Image, the Bantu, and the Boer: Racial Representations of South Africans in Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals

Matthew Kelly * History and Politics 110300478   m.j.kelly@newcastle.ac.uk   Supervisor: Dr. Xavier Guégan

'Retribution', in *Judy* February 19th 1879

'The Witches of War at Work', *The Lantern* March 8th 1885

'Jack Parton: His Brave and Romantic Adventures in Zulu and Kaffir Lands', *The Young Folks' Budget* June 14th 1879,

Introduction:
Nineteenth-century South Africa undoubtedly had a complex ethnic make-up. Colonial expansion brought Bantu, Khoisan, Dutch, and British settlers into contact, and periodically conflict. At a time when new ideologies about race, such as Social Darwinism, were emerging racial hierarchy in the British colonies was a popular concept.

With advances to Victorian printing, the periodical boomed in the nineteenth century with 125,000 issues in production. South Africa became a big media focus in the latter half of the century, with the Zulu and Boer wars attracting significant public attention. The result of these factors was a range of imagery in periodicals, representing race in a variety ways and to a variety of audiences. The question is, how was the concept of race represented? Did the portrayals alter dependant on the intended readership? And can these representations be considered a culturally violent practice?

Aims:
1. .To investigate how the concept of race in South Africa was represented through images in British periodicals between June 11th 1815 and December 31st 1900.
2. .To analyse the extent to which these representations varied dependent on the type and place of publication, and how racial representations were portrayed to different social groups.
3. .To examine the extent to which these representations can be considered 'cultural violence'

Cultural Violence:
By 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence, that can be used to justify or legitimize other forms of direct or societal violence, whether it be war or the social structure of a society(Galtung: 1990). These forms of cultural violence serve to consolidate ideas of 'imagined community' (Anderson: 1983), in this instance the nation, and legitimise the colonisation of other people based, in terms of this project, on the concept of race.

Fun – February 5th 1879
'Nursery rhyme for little niggers':

'There was a most cheeky Zulu, Shere Ali cried
"Mind what you do. I have tried the same game, to my infinite shame, and you will get sat upon too.'

'Hunting The Boer, in *Pick-Me-Up* 11th November 1899

Categorisation:
In order to analyse the sources that were gathered, they were placed into two broad categories, one based on the type of publication, and the other on the type of representation portrayed. These were then sub-divided further.

Type of publication:
- Metropolitan periodicals and magazines
- Colonial periodicals and magazines
- Children's periodicals and magazines
- Women's periodicals and magazines
- Missionary periodicals and magazines

This made it possible to see how the concept of race was represented to different Victorian readerships.

Type of representation:
The Indigenous:
- Dehumanisation
- The subordinate indigenous
- Naturalisation of culture
The Boer:
- Frontier Whites
- Dehumanisation
Self Idealisation (British):
- Heroism and adventure
- Militarism and patriotism
- Civilising the 'other'

This categorisation made it possible to analyse common representational features within the images.

Conclusions:
The particular type of representation varied dependant on the ethnicity of the group in question. The main representations of indigenous groups were aimed at ridiculing them through implying stupidity, or implying violence and thus suggesting they were dangerous. The Boers were commonly represented as also dangerous, both to the indigenous people and to the British troops. In comparison the British were portrayed as militarily and intellectually superior, and as a higher form of racial order. Certain images do depict neutral representations, merely documenting or reporting on life in South Africa, but the vast majority fit into these representational categories.

Nineteenth-century imagery in British periodicals portrayed race in South Africa as a three tier pyramid of racial hierarchy from indigenous, to Boer, and finally British. The emphasis of the racial superiority of the British was used as a means of justifying and legitimising the colonisation of South Africa to the metropolitan and colonial public by cementing nineteenth-century racial ideology. This was due to the questionable popularity of the Zulu and Boer conflicts with the British public . The representation of the concept of race in imagery in British periodicals was therefore a practice of cultural violence used to legitimise the colonisation of South Africa. A question for further research would be why independent media supported this practice.

The representations were largely dependant on the target readership . The manor in which race was portrayed in South Africa varied dependant on factors such as age and gender of the readership, as well as place of publication. Colonial events and policy also influenced the way in which race was portrayed, suggesting that racial representations were not fixed in nineteenth-century British periodicals, rather that they could alter dependant on the agenda of British colonial policy. This implies that the representation of race in South Africa was less the promotion of a particular racial ideology, but rather the promotion of the British colonial agenda in South Africa.
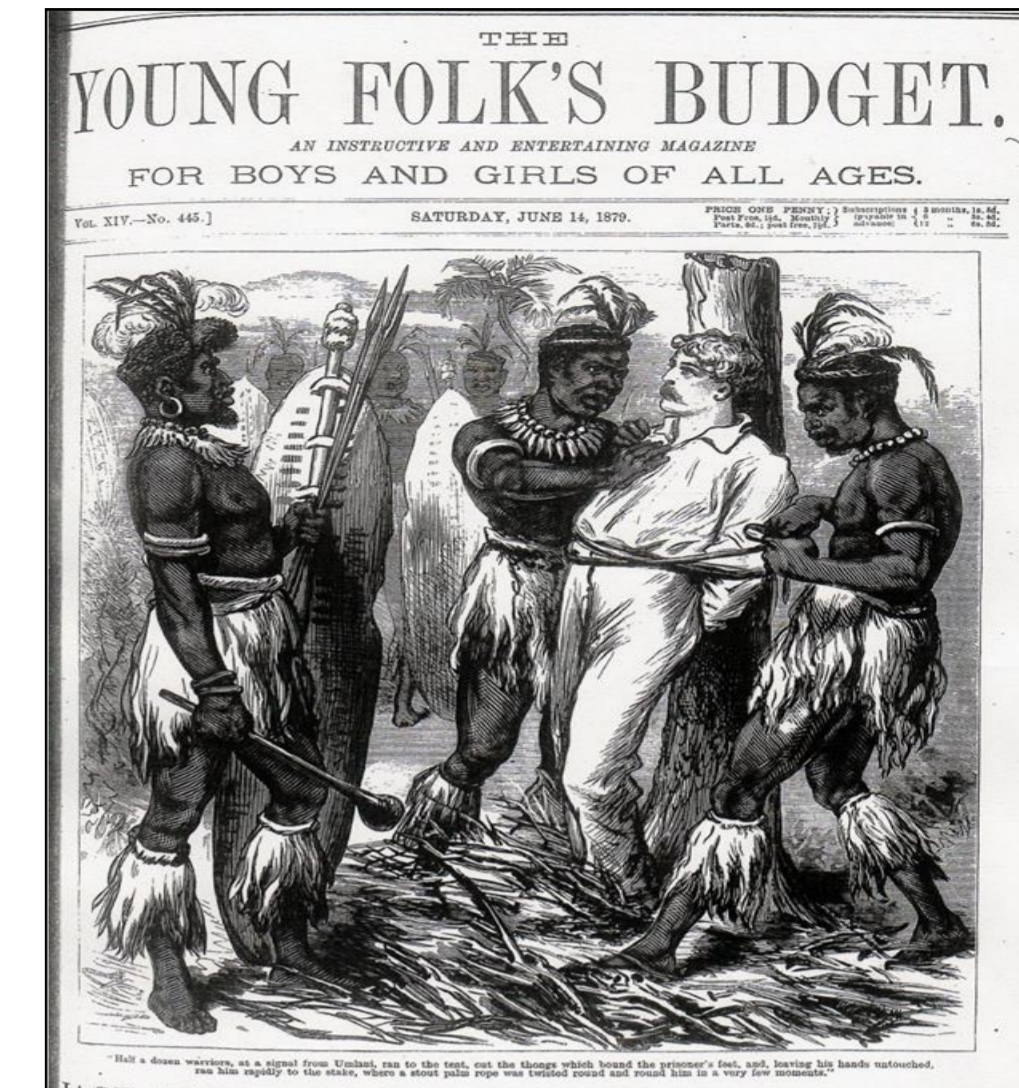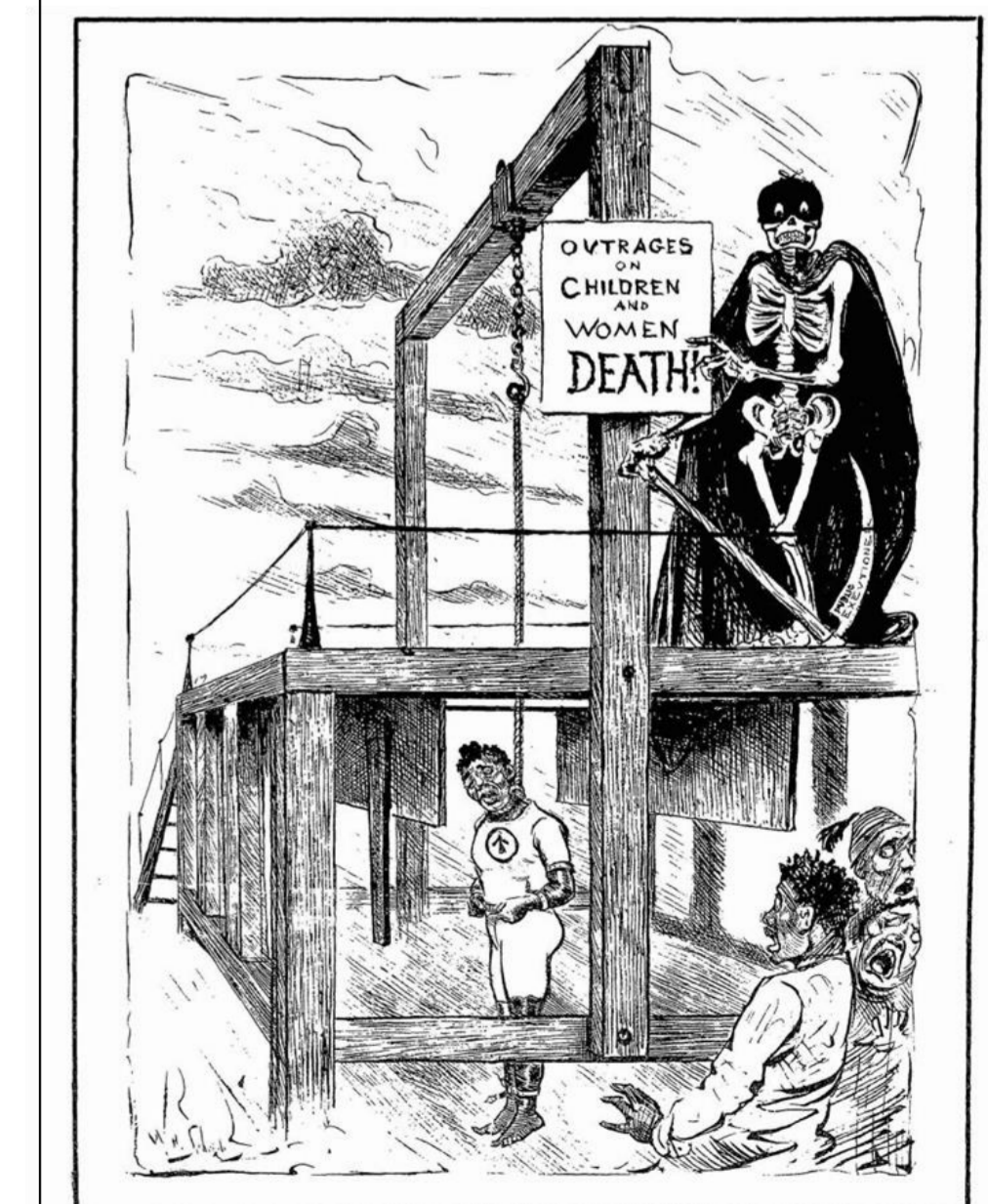
Judy – 28th November 1883
The Boer Demand – Liberty to set up as a petty tyrant:

'Even the friends of government are afraid that the ignominious business will end in the establishment of a slave trade in the Transvaal.'

A Horrible Necessity', in *The Lantern* January 21st 1888