast* (1919), in the transatlantic context of their first North American serializations in the popular pulp-paper magazines.⁴⁰ It shows how Buchan’s own professional command of literary agency, publishing, and authorship operated on multiple levels, and contends that his ability to perform simultaneously the roles of agent, publisher, and author effectively informs his development of a new kind of modern hero. Buchan’s protagonist—the South African