

# Fictions of (Cultural) Memory: Re-inventing British Imperial Memory in Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' and Lord Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon'

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**Abstract:** This study explores the representations of British cultural memory and identity in two British Poems—Kipling's 'The White Man's burden' and Lord Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon', with the aim of demonstrating that, as 'fictions of memory' these literary works teem with a memory of British political/imperial history in the form of linguistic parameters, ideological and cultural discourses, myths, images and mainly metaphors of imperial history or what most critics generally refer to as, 'fictions of empire' or 'metaphors of empire'. The selected texts from the British colonial context are linked by their historical affinity to, and memory of British colonialism and the history of slavery. This paper answers the following research questions: Whose memory of the past is textually articulated through the chosen texts? Or, which specific versions of memory are textually inscribed? What approaches are available for research focusing on British imperial memory in literary studies? What functions do the texts fulfil as fictions of memory? In answering these questions, the study further demonstrates that the representation of memory in texts can be located via narrative strategies. Narratology thus plays a significant role in constructing versions of the past and the identities of given social groups or cultural communities.

**Keywords:** Fictions of Memory, Cultural Memory, Identity, Kipling, Byron

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## 1. Introduction

Given their importance to this paper, and also the ambiguity surrounding the seemingly imprecise words, 'fictions' and 'cultural' in the phrases, 'fictions of memory' or 'memory fictions' and 'cultural memory' respectively, there is need to begin by shedding light on these concepts. The functional definition of the term, 'fiction' has been elaborated as quoted below:

...the word fiction has quite different meanings. On the one hand, the word can designate '[t]hat which, or something that, is imaginatively invented' or, more specifically, '[t]he species of literature which is concerned with the narration of imaginary events and the portraiture of imaginary characters', viz. [a] work of fiction; a novel or tale'. On the one hand, 'fiction refers to any 'supposition known to be at variance with fact, but conventionally accepted for some reason of practical

convenience, conformity with traditional usage, decorum, or the like' [15].

The meaning of 'fiction' as both literary and narrative is very vital for this study because it can address questions that deal with how stories are told. Notice that questions about narrative transmission or mediation, or about 'who speaks', 'who perceives' or 'who focalizes' (Gerard Genette's conceptualization), whether an individual or a collective community, often draw attention to mediums such as narrative voice, focalization, perspective and (cultural) memory. The meaning of fiction as a 'theoretical construct' [15] is also adoringly adopted in this investigation given that it can answer one of the questions raised in the study, specifically that dealing with how works of fiction focusing on a group's or nation's cultural heritage can construct their collective voice, collective perspective

(focalization) and thus their cultural memory and identity. Most memory critics agree that, as art form, literary texts (re-) create and represent culture by revisiting history and excavating the relics of the cultural practice of a people. The term, 'fictions of memory' is used to designate the presence in a literary text, of 'what is remembered as a culture's past' and which includes 'collective memories', 'shared interpretations of the past' or the 'shared collective past'. The term is often used interchangeably with 'cultural fictions' in the sense that 'fictions of memory reside in literary representations, notably, in perceptual and ideological metaphors, myths, symbols, discourses (e.g. colonial discourse), material objects as well as immaterial aspects of texts and function as mediums by which a given community's cultural past continues to live on in their communal psyche, and through which given cultures, social groups or nations remember their past and thus construct their cultural identities. It is in this regard that all ideological stereotypes in texts largely shaped by the imperial experience can be categorized under fictions of memory or cultural fictions. But what is Cultural memory?

## 2. Cultural/Imperial Memory and Its Literary Representation

Believed to have come into being at the beginning of the twentieth century, notably 1920s, the paternity of Cultural memory studies is generally accredited to the works of the French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, on 'Collective Memory' which has since inspired recent research on memory studies. In Halbwachs's 'seminal work...on the nature of collective memory', he essentially argues that

even as people remember in an individual capacity, their memories are firmly shaped and rooted in the socio-cultural context to which they belong. Hence even as social groups and institutions have no memory of their own, the people who populate them constitute what he calls collective memory' [7].

The term, cultural memory or collective memory thus implies that the individual memory of many people partly overlaps as it is influenced, for example, by the habits of your family, social class and profession.

The term, Cultural Memory' is used interchangeably with terms like 'collective', or 'social' memory and denotes the metaphorical 'connections of memory on the one hand and socio-cultural contexts on the other' [8]. According to [4], collective, cultural or social memory thus implies a shared identity that unites a social group (e.g. a family, a cultural community or a nation). It is the political, historical, ideological, literary, anthropological and socio-cultural structures, images and objects in which shared knowledge resides that are used to represent 'cultural' or 'collective' memory. Cultural memory is 'the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts', hence, 'individual acts of remembering in a social context, group memory, national,[and imperial] memory...' are forms of cultural or

collective memory [8]. Such a definition allows us to consider images of history, discourses, perceptual devices, notably metaphor and other linguistic structures through which the past is often remembered in the present, as depictions of cultural/collective memory. In the context of this study, images, objects and linguistic structures with which imperial memory is constructed constitute what in literary terminology is called 'fictions of memory'. The association of collective or imperial memory with shared knowledge permits this study to consider images and/or objects that are used to transmit these notions of shared values and norms, and/or that are used in the construction of imperial memories and identities, as forms of collective memory.

However, the above definitions only invite questions regarding the representation of cultural/imperial memory: How does a given society, a nation for instance, or a given object remember its past when it has no mind? Reference [8] explains that the notions of 'cultural' or 'collective' memory proceeds from an operative metaphor, adding that the concept of 'remembering' (a cognitive process which takes place in individual brain) is metaphorically transferred to the level of culture. This metaphorical line of thinking permits the transfer of the traits of an individual to society and thus allows critics to speak of levels of memory such as, a cultural community's memory, social memory, individual memory, literature's memory, the nation's memory amongst others. Astrid Erll identifies two levels on which culture and memory intersects: the individual (the cognitive level) and the collective (which embodies the social, national, imperial). This study adopts her explanation of how a given society can remember its past. In this regard, (Cultural) 'Memory' is used in this paper in a metaphorical and not literary sense in that societies (nations for instance) do not have minds and therefore do not remember literarily in the way an individual uses his/her cognitive processes to remember the past. Rather, what a literary text, a carving, symbolic objects, or linguistic forms (proverbs, metaphors, and other images) do to reconstruct a shared past 'bears some semblance to the process of individual memory, such as the selectivity and perspectivity inherent in the creation of versions of the past' [8]. The view that a society/a nation can remember its shared past via the selection of perspective draws attention to the inextricable relation of narrative techniques to memory. But what textual indicators can lead us to ascribe such memory to a nation (in this case, Britain)?

## 3. British Narratives as Fictions of (Imperial) Memory

As sites of cultural memory, British narratives allude to culture or the social contexts, and in so doing evoke the past of their nation, sometimes through voice, perspective and memory. Owing to their inextricable relationship with cultures, the social and historical contexts of their nations, these narratives have been viewed as cultural products

capable of reproducing the cultures from which they originated. They must therefore be considered in any analysis of how a given nation's shared past is remembered or represented in a text. Because they function as perceptual or ideological representations of shared past, these texts and their 'fictions of memory' can be assigned memory potentials and given narrative authority in the form of voice, perspective and memory, all of which can permit the staging of versions of the past or 'shared interpretations of the past' [11]. 'Fictions of empire' or 'metaphors of empire, specifically those conceived from either the imperial (colonizer's) perspective or the colonized's imagination for instance, must be considered when analysing British imperial memory and identity. Due to its colonial heritage, British literary works sometimes embody colonial discourses and thus fictions of empire. What is implied here is that the British narrative, be it a poem, a drama text, or a novel can generate discourses of its colonial history which are thus representations of Britain's imperial memory, and such discourses generally resuscitate versions of the past that continue to survive in the public psyche of the British people. These narratives or texts therefore contain literary tools for activating collective (national) memory. Historical events like colonization, (especially when clothe in figurative language like metaphors, images, objects and symbols), constitute sites of British collective memory and are used for negotiating British imperial/national consciousness and collective identity. The British narrative with the above mentioned literary tools is largely a national story, a discourse of national memory or a 'fiction of memory'. A colonial discourse signified by the presence of tropes, stereotypes, myths and metaphors of empire articulates a number of issues relevant for any analysis of colonial memory and collective identity. They should be viewed as largely the means by which literature recreates the cultural or national past of collective groups like Britain. Such discursive devices are cultural repertoires and function in generating, conserving and transmitting collective memory and identity. They can therefore be read as discursive manifestations of national notions, norms and values, as ways of producing meaning and collective (national) identity, and as patterns of interpretation and understanding. Metaphors of partition, myths and metaphors of empire including culture symbolic objects and other literary tools constitute 'sites of memory' [17]; they are considered as figurative devices of collective memory. These devices are not passive carriers of memory; they 'do not simply mirror the discourses they are embedded in; they should be perceived as ideological vehicles of collective/national identity that assign to texts the potential to function as mediums or depositories of collective/national memory and identity' [1]. But what narratological concepts exist for constructing collective memory in literary text? Put differently, how do I render voice, perspective (focalization) as a social/cultural category?

#### 4. Analyzing Imperial Memory: Voice, Perspectivity and Empire Metaphors

An analysis of memory usually begins with a few questions: How is memory represented in a text (a novel, poem, drama, short story etc.), an image or object? Whose past is remembered by who, and how? To which community is the facet of memory, or version of the past remembered ascribed? What object of representation is used to remember the past? Are the values or perceptions contained in the representations linked to an individual, a group or nation?

These questions hint on the link between narratology and memory as both critical traditions share methodological affinities specifically in their concern with the following questions: Who is telling the story, or, who speaks? 'Who perceives' or from whose perspective is the story told? 'Which versions of the story/memory are articulated, [and] [w]ho or what is remembered by whom?' [17]. While the question. 'Who speaks' or 'Who narrates'? refers to the teller or speaker who functions as the narrating subject, 'Who perceives' implies focalization or the perspective from which the story is told and refers to all sensory processes including, thinking, feeling and remembering [14].

Both Memory Critics and narratologists agree that narrative voice and perspective are instrumental in reproducing a given cultural community's memory. Reference [8] argues that societies construct a shared past by means of the selectivity and perspectivity inherent in the creation of versions of the past. By implication, the intersections between cultural memory and narratology is in their interest in the voice, perspective (focalization), memory and the use of figurative language. The reference to perspectivity (which is a category of narratology and which often draws attention to the textual agent whose perceptions, focalization, perspective, emotions, feelings, dispositions, thoughts and mental states play a key role in determining what is narrated), as a device for constructing memory draws attention to the relevance of narrative methodology in locating memory. Interestingly, critics asserts that, 'without doubt it is narrative that forms the basis of collective, national memories and that constitute the politics of identity and difference' [13]. As socio-cultural categories, narrative voice and perspective (focalization) can play key roles in locating collective memory in texts.

We have stated that, memory resides in texts and discourses of culture including, figurative language (metaphors, images) and images of history wherein resides shared values, norms and beliefs and whose origin can be traced to a specified socio-cultural community or nation. Since these memory-sensitive aspects constitute communal property and have narrative potentials, they can be assigned narrative perspective. In this regard, narratologically sensitive terminologies such as communal/collective perspective, focalization or communal consciousness can be used to describe the kind of cultural discourse that originates from a collective community and exists as prove of how their collective values, norms, beliefs and perceptions have come

to live in their public psyche as evidence of their collective identity. In other words, although linguistic images of history may not possess voice, they wield narrative authority in the form of perspective or focalization. Perceptual and ideological images, myths and metaphors can thus be assigned collective perspective/focalization or memory, and be made to perform memory-oriented narrative functions. In this regard, the following questions may be investigated: whose perspective, focalization or memory, is encapsulated in the specific text, discourse, metaphor, or image of history? Does the perspective/focalization or memory belongs to a given social group, a nation or an individual? That is, does the orientation inscribed in the image originates for example, from the colonizer or the colonized? An image may encode a shared version of the past. In such a case of shared versions of the past, the perspective, focalization, or memory encapsulated in the image, (be it an image of history or metaphor of history, notably, metaphors of say Empire or partition), can be assigned to a specific collective group or nation. Generally, shared believes, norms, values and ideologies legitimizing imperialism are often textually inscribed by means of stereotypes as well as myths and metaphors of popular imperialism. Such myths and ideologically charged metaphors can be reconceptualized in Narratological terminologies and can be attributed the communal or collective perspective or memory. For instance, an image, myth or metaphor that encodes the perception of Africa as well as encodes the view that Africans are primitive, uncivilized or barbaric people who lacked history and religion and need civilization accurately fits western perceptions of Africa and Africans in the colonial era and in colonial discourse and can or should be attributed to their collective or national (in the case of Britain) perspective. Myths and metaphors of empire that usually encode such cultural stereotypes created by the historical, political, social or ideological circumstances of colonialism and habitually perceived as indicators of the inferiority of a colonized people constitute instances of memory that can be located in texts and attributed the communal/collective/national perspective.

Conceptual and ideological metaphors can also be reconceptualized to proffer textual solutions to questions regarding collective or national memory. The concepts of cultural/collective or national memory and remembering are inevitably linked to metaphors of history and imperialism, since metaphors are often associated with activities of cognition, remembering, perception, and are therefore considered by some critics as 'viewing and perceiving frames' [10]. In addition, metaphors have been said to be cognitive, mental and perceptual tools for understanding something in terms of another [14]. It is with this function in mind that another critic aptly describes metaphors as 'mini-narrations' [9]. They are indeed, the result of mental operations that can serve as cultural expressions of collective consciousness and communal perceptions, and thus constitute cultural devices that create the illusion of the collective psyche of a given nation or cultural community. In addition, metaphors and

images can assume the role of the perceiving or narrating agents, and can function as perceivers and focalizers in the narrative transmission process. Metaphors are powerful vehicles of memory because 'the connotative power of metaphors supplies particular criteria for the perception and interpretation of historical and political circumstances' [14]. Hence, 'metaphors, do not simply mirror the discourses they are embedded in; they do 'ideological work' and should be perceived as ideological vehicles of collective [national] identity' [1]. Metaphors should be perceived as active medial elements contributing to the 'legacy of the rhetoric of empire' [6]. The point to establish is that, metaphors, especially 'metaphors of empire' can be assigned narrative authority in the form of either communal perspective/focalization or collective memory and made to perform the textual functions of locating shared memory and the collective identity of nations like Britain as in the analysis below. Yet, one cannot talk accurately about memory construction devices without alluding to 'colonial discourse' in which they are usually encoded.

## 5. Orientalism and the Construction of Colonial Identities

In *Orientalism*, Said draws attention to Western attitudes towards the East (Orient), and how the West constructed and continues to represent the East or Orient as its 'Other' and as inferior by means of style, figures of speech, narrative devices, structures of thoughts, characterization, setting and textual stereotypes (which serve in this study as representations of colonial discourse) and as instruments in the construction and memory of collective identities. Orientalism is thus the process by which (British) imperialism was constructed in/by the West as justification for their colonizing project. The Orient was associated with the values, perceptions and mind-set which the West negate in themselves, some of which are vile, cruelty, barbarism, uncivilised, irrational, etc. What became the upshot of Said's analysis of textual devices and stereotypes by which the West had continued to represent the East was 'colonial discourse', defined as a set of codes, stereotypes, and vocabulary employed when the relationship between a colonial power and its colonies is written, or spoken about [14]. An analysis of memory and the construction of British colonialist identity therefore needs to consider 'colonial discourse' which is founded on 'the variety of textual forms by which the West produced and codified knowledge about the non-metropolitan areas and cultures, especially those under colonial control' [3] as well as those targeted for colonialism. An investigation of the chosen texts as colonial discourses that encode the process of constructing British imperial/national memory and collective identity then requires an analysis of images, myths and metaphors, codes, stereotypes, vocabulary, and any form of linguistic and perceptual representations which plays a crucial role in terms of codifying the relationship between a mother country and her colonies. Such devices are essential

in constructing, first, the cultural identity of a given nation as colonizer or the colonized and are thus essential to collective memory and identity construction.

Said's orientalism is close to the postcolonial concepts of the center and margin (periphery), which are often evoked in discussions of colonialism in postcolonial theory. Colonial ideology is based on the idea that the world we live in is divided into two binary opposites, which are, the colonizers understood as the civilized, and the colonized understood as savages. For the colonizers, the colonized were groups of people who lived in darkness; they are uncivilized, undeveloped, uneducated, uncultured and thus need to be impacted with the ways of the privileged white. Such a view constructs the colonizer (imperial Britain) as the center, while the non-white world is shuffled to the periphery (margin) of civilization, culture and power. The superior position (the center) occupied by the whites leads them to consider it their mission to bring the marginalized civilizations to the realm of the sophisticated center, and in so doing bring those living in darkness to the light of Western civilization, a view that accurately articulates in the chosen data.

## 6. Re-inventing British Imperial Memory

### 6.1. Rudyard Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' ([1897] 1899)

According to Gayatri Spivak in 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', British literature of the nineteenth century reproduced the ideology of imperialism and should not be read without considering the imperialist agenda and its implications. To Spivak like to many other postcolonial critics, this literature is laden with imperialistic undertones. Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' is an illustrative contribution to this argument. The poem has proven its merit as a testing ground for how British collective memory and identity as colonizer as well as the colonized identities of the non-white societies which lived the imperial experience are constructed and remembered in colonial discourse. Based on the view that England is an exceptional nation that is characterised by altruism, in the service of others, and that its selfless colonial policy is dedicated to peace and humanitarianism, Kipling made his case for colonial intervention on moral grounds. Written from the perspective of the West, the speaker in Kipling's poem constructs the colonialists as messiahs destined to rescue the non-white races: 'sullen peoples' who are 'half devil' and 'half child'. These coloured races have no peace as they die from wars, famine and diseases. The non-white races are perceived or constructed as a people in need of the saving grace of western benefactors. Dehumanizing the natives by depicting them as monsters—'your new caught sullen peoples, half devil and half child'—, the speaker creates a binary that simultaneously elevates colonialists by stressing their civility and humane Christian ethics while emphasizing the savage nature of the colonized.

Imperialism is deeply ingrained in the historical context, setting, title and thematic content of the poem. Like other colonial discourses, notably, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Heart of Darkness*, the plot and thematic content of the poem resembles that of an adventure, hanging its thematic trail on the explorations of new lands, colonialism, annexation and arrogation of the right to civilize people on the dark peripheries of the globe. On such a thematic content is sustained the discourses of empire, fictions of memory, colonialist ideology and motives, all of which function as active forces in the construction of British collective memory and identity.

In its setting, the poem replicates features of colonial discourse. It is set in the colonial context as can be inferred from its manifold myths, metaphors, images, beliefs, preconceptions and stereotypes associated with imperialism, and, in the racially biased portrayals of the (yet to be) colonized natives. The poem has three interrelated contexts. It was first written in 1897 on the occasion of the celebration of queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, with the purpose of celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her rule, not just as queen of England, but also as 'Empress of India', one of the many titles she was known by and that clearly signal the colonial or expansionist policy of her reign. Her reign was a high point in British imperialism and, from this perspective, it is clear that the poem was written to celebrate Britain's successful imperialist conquest and what Kipling and the British public naively believed was the powerful moral duty behind imperialism. The poem is thus a self-righteous justification/defense of British imperialism and the nineteenth century ideology of white superiority over colonized indigenes which was strong in popular culture at the time. As a poem that provides justification for Britain's imperialist rule over its colonies 'The White Man's Burden' reinforces and immortalizes the British colonialist ideology about the necessity of sending their sons out to distant lands to defend the empire with their lives. Underlain with western assumptions about racial superiority, the poet personae calls on other white nations to take up the white man's burden by sending the best of their country's youth to dark, uncivilized parts of the globe to end famine, disease and wars.

The second and even more significant, but interrelated context comes with a revision of the poem in 1899. In its revised edition, the poem addresses not the British monarchy and public but the American public. Yet one must not lose sight of the background presence of the British Empire that provides a model for the speaker's advice on imperialism. Written in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war in which America found itself in possession of the Philippine islands and other territories that belong to the Spaniards prior to the war, the revised edition of the poem openly exhorts America to join the white colonizing mission.

There is a third setting for 'The White Man's Burden' which is essentially the entire globe. Kipling's specific target was the Philippines, but while the poem implicitly includes this geographic area in its setting, the setting extends to include Egypt, which is used in the poem as a metaphor for

the non-white territories of the world. Hence, while the historical context leads us to think that the target of the poem is the Philippines and that the poem is addressed to the British and American publics, the poem itself implies an audience of the white race in general for, it implicitly addresses Americans and the many Europeans who settled in, or colonized myriad parts of the world. This view is attested to by the capitalization of the title words, 'The White Man' which clearly indicates that the poem is addressed to the entire white race, which is expected to lift up to civilization the inferior non-white races of the world. The definite article in 'The White Man's burden' further indicates that the addressees know this burden, hence, denying to take it up will imply denying one's moral and divine duties and destiny.

In the wider context discussed above, the poem is an endorsement of British and American imperialism which it presents as a moral duty that the white races must assume in order to bring advancement to non-white populations like the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. Perceiving British imperialism as the standard, the speaker in the poem urges America to colonize the Philippines and to establish an imperial rule, modelled on the British Empire. Significantly, the poem expresses in religious phraseology, the exploitative political, economic and military policy (imperialism) that gripped western civilizations from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, directing the white race toward an unspecified number of locales around the globe that are not yet under colonial control with firm instructions to colonize them. At the beginning of the voyage in *Heart of Darkness*, the narrator, Marlow draws attention to the need for Britain 'to pass on the light of civilization' [5]. Like Conrad's Novella, 'The White man's Burden' commands its listeners/readers (presumably whites) to 'Take up the White Man's burden' and to colonize different regions of the world desperately waiting for imperialism and colonialism to rescue them. Having been raised in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time when 'the British still saw themselves as 'humane masters' over all 'dark peoples' and 'still thought of the black race as dependent and less capable in all aspects of intelligence and morality, [Kipling] is quick to show prejudice in any difference in religion and culture' [16]. The refrain—'Take up the White man's burden' — is repeated regularly as to make the words linger in the readers' minds long after the poem ends. Like, Conrad's 'light of civilization' that must be passed by the British, this refrain, like the title itself—'The White Man's Burden'—demonstrates the popularity of the imperialist ideology at the time. What the title evokes as thematic content is imperialism as engrained in western mentality and in colonial discourse.

In view of its historical setting, and thematic focus on imperialism, 'The White Man's burden' has become canonical within the corpus of English colonial or imperialist literature and like such literature, the poem swarms with myths, metaphors and images by which colonialism/imperialism is represented as a mythical event. These myths, metaphors and other poetic devices serve a variety of purposes: first, as representations of White supremacy and superior civilization, secondly, as racially

prejudiced representations of the colonized as the 'Other', and third, as perceptual and ideological discourses by which the collective identities of Britain and other western nations as colonizers as well as the cultural identity of the indigenous populations as the colonized 'Other' are remembered and transmitted through generations. The devices further functions to disguise the true motives of imperialism; to rationalize them as well as provide justification for the colonial enterprise.

As postulated in *Orientalism*, colonial discourse establishes oppositions between 'us' and 'them'; 'self' and the 'other' which are important in shaping the identities of Western nations as colonizers and the natives as colonized. The heroic qualities that the poem attributes to the white race, and the stereotypes tagged on non-white races creates binary identities. The perspective/focalization is that of the colonizers, and the stereotypes tagged to non-whites feature strongly when the poet personae makes references to whites visa-vis the non-whites. The key word is 'burden', a metaphor by which Kipling's false narrative disguises as philanthropic the primary goals of the oppressive imperial system which is to extract natural resources for the benefit of the imperial nation. This same metaphor encodes an ideological irony for, owing to its dehumanizing effects, colonization (which is the subject of the poem) is actually the black man's burden. However, through Kipling's metaphor ('the white man's burden'), a selfish colonial mission is transformed into a moral obligation that will demand time, patience, sacrifice and perhaps, death from the white race. The metaphor constructs imperialism in the western imagination as a moral duty/obligation imposed on the white race by destiny. After demanding that the intended reader/listener (supposedly whites) 'Take up the White Man's Burden' and 'Send forth the best yet breed,' or their 'best' sons, for the white man's mission, the speaker elaborates on what this heavy task demands. Significantly the category of 'best' is perceived in the western imagination as belonging exclusively to the white race. The hard work that awaits the 'best' breed of white men in the foreign lands is captured in yet another metaphor that compares the supposedly selfless white men to workhorses in a 'heavy harness'. Opposed to the 'best' species of whites are the 'new-caught' or newly conquered natives, metaphorically perceived as 'fluttered folk' implying that, like any winged creatures, birds or butterflies for instance, the natives are without control and without any sense of direction. They are equally described as 'sullen' and 'wild'. Sullen means, bad-tempered and sulky while 'wild' draws a parallel between the natives and animals or plants living or growing in a natural or uncultivated environment. The natives are thus constructed as ignorant savages, undomesticated, uncultivated and uncivilized. This rawness provides justification for imperialism/colonialism which is the only process opened to the uncivilized natives to be civilized. Since these natives are ignorant, the speaker advises the colonizers to be 'open [in] speech and simple'; to speak slowly and to repeat their phrases when interacting with these ignorant natives.

Since the main purpose of the poem is to promote and legitimize imperialism, the colonizing enterprise is neither presented as a conquest nor as a profitable venture for the colonizing nations. Rather, imperialism is presented as a sober, tedious duty rather than the grand conquering adventure that it is. Hence, the speaker claims that imperialism is not, as many would think, a 'tawdry rule of kings,' but the 'toil of serf and sweeper,' to be undertaken with painful 'patience' for it requires time and sacrifice to lift the primitive natives out of savage darkness. The colonizers are remembered, not as triumphant conquerors of weaker peoples, but as honest workers on behalf of humanity for, colonialism is a 'thankless' task bestowed on whites who must execute it purely out of goodwill for other races without any ulterior motive of profit, reward, praise, or gratitude. Colonialism is thus intended 'To seek another's profit,/And work another's gain.' It is the selfless moral duty of the white race, involving no personal or national benefit, but rather development and civilising benefits to the inferior races. The poem redefines colonialism as a moral scenario in which the captors serve their captives with humility for, the white captors only 'seek another's profit, / And work another's gain.' Through the selfless efforts of the white race, the non-white races will be brought ('Ah, slowly!') toward the light, escaping the 'loved Egyptian night' in which they idled before they were rescued. In their ignorance, the natives' love for their previous 'darkness' will make the white man's task a difficult burden. The description of native territories as 'dark' echoes the British Empire's perception of Africa as dark. Such fictions of empire fulfill a legitimizing function: they provide justification and rationalizations of imperialism as a civilizing mission.

Like Conrad's title, *Heart of Darkness* too, 'The White Man's Burden' evokes the traditional hardship of the White man's journey into these supposedly 'dark' territories of the uncivilized natives. The difficult nature of the white man's civilising task is encoded in the metaphor of a 'burden', not to the colonized but to the colonizers; a 'burden' that requires them to lose the best of their young men, who must 'exile' themselves from the comforts of home to paradoxically serve their foreign, uncivilized, ungrateful and uncooperative captives. Masking the primary goal of imperialism, the poet personae persuades his audience to perceive the colonizing task as a divine mission (a 'burden') conferred on their race: to bring light to the unwilling savage populations of the world, described, not as human adults but as some 'childlike' evil beings. Contrary to their savagery, the white race must perform its task with patience, restraint and humility; all of these they must selflessly do for the benefit of the colonized for, their aim is 'To seek another's profit,/And work another's gain.'

However, in spite of the white race's best effort — fighting wars to enable peace to reign in the colonized regions ('The savage wars of peace—'); ending famine ('Fill full the mouth of Famine'), and getting rid of sickness ('bid the sickness cease') in these dark zones—the natives will remain unappreciative. The speaker also warns that the

whites must be careful to avoid, 'as your goal draws near', falling into sloth and heathen Folly' that will 'Bring all your hopes to nought.' The dangers of falling into sloth and folly underscore the psychological risk posed by the wild and uncultivated native environments to the refined Westerners. Like Kurtz, the 'best' westerners risk being transformed into the same wild and uncivilized monsters they seek to civilize. But the white man's burden will also inevitably be threatened by the laziness and foolishness of the savage races who will definitely respond negatively or ungratefully through their preference for the darkness ('Egyptian night') of their previously savage lives.

Significant are the contrastive images with which the colonizer and colonized are remembered, constructed or identified: the white colonizers are marked by civility and humane values while the natives are depicted in dehumanizing animal imagery and perceived as uncivilized and desperately dependent on whites for knowledge, religious, political and economic nurture and survival. Kipling refers to the indigenous natives as 'sullen peoples' and calls them 'Half-devil and half-child.' These disparaging ideological and perceptual images emphasize Kipling's racial prejudice, and degrade the Natives by constructing their identities as the colonized. Further, the metaphors of light and darkness are ideological and perceptual images that represent the contrast between civilization (light) and the savagery of the native populations (darkness). Light here is ideologically perceived as synonymous to whiteness and stands for freedom, knowledge and civilization. This metaphor of light is contrasted with the 'Egyptian night' by which the colonized regions are remembered. 'Night' or darkness is a state of bondage that reflects the ignorance and savagery which from the western perspective, the non-white people live in. Thus the racist speaker of the poem calls on white people to lead non-white races 'towards the light'—that is, towards civilization. Since this colonizing mission is presented as a moral duty/obligation, 'light' is further associated with virtue and darkness with vice. The metaphor of light thus emphasizes the altruistic motives of the white people in their conquest, attributing special moral qualities to whiteness. In contrast to the non-white races, the white race undertakes deadly missions on behalf of the weak, uneducated and uncivilized 'others'. To further emphasize this metaphoric contrast, the speaker refers to the non-white race as 'half devil and half child', thus underscoring the ideological contrast between the supposed devilish darkness (in mythology, European art, biblical verses etc.: in common parlance, devils were/are often presented as dark-skinned and darkness always associated with evil) of the savage non-white races and the angelic whiteness of the white race. The moral quality of whiteness is further contrasted with the 'Egyptian night' which the speaker claims is the preference of the non-white races. The allusion to Egypt in 'Egyptian night' constitutes another metaphoric dig at the non-white races in general and to Africans in particular. Like ancient Egypt which had many gods for many different purposes, non-white races are perceived to be mainly polytheistic. The

implied contrast here is with western Christianity which the speaker wishes to present as simple and as pure as light. On the other hand, the polytheistic superstition of non-white races, Africa in particular, keeps them in 'bondage' and thus in need of liberation. It is important to note that none of the territories considered for imperial conquest in the poem is Egyptian or even worships Egyptian gods. The implication is that 'Egyptian night' is used as a metaphor for non-white civilisations in general whose religions and cultures need to be swept aside and be replaced with western civilization. The metaphor of an 'Egyptian night' has other implications for the colonial identity of the white race. The supposedly superstitious culture of classical Egypt is contrasted with the supposedly enlightened and sophisticated western cultures. This contrast reinforces the differentiation between light and darkness which is meant to justify colonization. There is no doubt therefore that 'light' and 'darkness' are perceptual and ideological metaphors of empire that serve to legitimize the imperial conquest. As metaphors of imperialism, they portray Britain and its European counterparts as nations of great power destined to bring civilization to non-white societies characterised by barbarism and darkness. The 'darkness' with which non-white territories are associated draws attention to the intellectual bareness with which these societies were associated. The metaphor of 'darkness' structures the narrative from a colonialist perspective because it is definitely in the white colonizer's perception that the non-white regions are viewed in the image of darkness.

Since the purpose of the poem is to provide a positive memory of, and justification for, colonialism, the difficulty and self-sacrifice associated with the colonialists' journey as he penetrates the interiors of hazardous foreign lands are effectively evoked in the poem which emphasizes the hardships of the imperial project, juxtaposing it with the ingratitude of the savage natives. Imperialism is conceived as a holy mission in which the white imperialists will selflessly 'bind [their] sons to exile' forcing them to 'wait in heavy harness' in pursuit of 'savage wars of peace'. Instead of being praised, the 'silent sullen peoples' that are lifted from the 'bondage' of savagery will return the efforts of their white masters with ingratitude, 'blame' ('The blame of those ye better') and 'hate' ('The hate of those ye guard—'). The thanklessness of the imperial enterprise as well as the speaker's refrain calling for the whites to take up the burden establishes the credibility of the colonial powers as a humane people full of foresight, good sense and selfless sacrifice. The metaphor also elevates them to the statue of an educative mother/father figure over the savage natives described in the poem as 'childlike' and thus ignorant and in need of direction. The above metaphors cognitively or perceptually structure the relationship between the metropolis (colonizers) and the colonies as that of the civilized master/teacher/father figure and the dependent child relying on the master.

Kipling's 'empire metaphors' function as cognitive and perceptual frames of references, and although it can be argued that the voice the reader hears is that of Kipling or his poet personae, the perspective encoded in the metaphors

seems to originate from the white colonizers and thus constitutes a memory of their collective identity. Such ideological and perceptual metaphors embody the shared views and perceptions of white nations (France, Britain, America and other European nations), and thus locate the perspective of the narrative as theirs; they also construct the identities of these nations as colonizers by further assigning to them the role of a civilizing mission in the colonies which are characterized by 'darkness' and childlike innocence. Such metaphors thus encourage a cognitive or perceptual view of European colonialists as masters and of the colonized zones of the world as dependents. They further validate the imperial project as a civilizing mission. The white race is assigned the role of a teacher on which its colonies, perceived as uncivilized, desperately rely for knowledge and survival. Such ideological metaphors also serve to conceal the violent, military and despotic relation that obtains between the imperial centre and its colonized periphery (the colonies).

The father-child metaphor in the poem is extended to the Americans to whom the poem seems to be partly addressed. The poem exhorts Americans to learn and promote through participation, the humane benefits of colonialism from their British and other European counterparts who precede the Americans in colonizing 'inferior' regions of the world. Hence, the poem sets up Britain in particular and the Europeans in general as models or fathers figures charged with the responsibility of teaching non-whites and even their own white counterparts (Americans) the moral benefits of colonialism. Americans must learn from its predecessors (Britain in particular) the colonizing mission for, as the speaker tells the Americans, they will only gain true respect—'the judgement of your peers' both 'cold' and edged with dear-bought wisdom'—if they fulfill their burden of colonizing inferior races.

Kipling's metaphors and images analysed above, not only promote, legitimize and transmit memories of imperialism, but also constructs the collective identity of Britain and other European powers as colonizers. The description of the non-white races as living in darkness ('Egyptian night') is identical with the white colonizers' perception of Africa and other territories of the world that they colonized. Such metaphors are used in order to give legitimacy to the colonizer's civilizing mission. One of the reasons advanced by the colonizers for embarking on colonialism was that the non-white territories lacked civilization which covers education and religion. Guided by colonial discourse theory, the darkness encoded in 'Egyptian night' and attributed to non-whites constructs the colonized as barbaric, at the same time, this view constructs the white-race or the colonizers as superior and thus as a people with the God-given duty of bringing other races into the light of civilization. Such metaphors fulfilled a legitimizing function because they provided rationalizations and justifications for imperialism. They legitimize colonial conquest by dignifying it with a high-minded mission which confers moral, religious, and material benefits onto the colonies. A false narrative, the poem offers a blatantly racist justifications for the colonial



enterprise by arguing for the moral basis of white imperialism and portraying this profit-making enterprise in moral terms.

While to the American public the poem merely constitutes an entreaty to take up their fair share of the supposed white man's burden, for the British public, of the time, the poem only reinforces the British imperial ideologies to which the naïve British population had been exposed and which emphasized the necessity of sending their sons abroad to defend the empire with their lives. The naivety of this imperial ideology is fully illustrated in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Like Marlow's aunt, the poet persona in 'The White Man's Burden' is blind to the reality of white imperialism as he takes for granted the racist world view of whites as civilized, humane and superior while the non-white races are simply inferior savages. In Marlow's parting farewell conversation with his aunt, she expresses the western delusion that imperialism is a selfless civilizing mission. She perceives her nephew as 'an emissary of light' on a mission to educate and purge the native population of their 'horrid ways' (18-19). Marlow tries to point out to his aunt that the company he is going to work for is run for profit, but despairs at his aunt's inability to penetrate these Western illusions to the truth. The delusion that colonization was profitable to the colonized is what the speaker in Kipling's 'The White Man's Burden' shares with Marlow's ignorant aunt. Ignoring the records (from *Heart of Darkness*, *Things Fall Apart* and many other documentation on imperialism) of the devastating enslavement of native populations in America; the slave trade that emerged from European colonization of Africa; the corrupt practices of Europeans in the Belgian Congo and the power and national pride that Britain derived from its empire, the speaker in Kipling's poem naively presents imperialism as a selfless benevolent enterprise with positive effects for the colonized natives.

The poet personae also has an absurd opinion of non-white people as savages who actually *love* bondage: 'Why brought ye us from bondage / Our loved Egyptian night?' Sigmund Freud shows us the significance of slips in revealing the unconscious and the speaker's claim that the young white people sent abroad will be involved in 'savage wars of peace' constitutes a Freudian slip that paradoxically implicates the white race in the savagery they attribute to non-whites. The phrase— 'Why brought ye us from bondage / Our loved Egyptian night?'— which is meant to indict, the savagery of the natives who prefer their previous lives of savagery to the light of western civilization is indeed an ironic indication of the colonizers' savagery as well. While the speaker's intension is to emphasize that these wars are only waged by Europeans on behalf of peace, we also realize that, as wars they put an end to peace, and thus make the western colonizer just as 'savage,' as the natives they intend to civilize. Such a delusion is further illustrated in the speaker's/Kipling's surprise at what he claims is the natives' 'blame', hate, ingratitude and refusal to cooperate with their captors. Kipling is marvelled by the natives' attitude which is quite understandable today in the context of postcolonial criticism: why should the colonized subjects embrace the

violent, debasing and dehumanizing imperialists' rule of their lands? For Kipling the natives should jump in gratitude to their supposedly civilizing conquerors. The delusion inherent in this thought and even in the whole poem, that colonialism is beneficial to the colonized has come to be engraved in the cultural memory as a euphemism or even a cliché for all forms of racist justification of Western conquests and disguised exploitation, and is commonly expressed in the words of Kipling's title as 'The white man's burden. In the cultural memory, 'the phrase 'the white man's burden' [has come to be used] as a euphemism for imperialism that seemed to justify the policy as a noble enterprise' [19]. Kipling's self-righteous justification of imperial expansion should be understood not only by contrasting it with the devastating effects of the [colonial] intervention but within the context of a long history of moral entitlement in Western political discourses. It is important to note that the west has always implicitly evoked and used this self-righteous responsibility to protect human rights or doctrines like democracy to justify intervention in Africa and elsewhere for baser material interest [18].

## 6.2. Lord Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon'

Byron's historical poem, 'The Prisoner of Chillon' focuses on the ways the prison image and/or slave image constitutes a memory of British political (imperial) history. The poem not only reproduces colonial history; that is, the legacies of imperialism, as well as express views legitimizing the imperial project as a civilizing mission, but also contains references to colonial and imperial history and slavery, and it is this that has triggered a re-reading of the poem as a fiction of memory. It is thus one of many British poems that serves as an illustrative example of the role that ideological fictions of memory, can play in the process of remembering imperial history (imperialism and colonialism). The poem explicitly draws attention to how 'the relationship between a mother country and her colonies' [15] is conceived in Britain's psyche as a parent-child relationship. The Poem thus demonstrates how colonial discourse has continued to propagate and transmit from generation to generation, the civilizing and colonizing agenda of imperial history which is essential for constructing the collective memory and identity of the colonizer and that of the colonized. This excerpt from the poem sheds light on the above views:

It might be months, or years, or days,  
I kept no count, I took no note,  
I had no hope my eyes to raise,  
And clear them of their dreary mote;  
At last men came to set me free,  
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where.  
It was at length the same to me,  
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,  
I learn'd to love despair.  
And thus when they appear'd at last,  
And all my bonds aside were cast,  
These heavy walls to me had grown  
A hermitage all my own!

And half I felt as they were come  
 To tear me from my second home:  
 With spiders I had friendship made,  
 And watch'd them in their sullen trade,  
 Had seen the mice by moonlight play  
 And why should I feel less than they?  
 We were inmates of one place,  
 And I, the monarch of each race,  
 Had the power to kill....  
 In quiet we had learn'd to dwell-  
 My very chains and I grew friends,  
 Such a long communion tends  
 To make us what we are: even I  
 Regain'd my freedom with a sigh [2].

The poem focuses on imprisonment, an image of enslavement which it uses to reproduce British political history. It is thus a poem that encodes and remembers the colonizing history of the British Empire from the perspective of the British colonizer. In the poem, the colonizer only remembers the colonized in the images of spiders and mice while attributing to himself the position of a Monarch. The speaker's references to prison, the setting of the poem as 'my second home' is also very revealing of Britain's Post-independence relationship to its formerly colonized territories. The speaker's reluctance to abandon this second home and return to his own land as suggested in the lines '...I felt as they were come/To rear me from my second home/...I/Regain'd my freedom with a sigh' suggests the reluctance of Britain and other colonial powers, France for instance, to depart after granting independence to their colonies (The creation of the 'Commonwealth of Nations' and 'La Francophonie', all attest to former colonizers' reluctance to quit their colonies or their 'second homes'). The presence of references to colonialism/imperialism and slavery make the poem an imperial text and a memory of imperial history. The above stanza contains a number of references and images of the history of slavery and thus creates the impression that the poem is an attempt to remember both the history of British colonialism and also the role of Britain in the slave trade that took place in Africa, the West Indies and America from the 14<sup>th</sup> century till about the 18<sup>th</sup> century when slavery was abolished. Such perceptual images of the history of slave trade and associated practices such as imprisonment as remembered in the colonized's public psyche are encapsulated in the following words and phrases: 'Fetter'd inmates', 'These heavy walls to me had grown/ A hermitage all my own!'/ 'My very chains and I grew friends', 'I Regain'd my freedom' and 'At last men came to set me free'. This line, 'At last men came to set me free' serves to remember the abolition of slavery in American history and when independence was granted to former colonies of the European powers. It can thus be inferred that the poem encodes the colonized's shared perceptions of the historical experience of slavery as it was engendered in their public consciousness.

The colonizing image of the British Empire is remembered in terms of the way the poem structures the relationship

between the colonizer as 'Monarch' and the colonized represented by spiders and mice. The colonizer remembers the colonized in terms of spiders and mice but describes the creatures as a 'race'. The colonizer images the prison setting as a kingdom, the mice and spider as his racial subjects, and himself as the Monarch of that Kingdom which he owns and in which he wields unrestricted authority and power, just as the English 'Monarch' wielded over the colonized territories.

Through ideological metaphors of empire, as contained in the images of the colonized as 'spiders' and 'mice', the poem creates conditions for understanding how the supposed dehumanized, untamed image of the cultural products of the former British empire has continued to survive in colonial discourse as well as in the colonizer's public psyche. This is further made visible in the following metaphors of empire. Although we meet the narrator as a prisoner, he refers to himself as the 'monarch of each race', with the power to kill his subjects. He is living in his 'second home', perceptually or cognitively pictured as a 'hermitage'. The word 'monarch' structures the narrator in the image of a Queen or sovereign King. References to the fact that the monarch had a 'second home' and subjects under his absolute command further structure the relationship between the colonizer (Britain) and the colonized as that of a Master and his servants. The narrator as 'monarch' with a 'second home' attended to by subjects, suits our understanding of the ways the colonizer (Britain) and the colonized (including Africans and Caribbeans) were remembered in the public consciousness of the imperial powers. The colonizer's description of his supposed subjects as 'spiders' and 'mice' carries racist undertones.

In view of the above, images of history and slavery as conveyed in fictions of memory and in words such as 'monarch' and 'second home' draw attention to what some critics refer to as 'Empire metaphors' [14, 12], a phrase they used to refer to ideological and conceptual metaphors that play a role in reproducing historical issues of colonialism. The depiction of the prison setting as a 'dungeon' and 'second home', and of its subjects in animal imagery suggests that it is the view of the colonized's community as perceived in the public psyche of the colonizer (Britain) that is remembered. The British Empire is here structured in the image of the monarch wielding unrestricted authority in his second home, understood to mean the former colonized territories whose subjects are animals (mice and spiders).

The above poem plays a significant role in that it supplies fictions of memory in the form of ideological metaphors that in turn serve as cultural documents by which imperial history and some of its legacies were reproduced. The perspective assigned to the poem through the use of images and metaphorical fictions of empire seem to be a collective one. The above analysis thus draws attention to the role played by colonial fictions of memory in remembering colonialism, its legacies and legitimating patriotic views, specifically as perceived in the imperial imagination of the British Empire. The poem thus constructs the cultural memory of both the British Empire and African or Caribbean countries that

experienced colonialism and imperialism.

## 7. Conclusion

In view of the above argument, the following constitute the findings of the study. The British poetic data selected for this study constitute fictions of cultural memory for, they contain fictions/metaphors of Empire, narrative evidence and images of history with potentials for memory, and for investigating the relationship between narrative and memory. It also becomes clear that these English fictions focus largely on fictions of Empire with its characteristic colonial discourse that features in the form of stereotypes, myths and metaphors which largely legitimized the imperial project. These ideological and perceptual myths, metaphors and stereotypes of Empire have proved their analytical merit as essential discourses/fictions of memory relevant for constructing British collective memory and identity.

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