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Nautical Metaphors and Late-Victorian Literary Culture

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This article reveals how nautical conceits were frequently used to articulate stylistic concerns and respond to publishing trends emerging in late-Victorian culture. Reviewers, authors, and press commentators described writing as akin to ship building or seafaring and employed marine metaphors to categorize and critique narratives as 'vessels' for certain characters or plots. For example, leisurely multi-volume 'three-deckers' were manned by a recognizable 'crew' of characters while modern literary 'steamers' were more sparsely populated and took shorter and more direct narrative routes. Many accounts discussed also show an acute awareness of commercial pressures of the book-trade and parallel developments in author-publisher relations. Rudyard Kipling, amongst others, envisioned the publishing world as a 'seascape' upon which works needed to be carefully launched—especially if the voyage was trans-Atlantic. His unusually inventive and intricate nautical metaphors anchor much of the article's analysis, while close literary-critical readings of contemporary periodicals shed light on broader patterns of contact between literary and maritime cultures. The linguistic creativity with which the Victorian nautical imagination was expressed demonstrates the depth of maritime influence upon literary discourses of the period while also reflecting very real interconnections developing between nautical and literary industries.

INTRODUCTION

The terms 'three-decker' and 'triple-decker' were applied to disparate nineteenth- and early twentieth-century objects including household goods such as fridges and kitchenware; lay and ecclesiastical furniture, and articles of clothing.[1] Descriptions of these items often retained the phrase's primary maritime meaning: a wooden sailing ship, usually a warship, featuring tiered gun-decks. For example, in 1888 the *Journal of Photography* promoted a 'large lantern' for slide projection complete with three verticle levels and lenses which protruded like heavy artillery. 'In nautical parlance it is a three-decker', their commentator remarks, 'and one of rare excellence as

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[1] H. Hallmark, 'Summer Housekeeping, New Refrigerators', *Portland Oregonian* (31 March 1895), 15; Hope Arden, 'Varieties in Housekeeping – Lodgings', *Everyday Housekeeping*, 23 (September 1906), 105–7 (p. 107); Deliverance Dingle' [pseud.], 'Light Housekeeping', *The Home-Maker*, 4 (April 1890), 56–9 (p. 58). [Anon.], 'News of Paris Day by Day', *The New York Herald*, 30 (13 August 1820), 4; [Anon.], 'Current Fashions in London', *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, 24 (1 April 1898), 8; [Anon.], 'Angela, Woman's Sphere', *The Sphere*, 2 (15 December 1900), 430; [Anon.], 'World of Women', *Hampshire/Portsmouth Telegraph* (23 July 1898), 11; [Anon.], 'The Wares of Autolycus: The Glass of Fashion', *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 July 1898), 3.

regards fitting, finish, and appliances'.[2] Other tripartite wooden structures were also associated with naval architecture, including 'old' and 'quaint' three-decker pulpits.[3]

One of the most persistent and widespread applications of the phrase 'three-decker' concerned the Victorian three-volume novel. Richard Menke points out that the 'nickname suggests an analogy to sturdy warships' and argues that the entire contemporary media system was 'anchored by access to the current crop of expensive triple-deckers' until the 'format wars' concluded with the 'scuttl[ing]' and 'sinking' of this prestigious form.[4] The evocative language used here implies a series of multipronged connections between book and battleship but does not quite pin down their relationship. Perhaps this is because the term was capacious and meanings diffuse. Menke argues that the Victorian 'triple-decker' appeared to be a 'neutral bibliographical description' but actually functioned 'as a description of a cultural sensibility, even a synecdoche for an entire media system' while David Finkelstein agrees that the nineteenth-century novel became 'a cultural signifier'.[5] In both literary and nautical contexts, 'three-deckers' gestured towards something systematic and symbolic: more than their structure or the sum of their parts.

The scattered and varied contexts in which nautical allusions appeared in writings of the period challenge efforts to trace patterns and bring meanings to the surface. While some usages suggest a hefty import, Matthew Kerr notes that there is also a tendency for nineteenth-century writers to absorb or produce 'incidental metaphors or stock turns-of-phrase' which make it 'unclear what degree of attention to the language of the sea is expected on the part of the reader'.[6] Likewise, Sophie Gilmartin observes that 'maritime and navigational figurative language is so common in both popular and high culture' that 'origins in the sea' become almost 'forgotten' or 'unheard', or are 'so familiar as to be trite and perhaps regarded as unworthy of historical or literary notice'.[7] Nevertheless, both she and Kerr show that a host of contemporary writers (and particularly novelists) 'deployed maritime metaphor' in nuanced and extensive ways—including in works at 'relative remove' from the tradition of sea-writing.[8]

While a growing body of scholarship has begun to explore relationships between the sea and nineteenth-century fiction, poetry, certain forms of life-writing, and scientific works, the extensive use of seafaring and ship-building language in literary and cultural commentary remains understudied.[9] This gap may be due to calls within the blue humanities (an interdisciplinary field which foregrounds human relationships with water) to prioritize historical realities rather than exploiting the sea for its ahistorical or transhistorical symbolism.[10] Additionally, the constant 'shuttling' between the sea's literal and symbolic registers, as well as the sheer volume of nautical references, frustrates studies of figurative language since the sea's 'voluminous and disordered baggage of association' threatens to 'overburden or unbalance' both fictional texts and

[2] [Anon.], 'The Photographic Exhibition II', *The British Journal of Photography*, 35 (12 October 1888), 644–8 (p. 645). By 1905, the 'three-decker' had been surpassed by less cumbersome models such as the 'Uno Mano' Lantern Slide Carrier. See for example [Anon.], 'New Apparatus, &c', *The British Journal of Photography*, 52 (6 January 1905), 16.

[3] [Anon.], 'My Pepys Parish Church', *Punch*, 108 (9 February 1895), 63; [Anon.], 'A Cosy but not Cossey Church', *Punch*, 95 (22 September 1888), 143; William Macdonald Sinclair, 'New Church Work at Great Warley', *Art Journal, 1839–1912* (March 1905), 69–77 (p. 70).

[4] Richard Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies, 1880–1900* (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 96, 100, 109. See also Frederick Nesta, 'The Myth of the "Triple-Headed Monster": The Economics of the Three-Volume Novel', *Publishing History*, 61 (2007), 47–69 (pp. 47–8); Katherine Saunders Nash, 'Overt and Covert Narrative Structure: A Reconsideration of *Jane Eyre*', in Laurence Mazzeno (ed.), *Twenty-First Century Perspectives on Victorian Literature* (New York, NY, 2014), 75–85 (p. 80).

[5] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 100; David Finkelstein, 'Publishing and the Materiality of the Book', in Kate Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature* (Cambridge, 2012), 15–33 (p. 20).

[6] Matthew Kerr, *The Victorian Novel and the Problem of Marine Language* (Oxford, 2022), pp. 17, 8.

[7] Sophie Gilmartin, '"The perils of crossings": Nineteenth-Century Navigations of City and Sea', in Steve Mentz & Martha Elena Rojas (eds), *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture* (London & New York, NY, 2017), 83–102 (p. 84).

[8] Kerr, *The Problem of Marine Language*, p. 14.

[9] Steve Mentz & Martha Elena Rojas (eds), *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture* (London & New York, NY, 2017); Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); Charlotte Mathieson (ed.), *Sea Narratives: Cultural Responses to the Sea 1600-Present* (London, 2016).

[10] Hester Blum, 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies', *PMLA*, 125 (2010), 670–77; Philip E. Steinberg, 'Of Other Seas: Metaphors and Materialities in Maritime Regions', *Atlantic Studies*, 10 (2013), 156–69; Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun (eds), 'Introduction: The Sea is History', in *Sea Changes: Historicising the Ocean* (London & New York, NY, 2012), pp. 1–12.

critical readings.[11] Nonetheless, gaining a fuller picture of the operation of nautical language in the nineteenth century—that 'age of heavy metaphor'—requires embracing these slippages between the real and the figurative—between 'marine materiality' and the nautical imagination.[12] Attention to the latter remains important because, as Douglas R. Burgess Jr puts it, 'Even before evaluating the impact of ships themselves, the power of their allegory is critical to understanding the Victorian mind'.[13]

This article traces manifold connections between nautical and literary registers in a range of periodicals and newspapers of the period as well as in selected critical, biographical, and literary writings. In doing so it reveals how marine metaphors shaped and articulated changing attitudes towards fiction and publishing in late-Victorian Britain in a manner that exceeded habitual expression. Rudyard Kipling's extended ship-building and sea-navigation analogies emerge as touchstone for many of the topics discussed. Yet, writers much less familiar with seafaring also frequently used nautical terminology to describe literary practices, to assess the place of British literature in an expanding marketplace, and to express nostalgia for the old or to encourage innovation and new textual forms. The article focuses on 'triple-deckers' but also takes in related metaphors including the literary 'steamship' and the 'ocean' or 'seascape' of publishing. The growing obsolescence of wooden sailing vessels and the rise of ironclad steamships became a framework for considering the relationship between modernity and literary tradition and a way to debate questions of utility and aestheticism. Meanwhile, the terminology of ocean travel captured changing commercial and interpersonal relationships between writers, critics, publishers, and readers around the *fin de siècle*.

FINAL VOYAGE OF THE 'OLD THREE DECKER'?

Although most prose fiction was not published in three volumes, 'three-deckers' became the common format for an upmarket first edition British Victorian novel.[14] The system relied on the patronage of circulating libraries which usually demanded a 50 per cent discount on sale price. However, in June 1894, Mudie's and W. H. Smith's issued a 'joint ultimatum': neither library would pay more than four shillings per volume and both would restrict the re-issue of cheaper single volumes for one year following the publication of the expensive tripartite work.[15] The tide was quick to turn, and major publishers began to bring out more original novels in single volume.[16] Once a marker of status and respectability, three-decker novels were suddenly all but abandoned.[17]

Just one month later, Kipling's poem 'The Old Three Decker' appeared in the *Saturday Review*.[18] Therein, the three-volume novel became a 'ponderous and creaking tall ship'.[19] It carries a 'prototypical cargo' of disparate characters: 'lovers', 'Able Bastards', maids of 'matchless beauty' and unknown parentage, 'a Church of England parson', and a 'Wicked Nurse' whose confession reveals the true parentage of 'a crew of missing heirs'.[20] The poem begins:

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[11] Kerr, *The Victorian Novel and the Problem of Marine Language*, pp. 17, 247.
[12] Douglass R. Burgess Jr, *Engines of Empire: Steamships and the Victorian Imagination* (Stanford, CA, 2016), p. 192.
[13] Burgess, *Engines of Empire*, p. 291.
[14] Simon Eliot, 'The Business of Victorian Publishing', in Deirdre David (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge, 2001), 37–60 (pp. 41, 50). See also John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (New York, NY, 2006), p. 123; Troy Bassett, 'The Production of Three-volume Novels in Britain, 1863–97', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 102 (2008), 61–75; Guinevere L. Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel* (Michigan, 1970).
[15] Troy J. Bassett, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Three-Volume Novel* (Cham, Switzerland, 2020), p. 1.
[16] [Anon.], 'Literary Notes', *Glasgow Herald*, (12 January 1895), 6.
[17] For discussions on the possibility of reviving the form see [Anon.], 'An Agitation for the Three Volume Novel', *The New York Herald*, 23,380 (1900), 5.
[18] Rudyard Kipling, 'The Old Three-Decker', *Saturday Review*, 78 (14 July 1894), 44. All subsequent references to this version, unless otherwise stated.
[19] Tim Killick, *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Rise of the Tale* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 33.
[20] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 109.

Full thirty foot she towered from waterline to rail.
It cost a watch to steer her, and a week to shorten sail;
But, spite all modern notions, I found her first and best—
The only certain packet for the Islands of the Blest.

As Menke notes, Kipling's verse 'adeptly connects the vehicle of the triple-decker to its contents, as well as to the supposed fixity of its itinerary'.[21] Despite brief comparison to a swifter mail 'packet', the vessel proceeds slowly but steadily to its destination: 'The Island of the Blest'. This repeated refrain, combined with a regular meter (briefly broken to make puns about shipping companies) chimes with the presumed readerly experience of these typically slow-paced works. Meanwhile, the 'watch' required 'to steer her' points towards the over-population of the three-volume novel with its crowds of characters and multiple sub-plots.

The denouement of the poem's 'three-decker' is predictable and cathartic: the narrative journey alluded to concludes with the punishment of the villain and marriage of heroes and heroines:

No moral doubt assailed us, so when the port we neared,
The villain had his flogging at the gangway, and we cheered.
'Twas fiddle in the forc's'le—'twas garlands on the mast,
For every one got married, and I went ashore at last.
I left' em all in couples a-kissing on the decks.
I left the lovers loving and the parents signing cheques.
In endless English comfort by country-folk caressed.
I left the old three-decker at the Islands of the Blest!

Conventional ethical standards are upheld here, reflecting the association of the three-volume with 'respectable recreation in the home' and as a representation of 'the norms of workaday British fiction'.[22] This reputation was supported by the three-decker's physical form: thick paper, generous margins, and expensive packaging marked the item as a 'thoroughly establishment commodity'.[23]

Yet Kipling's commentary is not finished. Having disembarked from the 30-footer, the poem's speaker presents the 'modern steamships' now occupying more of the publishing ocean rather unfavourably. Whereas passenger steamships were often seen as 'an oasis of calm' and a place of bourgeois leisure, the poem's steamboat is a 'ram-you-damn-you liner with the brace of bucking screws'—a kind of vessel disliked by passengers due to its 'unerring propensity to uncomfortable rolling'.[24] The crew swing an 'aching search-light' to no avail; they can only look on as the three-decker disappears beyond the horizon *en route* to the Fortunate Isles. The poem ends on an uneasy note—wry and perhaps a little nostalgic:

You'll see her tiering canvas in sheeted silver spread;
You'll hear the long-drawn thunder' neath her leaping figure-head;
While far, so far above you, her tall poop-lanterns shine
Unvexed by wind or weather like the candles round a shrine!
Hull down—hull down and under—she dwindles to a speck,
With noise of pleasant music and dancing on her deck.

[21] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 109.
[22] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, pp. 101, 96.
[23] Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Pegasus in Harness: Victorian Publishing and W. M. Thackeray* (Charlottesville, VA, 1992), p. 206.
[24] Jonathan Stafford, *Imperial Steam: Modernity on the sea-route to India, 1837–74* (Manchester, 2023), p. 15; Crosbie Smith, *Coal, Steam, and Ships: Engineering, Enterprise, and Empire on the Nineteenth-Century Seas* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 367, 7–8.

All's well—all's well aboard her—she's left you far behind.
With a scent of old-world roses through the fog that ties you blind.
Her crew are babes or madmen? Her port is all to make?
You're manned by Truth and Science, and you steam for steaming's sake?
Well, tinker up your engines—you know your business best—
She's taking tired people to the Islands of the Blest!

While Bassett suggests that the poem's tone is sardonic, and Bruce Steele and Clive Probyn claim that Kipling 'ridiculed the dominance of the three-volume method of publishing new and romantic fiction', Menke more persuasively argues that the closing remarks on the three-decker are, in fact, 'warm, if also droll and self-aware'.[25] He adds that 'Kipling's defense of the novel as a solace for the tired' recalls 'quite serious claims that the three-decker's generous typography and slow pace made it well suited to comfort and distract the infirm'.[26] What critics of the poem fail to explore in depth, is the uneasiness with which the speaker presents the modern 'steamship's' entry into the picture. The questions posed in the final stanza regarding the vessel's purpose remain unanswered; yet they may be read as a series of challenges which are not fully retracted by the speaker's claim that the depersonalized forces which propel her know their 'business best'.

Regardless of its merits and faults, the fate of the three-volume novel, like its actual counterpart, had already been decided. Kipling's poem is written in the past tense; modern 'steamers' propelled by aestheticism ('steam for steaming's sake'), realism, and perhaps naturalism (note capitalized references to 'Truth and Science') are already ascendent.[27] Unlike the 'three-decker', they are not dependent on the 'Trade' (wind), a force which in a later version becomes a mere 'breeze' to reflect the effect of the circulating libraries withdrawing their patronage.[28] Less subject to the elements and with no need to 'shorten sail' or tack back and forth, these modern vessels should be able to pursue a more direct and speedier course (although in practice this depended upon appropriate port accommodations and wharf improvements).[29] While nineteenth-century steamships could cover greater distances more quickly and travel at times of year unsuited to sailing ships, the poem's steamer is more adrift (or less securely orientated) than the three-decker. The latter's 'route' has been established by 'recurrent passage'; though mythical, its destination is stated, and its direction defined.[30]

The English novelist, journalist, and historian Walter Besant named Kipling along with Robert Louis Stevenson as the two 'best and most popular writers' in 'revolt' through their refusal to 'recognise the Three-Volume rule'.[31] Yet the attitudes of these 'rebels' were complex: both men once aspired to and admired the form (albeit from a safe distance). In his biography *Something of Myself* (1937), Kipling pursued:

Kim, of course, was nakedly picaresque and plotless—a thing imposed from without.

Yet, I dreamed for many years of building a veritable three-decker out of chosen and long-stored timber – teak, green-heart, and ten-year-old oak knees – each curve melting deliciously into the next that the sea might nowhere meet resistance or weakness; the whole suggesting motion even when, her great sails for the moment furled, she lay in some needed haven – a

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[25] Bassett, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Three-Volume Novel*, p. 178; Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom*, ed. Bruce Steele & Clive T. Probyn (Queensland, 2001), p. 253 n.3; Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 110.
[26] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 110.
[27] For more on the relationship between steamboats and realist fiction see Alison Byerly, 'Technologies of Travel and the Victorian Novel', in Lisa Rodensky (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 289–312.
[28] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 110.
[29] Frances Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonisation, c.1817–1914* (Manchester, 2011), pp. 26–7.
[30] Ulrich Kinzel, 'Orientation as a Paradigm of Maritime Modernity', in Bernard Klein (ed.), *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 28–48 (p. 29).
[31] Walter Besant, 'The Rise and Fall of the "Three Decker"', *The Dial*, 17 (1 October 1894), 185–6 (p. 186).

vessel ballasted on ingots of pure research and knowledge, roomy, fitted with delicate cabinet-work below-decks, painted, carved, gilt and wreathed the length of her, from her blazing stern-galleries outlined by bronzy palm-trunks, to her rampant figure head – an East Indiaman worthy to lie alongside *The Cloister and the Hearth* [Charles Reade's 1861 historical novel].[32]

'Craft' is double-sided here. The passage appears in the chapter 'Working Tools' and Kipling describes labouring in his 'mould-loft'—the place for tracing out a ship's specifications.[33]

The aesthetic pleasure and professional satisfaction he imagined gaining from producing a three-decker is closely tied to its skilled and enduring construction. The dense and durable 'oak knees' refer to the traditional practice of naturally bending timber to secure parts of the ship together. This process not only makes the vessel watertight but also produces an attractive 'curve' which 'melt[s]' to create one seamless whole.[34] This sense of fluidity is echoed in the prose form. One long sentence gathers momentum as lists of dreamlike treasure accumulate: 'painted, carved, gilt and wreathed the length of her'. The interior is magnificent with its impressive 'blazing stern-galleries' and 'bronzy' decorative palm-trunks. It is made for comfort; below-deck is 'roomy', the imagined ship is stable—'ballasted on ingots of pure research and knowledge'—and, along with its passengers, the vessel can rest 'in some needed haven'. This lyricism implies an imagined leisurely writing as well as reading experience. The ideal three-decker is meticulously and unhurriedly constructed and decoratively dressed from 'within'—unlike Kipling's apparently episodic, 'naked', and 'plotless' novel *Kim* which was serialized in two magazines before being published in single volume in 1901.

The following passages, however, break the dream-like spell, undercutting the hitherto nostalgic reverie with 'thwarted idealism'.[35] First, Kipling points towards a personal inadequacy rather than a failure of the form itself: 'Not being able to do this', he admits, 'I dismissed the ambition as "beneath the thinking mind." So does a half-blind man dismiss shooting and golf'. He continues:

> Nor did I live to see the day when the new three-deckers should hoist themselves over the horizon, quivering to their own power, over-loaded with bars, ball-rooms, and insistent chromium plumbing, hellishly noisy from the sports' deck to the barber's shop; but serving their generation as the old craft served theirs. The young men were already laying down the lines of them, fondly believing that the old laws of design and construction were for them abrogated.[36]

Despite acknowledging that new fiction forms responded to the leisure and tastes of a late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reading public, the violent clamour and hedonism of these literary 'steamers' is unpleasant, especially when juxtaposed with the lyrical three-decker. This passage from Kipling's biography traces the same route established in his earlier poem; modern literary steamers usurp the noble three-decker and the final comment that young pioneers believe they can discard 'the old laws of design and construction' resonates with the doubtful assertion that these men 'know their business best'. While Menke presents 'The Old Three-Decker' as 'part of the press's general discussion of the fate of the form', Kipling's revival and extension of this imagery—decades later and in a fresh context—suggests a significant investment in the analogy and its meanings.[37]

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[32] Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself: For my Friends Known and Unknown* (London, 1937), p. 228. For D. H. Lawrence's similarly enthusiastic and nostalgic account, first published in 1921, of the 'careful, thorough, manly, everlasting work' conveyed by Victorian wooden sailboats see *The Sea and Sardinia*, ed. Mara Kalnins (London, 1999), pp. 31–2. 'East Indiaman' refers to a large sailing ship engaged in the East India trade.
[33] OED.
[34] OED sense II.7.a
[35] Rudyard Kipling, *Stories and Poems*, ed. Daniel Karlin (Oxford, 2015), p. 664.
[36] Kipling, *Something of Myself*, p. 229.
[37] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 110.

In an essay published in the *Idler* in August 1894, just two months after the circulating libraries' ultimatum, fellow 'rebel' Stevenson also aligned writing with shipbuilding and evoked seafaring imagery to reflect on his navigation of the literary marketplace. Echoing Kipling's anxieties about writing a 'real novel', he refers to a 'succession of defeats' as a budding short story writer and admits that he 'used to look […] upon every three-volume novel with a sort of veneration, as a feat – not possibly of literature – but at least of physical and moral endurance and the courage of Ajax'.[38] Before describing how he wrote his best-selling adventure tale, *Treasure Island* (1883), he reminds readers 'I am not a novelist alone. But I am well aware that my paymaster, the Great Public, regards what else I have written with indifference, if not aversion' (p. 111). Here, Stevenson rejects the notion that *Treasure Island* was his 'first book', but ultimately submits to the authority of his readership as 'paymaster'—a term for 'an officer responsible for keeping ship's accounts and for overseeing the supply and distribution of provisions and stores'.[39]

He credits 'the finger of predestination' (p. 116) for *Treasure Island*'s famous 'map' which was later lost, redrawn, and embellished with 'blowing whales and sailing ships' (pp. 128–9). With similar nautical inflection, Stevenson advises that any novice novelist must have 'have a slant of wind […] he must be in one of those hours when the words come and the phrases balance of themselves—*even to begin*' (p. 114). Later in the essay he recounts how, when encountering writer's block, the remainder of the tale unexpectedly 'flowed from [him] […] at a rate of a chapter a day' enabling 'a second tide of delighted industry' (p. 125). These allusions, combined with the essay's references to islands, compasses, and other marine objects and landscapes, cumulatively suggest an alignment between literary writing and sailing (rather than steaming); even the writer who does not attempt to construct or sail a 'three-decker' must carefully define the voyage's direction while working in tandem with 'the wind' of inspiration, retaining 'balance', and taking advantage of 'the tides'. Other authors and critics drew similar connections. For example, Kerr notes that William Hazlitt and Thomas Hood both advocated working *with* the currents and drifts of human experience or formal rhythms to produce a well-wrought prose work.[40] The steamship's estrangement from 'traditional' literary qualities, combined with the wooden sailing frigate's claim to romance, heritage, and skilful navigation, made the latter a preferable metaphor for imaginative writing. As Frances Steel remarks, the reliance on coal and machinery rather than 'wind and the white wings of sail' meant that the steamship and its engine room 'was a new space afloat'.[41]

Stevenson and Kipling were personally connected to the sea from an early age and developed rich nautical imaginations. The former came from a line of lighthouse engineers—a profession which was threatened by the rise of steam propulsion and which helps explain Stevenson's deep investment in sailing and maritime kinship.[42] Of course his later travels in the Pacific inspired collections such as *South Sea Tales* (1911) which foreground island communities, depict coastal life, and exploit the ship as a setting. Kipling also developed a lifelong enthusiasm for ships, sailors, and the sea. As a young boy living unhappily with foster parents in Southsea, he formed a much-needed friendship with a former coastguard, Captain Holloway. The pair frequently visited the naval dockyards to admire an array of ships including Arctic exploration vessels and Admiral Nelson's flagship three-decker *HMS Victory*.[43] Later in life, Kipling—like Stevenson—travelled extensively on board all kinds of boats (including steamships) and wrote about them in detail.[44]

[38] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'My First Book: "Treasure Island"', in *Essays in the Art of Writing* (London, 1905), p. 115. Subsequent references to this edition are made in the main text.

[39] OED I.b.

[40] Kerr, *The Victorian Novel and the Problem of Marine Language*, p. 149.

[41] Steel, *Oceania Under Steam*, p. 76.

[42] Alison Maas, '"Near the Sea": Maritime Kinship and Oceanic Kinship in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*', *Atlantic Studies*, 20 (2023), 259–76 (p. 265).

[43] See Andrew Lycett (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Kipling and the Sea: Voyages and Discoveries from North Atlantic to South Pacific* (London, 2014), pp. xi–xviii.

[44] Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea, and Other Sketches, Letters of Travel*, 2 vols (London, 1908).

His nautical interests found literary expression in ways too numerous to detail here, but which included sea stories as well as nautical poems published in *The Seven Seas* (1896) collection and elsewhere.[45] Kipling's engagement with the maritime world exceeded the purposes of imaginative and poetic potential; he also supported campaigns to bolster naval defences and lauded 'the spirit' of the British Navy.[46] Although the extent of both writers' investment in nautical culture was not typical, the pair contributed to a broader tradition of literary commentary upon nautical affairs and participated in a wider 'tendency to romanticise and construct a heroic mythology around the dying Age of Sail' (*c*.1700–1850).[47]

There was no immediate break between from sail to steam, wood to iron, or paddles to screw-propulsion. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869—too narrow and shallow for many sailboats—was 'perhaps the most widely heralded symbol' of the transition to the 'Age of Steam'.[48] However, developments were gradual and uneven. As Robert Foulke reminds us, 'No date can be isolated as a decisive turning point and no single development can be labelled prime cause of the sailing ship's demise'.[49] Nonetheless, steamships (and steam-engines more broadly) became potent symbols of progress and John Stafford remarks that 'the popular cultural imagination' imbued them 'with a more emphatic association with modernity than was perhaps warranted by the material conditions of their mobility'.[50] Although it was not until 1883 that 'the total tonnage of all British steam vessels surpassed that of sail', by then three-deckers already recalled 'olden times' and had become mere 'memories of the past'.[51]

FULL STEAM AHEAD?

Notwithstanding the historical proximity of sail and steam, as well as short-lived experiments with hybrid propulsion, the 'move' from the former to the latter, and from wood to iron and steel, was perceived as an aesthetic and literary break as much as a technological or historical development. 'The phantasmagoria of steam', and the potential of the machine 'fired the boilers of human imagination' and could convey a sense of wonder and of magic.[52] However, as poems and articles 'poured out in celebration of steam culture', and some writers were swept up in steam triumphalism and 'technophilic utopianism', a strong counter-movement emerged which sought to check this whiggish politics of progress.[53] For this group, 'Steam and smoke deface[d] epic grandeur', and the 'mechanized vision of human progress' that steamboats represented alienated these vessels and their navigators from nautical tradition.[54] Those writers seeking to 're-enchant' and re-invest contemporary maritime culture—and culture more broadly—with 'a romance lost' often applied aesthetic and literary language to discuss changes in nautical architecture.[55] Many even suggested that the rise of steamships paralleled or precipitated a loss of literary quality and character.

The somewhat clichéd 'artistic formula', whereby sublime wooden sailing frigates were starkly contrasted to ugly modern ironclad steamships, found expression in a broad range of press

[45] Rudyard Kipling, *The Seven Seas* (London, 1896).
[46] Rudyard Kipling, 'The Spirit of the Navy', in *A Book of Words* (London, 1928), pp. 53–9.
[47] Steel, *Oceania Under Sail*, p. 76.
[48] Douglas Hamilton and John McAleer (eds), 'Introduction', in *Islands and the British Empire in the Age of Sail* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 1–17 (p. 16).
[49] Robert Foulke, 'Life in the Dying World of Sail, 1870–1910', *Journal of British Studies*, 3 (1963), 105–36 (p. 107).
[50] Stafford, *Imperial Steam*, p. 67.
[51] Stafford, *Imperial Steam*, p. 54; Mary Fairfax Somerville, *Personal Recollections, from Early Life to Old Age, of Mary Somerville* (Boston, MA, 1874), p. 333; [Anon.], 'Our Supplement Illustration', *The Photographer's World*, 1 (15 October 1886), 12.
[52] Burgess, *Engines of Empire*, pp. 5, 13, 117.
[53] Clare Pettit, '"The annihilation of space and time": Literature and Technology', in Kate Flint (ed.), *Cambridge History of Victorian Literature* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 550–72 (pp. 556, 555); Stafford, *Imperial Steam*, p. 54.
[54] Tobias Döring, 'The Sea is History: Historicising the Homeric Sea in Victorian Passages', in Bernard Klein (ed.), *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 121–40 (p. 125); Burgess, *Engines of Empire*, p. 41.
[55] Döring, 'The Sea is History', p. 126.

organs, including colonial papers.[56] For example, under the editorship of pro-British patriot Horace Rose, the South-African *Natal Witness* compared an 'old three decker, majestically ploughing through the waves with the aid of its stately expanse of canvas, a thing of beauty to all beholders' to 'an ugly, formidable-looking modern warship'.[57] With similar inflection, the *Gold Coast Leader* lamented the decline of Victorian 'heart of oak vessels'. 'Graceful white sailed frigates' and 'proud line-of-battle ships' boasting 'tapering masts bending with willowy grace' and 'clouds of clouds of canvas gleaming white as silver', displayed precisely those qualities that the 'unlovely steel and iron monstrosities of to-day […] palpitating with machinery' lacked.[58] As Stephanie Newell notes, newspapers in 'British West Africa' typically asserted their own specificity 'while absorbing the debates and opinions that flowed in from other printing presses', including, it seems, those surrounding naval architecture and aesthetics.[59]

British periodicals repeatedly emphasized that sailing ships retained an inspirational function while steamboats impeded the literary imagination. Press commentators aligned wooden sailboats with literary history via stirring references to maritime poetry and fiction, thereby supporting their claim that the 'old style' of construction had 'been often told in verse and prose'.[60] Others appealed to a romanticized nautical past by invoking storytelling frameworks. For example, in 1899, the *Windsor Magazine* carried a richly illustrated article on the process of metal armour-plating (hence the term 'iron-clads'). Yet, the piece begins by remarking nostalgically that:

> Once upon a time, and that not so long ago, the 'wooden walls of Old England' were alike the safeguard and the glory of the Empire. The great man-of-war, with its tall masts, its gallant spread of canvas, and its many guns, lives no more save in song and story. Its place has been taken by the armour-clad, which has no masts to speak of, not sails, and but few guns […] very like a whale with two sticks standing out of it. And in very truth there is not much poetry about a modern battleship [... which] is built for business and nothing else.[61]

In 1881, *The Times* put the point more bluntly, describing the iron-clad torpedo-ram ship *Polyphemus* as a 'monster'. 'Form and beauty of lines', their writer claims, 'have long been obsolete in our dockyards. Our ships of war embodying these past ideals now float like premature pensioners at the entrance of any naval harbour – not worn out, but past use'. This newspaper's overt concern was the expense of the navy's 'useless and wasteful experiments' which included the erection of central batteries and gun turrets. However, their anxieties also absorbed aesthetic and even ethical dimensions, forwarded through a rhetoric of loss that was characteristic of discussions of the transition from sail to steam.[62] For example, the 'horrible directness' of modern ship design lacking 'form and beauty' chimes with Kipling's characterization of the utilitarian 'ram-you-damn-you liner'.[63]

The fact that seafaring plots and seafarers themselves were associated with three-volume novels in the first half of the century invigorated the cross-currents between nautical and literary discussions. Prior to 1845, male authors of three-volume fiction predominated, and the 1820s to 30s witnessed a 'general masculinization of the novel both in terms of authorship and its

[56] John Ferguson Nisbet, *Marriage and Heredity: A View of Psychological Evolution*, 2nd edn (London, 1890), pp. 162–3.
[57] [Anon.], 'Naval Guns', *The Natal Witness*, 11 (19 October 1908), 6.
[58] [A Banker], 'The Wooden Walls of England', *The Gold Coast Leader*, 4 (5 May 1906), 3.
[59] Stephanie Newell, 'An Introduction to the Writings of J. G. Mullen, an African Clerk, in the *Gold Coast Leader*, 1916–19', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 78 (2008), 384–400 (p. 385).
[60] J. W. Steel, 'Our Iron Walls', *Cassell's Family Magazine*, 9 (April 1883), 283–5 (p. 283).
[61] Robert Machray, 'The Making of an Armour-Plate', *The Windsor Magazine*, 10 (August 1899), 259–65 (p. 259).
[62] [Anon.], 'The unanimity of the two Houses on the proposition for increasing our Navy', *The Times*, (5 February 1859), 8.
[63] [Anon.], 'The launch to-morrow of the ironclad *Polyphemus*', *The Times*, (14 June 1881), 10.

readers'.[64] Historical and nautical fiction became popular in the 1830s and 40s; both were over-whelmingly produced by men, and the latter was often penned by ex-naval officers who 'turned their swords […] into goosequills'.[65] England's 'wooden-walls' were an important setting in these works and, in 1861, *Punch* ruefully remarked that a 'regular three-decker blaze-and-sink affair' could only be found in nautical fiction of the 1830s or in biographies of naval heroes.[66] This was not entirely true. Three-decker warships remained a frequent feature of single-volume boys' books and stories in *Boys' Own* magazines. Although not uniquely British, these 'stately', 'gallant', 'noble', 'magnificent', 'grand' and 'glorious' vessels were vehicles for patriotic rhetoric about Empire.[67]

Three-deckers, prized for their symbolism and aesthetic appeal, were also regarded as 'ready-made' for the action-driven plots, stock masculine characters, and technical language of nautical adventure tales. In his 'Talk for Boys', printed in the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* and the *Daily Inter Ocean* in January 1891, the American journalist and travel writer Colonel Thomas Knox not only claimed that the sea had 'lost its poetry' due to the rise of steam ironclads, but also asserted that the decline of three-deckers was detrimental to narrative plot, interest, and action. Comparing 'the battles described in Marryat's novels' full of drama and human interest to the strangely depersonalized 'modern story of battle' he opined that:

> nearly everything that goes to aid the pen of the narrator or the tongue of the veteran at the fireside, are all absent in the modern story of battle. […] In the fight of the ironclads not a man is visible on the deck of either, and as for the rigging to be shot away and sails to be handled during the action there are none at all. The battle consists almost wholly of the discharge of cannon and attempts to use or avoid the ram, and there is little to describe, while in the meeting of old timers there is a great deal to be told.

While acknowledging that 'a naval fight in the olden days was one of tragic horror', Knox mourns the supposed lack of masculinized action upon these new vessels; modern warships, he claimed, were a place of 'prim decorum' upon whose 'spotless decks' a 'dainty lady' could take afternoon tea.[68]

The absence of skilled sail-handling on steamships energized gendered slurs upon crews whose imperial masculinity seemed doubtful.[69] Steel explains that 'deck work now consisted mainly of cleaning, chipping, painting and driving winches—simple, menial and repetitive tasks'—that invited parallels to domestic drudgery.[70] As one mariner recalled, many 'sailing-ship men' felt that those who worked upon steamships 'had lost their sense of beauty and were content to sail in a "kettle-bottomed coffee-pot"; they were effete and effeminate, lacking in resource'.[71] This gendered divide, whereby three-deckers were masculinized and steamboats were feminized, found expression in unusual contexts, including in satirical responses to 'three-decker' capes and skirts approved of by women's magazines. For example, *The Boy's Comic Journal*

[64] Peter Garside, 'The Early 19th-Century English Novel, 1820–1836', in Lisa Rodensky (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 21–40 (p. 22).

[65] [Anon.], 'Time is not, as a rule, very kind to popular novelists', *Daily Telegraph* (29 March 1893), 5. See also Garside, 'The Early 19th-Century English Novel', pp. 32–3; Bassett, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Three-Volume Novel*, p. 48.

[66] [Anon], 'Our National Defenders', *Punch*, 40 (25 May 1861), 217.

[67] S. O. Beeton (ed.), *Beeton's Boy's Annual: A Volume of Fact, Fiction, History, and Adventure* (London, 1868), p. 96; [Anon.], 'Paul Jones; or, the Rover's Love', *The Champion Journal for the Boys of the United Kingdom*, 3 (14 September 1878), 14–15 (p. 14); J. Clement P. Aldous, 'A Day on Board H.M.S. *Britannia*', *Little Folks: The Magazine for Boys and Girls* (1 September 1884), 142–7 (p. 142).

[68] Thomas W. Knox, 'Some Talks for Boys', *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* (18 January 1891), 10.

[69] See Alexa Price, 'Displaying the Wooden Walls of Old England: The HMS *Foudroyant* as a Monument to Lost Skills and Manhood, 1892–1897', in Karen Downing, Johnathan Thayer and Joanne Begiato (eds), *Negotiating Masculinities and Modernity in the Maritime World, 1815–1940 A Sailor's Progress?* (Switzerland, 2021), pp. 103–26.

[70] Steel, *Oceania Under Sail*, p. 75.

[71] W. E. Dexter, *Rope-Yarns, Marline-Spikes and Tar* (London, 1938), p. 10.

compared the gait and appearance of a female character thus attired to that of a cumbersome warship 'turning with the tide'.[72] Meanwhile, *Punch* presented a humorous sketch of ladies 'sailing' into a ballroom dressed in 'three tiers of flounces'. The 'extensive lady-patroness' promptly 'discharged' 'two broadsides of facetiousness' into the ear of an acquaintance who was almost loosed 'from his moorings by their tremendous press of canvas'.[73] In accounts such as these there is something absurd—or at least amusing and bathetic—about women (or feminized men) being associated with 'England's wooden walls', also tellingly called 'men-of-war'. As Gilmartin has shown, although maritime navigational skill 'was associated with a power and strength that was specifically male', associated figurative language was appropriated by and for women in the period to describe their negotiation (whether literal or social) 'of wider geographical spaces outside the home'.[74]

Although the physical form of the three-volume novel was largely scrapped soon after the announcement from the circulating libraries, readers continued to identify many of its features, plots, and characters in a new single-volume guise. Reviewers even cited Kipling's 'Three-Decker' poem when describing contemporary texts with an 'old-fashioned' flavour including 'healthy' romances and works suitable for 'restful recreation'.[75] Some responses were more scathing, however, and when female writers produced novels of the 'old style' during the early decades of the twentieth century, satirists had ready ammunition. *Punch* poked fun at the American writer Alice Colver's *Under the Rainbow Sky* (1926), in a poem which recounts, tongue-in-cheek, the 'moving' and 'attractively' told story full of 'incident, pell-mell'. The heroine Betty Ward is 'a bewitching' and 'moneyed maiden […] / With a coiffure and a heart of pure gold' who adopts 'a child of low degree', escapes her villainous fiancée, and marries the hero who promptly becomes a novelist. The poem wryly concludes:

> This innocuous recital should certainly content
> Readers whose hearts incline
> To a cargo of propriety and sugared sentiment
> As they shipped 'em on the 'Old Three-Decker' Line;
> So I'd wish our little wayfarer, Miss Colver's pretty ship,
> Returns a-plenty, wherein, be it said,
> I'd include the underwriters of its oh! So maiden trip—
> Messrs. Hodder (likewise Stroughton), Limited.[76]

As well as raising an eyebrow at the sickly sweet cargo of this lengthy and feminized narrative, *Punch* casts doubt on the 'return' for Hodder & Stroughton Ltd, the publishers-cum-insurers who own and operate 'the "Old Three-Decker" Line'. Their decision to underwrite this 'little wayfarer' and her 'pretty ship' for its 'oh! So maiden trip' seems a foolish business decision.

Female authors outpaced male counterparts in the production of multi-volume fiction in the final decades of the century, and 'triple-deckers' became allied with a growing female readership as well as with sensation, romance, and marriage plots.[77] Given the tendency to present the sea, and three-decker warships in particular, as sites of masculine virility, it is perhaps unsurprising that the 'shipbuilding' or 'seafaring' efforts of women novelists attracted ridicule. One humorous

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[72] [Anon.], 'Silly Billy, the Hope of the Family', *The Boy's Comic Journal*, 1 (1 September 1883), 393–6 (p. 394).
[73] Henry Silver & Horace Mayhew, 'Wags in a Ball-Room', *Punch*, 31 (20 September 1856), 112.
[74] Gilmartin, '"The perils of crossings"', p. 84.
[75] [FA-IK], 'The China Cupboard, Name the three novels…', *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church*, 96 (1 September 1898), 350–52 (pp. 351–2); [Anon.], review of Mary Emma Martin, *Uncle Jem* (London, 1923), in *The New York Herald*, 25,969 (29 September 1907), 9; T. Oupie, review of Raymond Escholier, *La Nuit* (Paris, 1923), in *Woman's Leader and the Common Cause*, 16 (11 July 1924), 193.
[76] [Anon.], 'You'll find that Alice Colver has a moving tale to tell', *Punch*, 137 (31 August 1927), 250.
[77] For detailed analysis and publishing data see Bassett, *The Rise and Fall of the Three-Volume Novel*, pp. 42–50.

account published in the American pro-suffrage paper *Woodhull Claflin's Weekly* was written from the perspective of a husband complaining of his wife's literary ambitions. 'She has always some craft on the stocks', he grumbles' – now a stately three-decker, then a fairy pinnace with gossamer sails. If not engaged in construction she is polishing and sand-papering her work to faultless perfection'.[78] The labour here is not dignified, but rather frenetic and obsessive—coming at the expense of marital and domestic duties.

Novelists were not the only writers under pressure to adapt their vessels and routes for a new publishing 'seascape'. As Laurel Brake repeatedly emphasizes, the century saw 'persistent, two-way traffic between the literary and the media' and by the latter half of the century, the periodical press was 'deeply implicated in the larger book trade'.[79] Many titles flaunted their literary credentials by including critical essays by authors and by appointing some as editors. In 1860 rumours circulated of a rivalry between Charles Dickens and William Thackeray due to the founding of *Temple Bar* by the former's colleague, George Augustus Sala, just one year after the latter became the face of George Smith's new literary monthly *The Cornhill Magazine*.[80] With nautical inflection, the *Illustrated London News* dismissed these 'stupid notions', asking rhetorically 'is the ocean not big enough for the billy-boy and the three-decker as well?'[81] The comparison between a species of river barge ('the billy boy') and a warship, during the three-decker novel's heyday, may suggest that the new magazine (or perhaps Sala himself) is a harmless adversary to the *Cornhill* under Thackeray. The material qualities of each publication support this interpretation. Dickens's *Household Words* was printed on cheap paper and in dense typeface in the double-column layout typical of inexpensive weeklies but in the 'smaller crown octavo size of the more expensive periodicals'.[82] Meanwhile, Joanne Shattock suggests, with its single-column pages, the *Cornhill* resembled a book more than a typical periodical.[83] Brake adds that, as editor, Thackeray performed a similar role to Mudie: both placed emphasis on selecting 'respectable' material suitable for female readers and excluded compromising subjects.[84] Equally, Sala's reputation for 'charming and light compositions' on 'events of the day' or Dickens's association with the practice of serialization may lie behind descriptions of the slimmer 'billy-boy'.[85] Either way, the *Illustrated London News* reserves judgement, suggesting that no new textual vessel should be 'shot-down' before the public's verdict—'the best judges of its merits and demerits after all'.[86]

Although literary 'three-deckers' had some supporters there was an overarching departure from florid expression and lengthy texts in the final decades of the century. The original epigraph accompanying Kipling's poem and attributed to a generic 'Daily Paper' proclaims that 'the three-volume novel is doomed'. Tellingly, when the verse was trimmed down for insertion in *The Seven Seas*, the adjective 'old' was no longer necessary: the title becomes simply 'The Three-Decker', and the revised epigraph baldly states that 'the three-volume novel is extinct'.[87] As Menke summarizes, 'A modern medium marks the downfall of a legacy format'.[88] Indeed, journalistic 'three-decker' styles were also threatened by a new emphasis on topicality and pace. In

[78] C. A. Halbert, 'How I became a Pagan', *Woodhull Claflin's Weekly*, 1 (13 August 1870), 6.
[79] Laurel Brake, 'Journalism', in Pamela K. Gilbert and Linda K. Hughes (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Victorian Literature, Volume II* (Chichester, 2015), 845–54 (p. 851); Laurel Brake, 'The Advantage of Fiction: The Novel and the "Success" of the Victorian Periodical', in Beth Palmer and Adelene Buckland (eds), *A Return to the Common Reader* (Farnham, 2011), 9–21 (p. 20).
[80] For discussion of personal tensions see Gordan N. Ray, 'Dickens versus Thackeray: The Garrick Club Affair', *PMLA*, 69 (1954), 815–32.
[81] [Anon.], 'Literature and Art', *The Illustrated London News*, 37 (1 December 1860), 513.
[82] Joanne Shattock, 'Literature and the Expansion of the Press', in Juliet John (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford, 2016), 507–21 (p. 509).
[83] Shattock, 'Literature and the Expansion of the Press', p. 514.
[84] Brake, 'Journalism', pp. 849–50.
[85] [Anon.], 'The Lament of a Leader-Writer', *Westminster Review*, 152 (December 1899), 653–64 (p. 661); Lorna Huett, 'Among the Unknown Public: *Household Words, All the Year Round*, and the Mass-Market Weekly Periodical in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 38 (2005), 61–82.
[86] [Anon.], 'Literature and Art', *The Illustrated London News*, 513.
[87] Kipling, 'The Three-Decker', in *The Seven Seas*, pp. 134–8 (p. 134).
[88] Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 110.

1899, one unnamed leader-writer lamented that space for serious opinion was being increasingly squeezed. 'When I first entered journalism in 1889', he complains in the *Westminster Review*, 'the custom of most London dailies was to have three leaders of about a column each […] divided into three parts, the construction of which was based on certain traditional editorial rules'. Now that these have been 'cut down' and substituted for 'short and snappy paragraphs', he agreed with a colleague that 'the *old style* of British journalism', as well as the profession of the leader-writer, will "soon be as extinct as the dodo".[89] According to this commentator, increased advertisements, 'the mania for sports and finance', and an overarching emphasis on brevity and fleeting topical interests impinged on slower and more considered commentaries: not even the 'high-class weeklies' or 'the old literary review' offered safe harbour.[90] The current continued to push in one direction; in 1917 the weekly *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* cheerfully announced that 'the daily papers have been compelled to shorten their ponderous three-decker leading articles, laden with pedantry and politics'.[91]

The interdependence between the periodical press and the book trade is revealed through parallel shifts in attitudes towards literary and journalistic output. In 1896 a reviewer for *The Times* remarked that an episode in *The Mystery of Elias G. Roebuck* concerning a schooner sailed by piratical monkeys was too brief: 'in Mr Clark Russell's hands it would have made a capital "three-decker".[92] Yet, by 1937 the same paper would remark that 'A type of literature regarded as enthralling half a century ago is considered ponderous and tiresome, as antiquated as the three-decker novel compared with the slim pocket edition of this utilitarian age'.[93] Four months later, the same commentator railed against 'verbosity', 'meaningless padding', and 'daily torrents of words' produced by the press. 'After all', they remarked, 'this is not a leisurely age; most three-decker novels would get short shrift at the hands of a time-conscious public'.[94] This attitude was reflected in reviews of the performing arts. Characters in plays could be 'weighted with the overpowering burden of lines that would have sunk a three-decker' while musical performances which conjured the grace of a 'perfect modern yacht' were lauded over thundering 'three-decker battleship' styles.[95] Such comments reflect changing terms of critique as well as the press's break from the three-volume system from which it no longer benefitted.[96]

The phrase 'three-decker' continued to be employed to write about writing, whether journalistic or fictional. However, by the early decades of the twentieth century it was often used as a shorthand for texts which were outdated, slow-paced, or excessively long. In this way, the typical attitudes towards three-decker battleships and three-decker forms of writing diverged: the former was a noble relic, whereas the latter was discarded as something of a historical embarrassment. Whereas 'The heft and the stable, standardized format of the three-decker [novel] embodied and gratified a mid-Victorian sense of taste that prized the massive or monumental as a sign of worth', Menke notes that by the end of the century 'an interest in lightness or craftedness' predominated.[97] Brake concurs that the 'transformation' of the material conditions of publishing in the 1890s affected magazines, publishers, authors, and distributors, resulting in 'nothing less than the transformation of the English novel itself, now to become slimmer, more tightly plotted, and compact'.[98] These changes in publishing networks and techniques were framed in

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89 [Anon.], 'The Lament of a Leader-Writer' (pp. 656, 657, 660, 662).
90 [Anon.], 'The Lament of a Leader-Writer', pp. 658, 662.
91 [Anon.], 'Hebe's News & Notes', *The Gentlewoman and Modern Life*, 55 (21 July 1917), 270–71 (p. 270).
92 [Anon.], 'Recent Novels', *The Times* (29 December 1896), 13.
93 [Callisthenes], 'Few Things Remain Unchanged', *The Times*, 47,480 (15 September 1936), 12.
94 [Callisthenes], 'Millions of Words – and who reads them!', *The Times*, 47,583 (15 January 1937), 10.
95 [Anon.], 'Novelty Theatre', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 3 (21 September 1885), 3; [Anon.], 'Coleridge-Taylor', *The African World and Cape-Cairo Express*, 41 (23 November 1912), 168.
96 For an explanation of how literary periodicals benefitted from the bulk buying of the circulation libraries see Brake, 'The Advantage of Fiction', p. 17.
97 Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies*, p. 105.
98 Brake, 'The Advantage of Fiction', p. 21.

parallel with developments in ship design and seafaring practices. The following section explores this new 'seascape'.

NAVIGATING THE PUBLISHING OCEAN

Reduced costs stemming from the abolition of the paper tax (1860) and mid- to late-century improvements in stereotyping, mechanized paper production, and composing machines extended the benefits of steam-powered printing from newspapers to book production.[99] These developments hastened the decline of the three-decker novel by reducing its profitability to the circulating libraries; publishers could escape 'the three-volume straitjacket' by rapidly issuing reprints of cheaper, popular works for a growing reading public 'intended for mass consumption through accessible venues', including W. H. Smith and John Menzies' railway bookstalls. David Finkelstein acknowledges that improved presses 'conjoin[ed] steam in the public mind with print activity' as well as with 'visible examples of evolving communication and transportation systems' including 'powerful and swift metal ships'.[100]

The connection was also tangible. Steamships expanded the geographical reach of Anglophone books which could now be shipped more quickly, efficiently, and safely.[101] Steam-powered sea-travel helped forge stronger links with North America and was pivotal in establishing colonial libraries, such as John Murray and Macmillan, which provided 'some of the most lucrative areas for book distribution from 1890 to 1920'.[102] In the final decades of the century, profit-sharing and royalty agreements superseded outright sale of copyright and a small number of publishers began to manage 'a vast and diffuse network of bookshops and circulating libraries'.[103] These developments, combined with increased competition in global markets, encouraged authors to be more assertive in negotiating publishing contracts and exploiting markets for their works.[104] While collaborative partnerships between writers and publishers were often forged to ensure financial returns, authors' demands were not purely commercial; they also included efforts to control the forms or versions in which works appeared.[105]

Once more, Kipling developed an extended analogy which captured these developments in author-publisher relations. As Andrew Lycett notes, 'the market changed, but Kipling retained the idea that books were like vessels and publishers like ships' captains'.[106] Having traded in a youthful aspiration to build a three-decker, for composing novellas, short stories, and poems, he sent a note in 1897 to the New York-based publisher Frank Doubleday (later a close friend).[107] Titled 'Letter or Bill of Instructions from the Owner', Kipling addresses Doubleday as *Nakhoda*, a term for 'the captain or master of a local boat in Indo-Malayan or Arabian waters', and entrusts him a *buggalow*, Indian English for 'a traditional type of sailing vessel used in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf'.[108] The extent to which Kipling sought here to validate indigenous nautical traditions which were imposed upon by steamships and yet nonetheless survived and coexisted alongside them, remains unclear; orientalizing naming practices allowed him to underline his

[99] Eliot, 'The Business of Victorian Publishing', pp. 54, 58; David McKitterick (ed.), 'Changes in the Look of the Nook', in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, V1, 1830–1914* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 75–116 (p. 76).
[100] Finkelstein, 'Publishing and the Materiality of the Book', pp. 15–16.
[101] Joanne Shattock, 'The Publishing Industry', in John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (eds), *The Oxford History of the Novel in English. Volume 3: The Nineteenth-Century Novel 1820–1880* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 3–21, (p. 6).
[102] Finkelstein, 'Publishing and the Materiality of the Book', p. 25.
[103] John Feather, *Publishing, Piracy, and Politics: An Historical Study of Copyright in Britain* (London, 1994), p. 177.
[104] David McKitterick (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, V1, 1830–1914* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 1–74 (pp. 62–3).
[105] Feather, *Publishing, Piracy, and Politics*, pp. 179–80.
[106] Lycett, *Kipling and the Sea*, p. 3.
[107] See Howard C. Rice Jr, '"Into the hold of Remembrance": Notes on the Kipling Material in the Doubleday Collection', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 22 (1961), 105–17.
[108] OED.

Anglo-Indian heritage, gesture to the cross-cultural subject matter of his writing, and romanticize the kinship of his 'voyage'.[109] Curiously, the accompanying image on this Bill's title page is of a steamboat rather than the traditional *dhow* that the text describes. Indeed, this would be a trans-Atlantic venture: the 'boat' is bound for 'the Western ports' (the USA) and its cargo would become the 'Outward Bound' edition.[110]

Although Kipling appoints the publisher as skipper, he remains the shipbuilder (as well as the 'owner') for the time being. New arrangement and edits to existing works are described as improvements to the vessel:

> I have given you a new compass, with new rigging, masts, sails, and other gear suitable to the *buggalow* […]. The cargo is all in new mats, stowed like by like, to be reached more easily; and I have painted her before and behind, and I have put a new plank deck in place of the old bamboo one, and the tiller-ropes are new as well. This is at my risk and the returns must be prepared with zeal and a single heart.

Kipling's concern for the careful management of his commodities as well as his advice regarding sale strategies occupy much of the text. For example, he references unscrupulous American publishers who pirated his works as 'men of the seas' who 'have told me lies secretly selling anchors and cables and ascribing the loss to the waves, sharks, and sea-fairies'. 'That was long ago, O *Nakhoda*', he warns, 'and now I do not believe all the stories that come up from the beaches' (pp. 23–4).

These remarks reflect concerns about 'literary property' that were particularly acute in cross-Atlantic publishing relations. Reciprocal agreements with European neighbours had been established in the 1840s and 1850s, and the Berne Convention adopted in 1886. Yet, attempts to secure a similar treaty regulating the Anglo-American book trade ultimately failed, putting pressure on individual agreements between British and American publishing parties. John Feather notes that US reprinting of British books 'continued to be a major problem until almost the very end of the century' when the passing of the Chace Act (1891) afforded British authors some protection.[111] Kipling advised Doubleday to avoid 'bellowing' 'iron' ships (perhaps bullish players in the book trade or relentless representatives of modern capitalism) which 'suddenly divide wooden vessels' (p. 24). His remark echoes concerns about contents 'leaking' prematurely, but the danger he alludes to was also real: a number of well-publicized maritime accidents involving steamships and smaller wooden crafts 'cast a shadow over the middle years of the nineteenth-century, especially in the increasingly crowded shipping lanes of the North Atlantic.'[112] He had already used such incidents for dramatic effect; in *Captains Courageous* (1896) the 'little schooner' occupied by the novel's young protagonist narrowly escapes the path of a steamer which instead tears off the foremast of a nearby frigate.[113]

Kipling figures his texts as textiles and other goods when continuing his instructions for appealing to different kinds of buyers who come aboard the *buggalow*. Doubleday should allow discerning customers to choose freely 'and throw a sail over certain bales of lesser worth' (p. 25). To those, who, 'stamping on the deck and talking loud, infallibly choose the worst', he may sell

[109] John M. MacKenzie 'General Editor's Introduction', in Frances Steel, *Oceania under Sail*, pp. xix-xxi (p. xx). See also David A Chappell, 'Ahab's Boat: Non-European Seamen in Western Ships of Exploration and Commerce', in Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun (eds), *Sea Changes: Historicising the Ocean* (London & New York, NY, 2004), pp. 75–89.

[110] Rudyard Kipling, 'To the Nakhoda or Skipper of this Venture: A Letter of Instruction from the Owner, 1897', in *Two Forewords* (New York, NY, 1935), pp. 23–31 (p. 24). Subsequent references made in the main text.

[111] Feather, *History of British Publishing*, p. 136. For more on British writers and international publishing see Feather, *Publishing, Piracy, and Politics*, ch.5; McKitterick, 'Introduction', in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, pp. 17–22.

[112] H. V. Bowen, 'Afterword. Islands and the British Empire: From the Age of Sail to the Age of Steam', in Douglas Hamilton and John McAleer (eds), *Islands and the British Empire in the Age of Sail* (Oxford, 2021), pp. 192–204 (p. 196). See also Geoffrey Marcus, *The Maiden Voyage* (New York, NY, 1868), p. 287.

[113] Rudyard Kipling, *Captains Courageous* (London, 1897), pp. 142–3.

cheap 'beads, brass rods and coarse cloths' (pp. 25–6). Those who seem cunning and are 'full of words as the foresail of wind', he should 'take to the hold and show them that I do not altogether sell toys or looking glasses' but quality cloths that are 'double- and treble-figured, giving new patterns in a shift of light' (p. 26). This last description emphasizes Kipling's careful craftmanship while also implicitly justifying his 'recycling' or reconstruction of existing texts for this new edition. These are 'stitched' or woven together to create a different form, gaining fresh resonances (or 'patterns') in the new context of the 'Outward Bound' collection.

Children and men are presented as particularly important customers. When the latter 'come down to the beaches', Doubleday should 'hide away all that which is uncomely' and prevent them from 'wander[ing] unchecked through all the holds or sully[ing] themselves in the bilges'. Instead, Kipling instructs him to 'let down the gangplank with the railing on either hand; and spare nothing of the painted clay figures, the talking apes, the dancing bears, the coloured lights, or the sweet-meats to give them pleasure' (pp. 26–7). Here, Kipling alludes to the 'dancing bears' and 'talking apes' of *The Jungle Book* (1894) while references to 'painted clay figures' recall youthful memories of Bombay School of Art which he describes as a 'marvellous place filled with smells of paints and oils, and lumps of clay with which I played'.[114] There is, however, a commercial impetus for this strategy: 'they will first plague their parents to buy, and later—for a child's memory is very long—will bring down their own babes when we return' (p. 27). Kipling's savviness only cracks slightly when discussing how the 'chief part' of their business lies with 'men who are wearied at the end of the day' and whom Doubleday must 'entice […] away from their houses and their occupations till they come aboard' (p. 27). They must have full freedom to roam the vessel at leisure and, for once, Kipling's reasons are not purely motivated by money. With a wistful sentimentality he reflects, 'I do not forget how, when I was wearied at the end of the day, certain great captains sold me for a little silver that which I could not now find in any market'. Finally, despite his efforts to ensure the voyage's success, Kipling acknowledges the unpredictability of the venture; 'following winds' soon give way to 'lasting calms' (p. 29), and 'The chances of the sea are many and come on all' (p. 28).

Nearly four decades later, and shortly before his own death, Kipling wrote a similar note to Doubleday's son Nelson. This time, the *jahaz* is not a sailboat but a modern steamboat 'fitted according to the reported increase of knowledge among mankind'.[115] Lycett claims that 'Kipling was happy to describe the publishing business as a steamship'.[116] Yet, an uneasy tone suffuses descriptions of this new vessel which is:

> cumbered end to end, with bells and trumpets and clocks and wires which, it has been told to me, can call Voices out of the air or the waters to con the ship while her crew sleep. But sleep *thou* lightly, O Nakhoda! It has not yet been told to me that the Sea has ceased to be the Sea.
>
> She has no sail but only engines which jig up and down, and must needs be anointed with oils as though they were dancing-girls. (In the old days, a sailing-ship was a beloved wife whereon, with a rope's-end, one wrought miracles) (12).

The new steamboat may be trussed with technological advances (like the radio, or 'Voices'), but seafaring skill and alertness is still required to ensure safe passage. In fact, these new additions are sly—possessing the ability to 'con the crew' and to make them forget that they remain vulnerable

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[114] Kipling, *Something of Myself*, p. 3. See also Mahrukh Tarapor, 'John Lockwood Kipling and British Art Education in India', *Victorian Studies*, 24 (1890), 53–81.

[115] Rudyard Kipling, 'Being The Instructions to the Nakhoda, The Captain, of this Ship, 1935', in *Two Forewords* (New York, NY, 1935), pp. 11–19 (pp. 16, 12). Subsequent references made in the main text; 'Jahaz' is the Arabic word for ship or 'vessel'.

[116] Lycett, *Kipling and the Sea*, p. 4. See also 'The Secret of the Machines', in Rudyard Kipling & C. R. L. Fletcher, *A History of England* (New York, NY, 1911), pp. 303–6.

to the elemental and unchanged forces of the 'ocean' market. The mildly disparaging comparison between dancing girls and a beloved wife likewise casts suspicion on the modern steamship and its fickle engines. By contrast, a sailing ship with whom one has enjoyed a long union, may be compelled to do a master's bidding. Here Kipling is aligned with writers such as Joseph Conrad (an outspoken opponent of maritime steam) for whom wooden sailing ships, and the living, changing sea itself, were 'intimate companions'.[117] The beloved wife, like a well-behaved wooden sailing ship 'yield[s] to the weather and humour[s] the sea'.[118]

This second 'Bill of Instructions' introduces literary critics as another group of writers that the author and publisher must appease. These 'idlers and sitters along the wharves':

> leap aboard to feel and to finger and to fret, and unwrap, and rattle and split open and smell at my goods, that they may tell the world how such a carpet should have been stretched on the loom, or Queen-turquoise set and steadied in the lac [resinous varnish], or the gold wire worked into a fringe (pp. 17–8).

Whereas other accounts imagine critics as occupants of 'hostile canoes', in Kipling's conceit this group do not test their own sea-legs, but instead wait leisurely to pounce upon whatever literary cargo tries to dock nearby.[119] The vessel is changed, the goods and handicrafts now loosely associated with Iran (known for its turquoise mines, Persian carpets, and ancient glazing practices), the harbour more crowded with naysaying critics, and literature is now in competition with the radio.[120] Yet, despite the collision of traditional handicrafts and emerging technologies, the content and tone of Kipling's second set of instructions vary little from the first. For example, women are still considered unlikely to visit the vessel, while children and men remain important target customers.[121] In fact, Kipling sent the original instructions with the new, 'Lest there should be any loose ropes or knots that may slip' (p. 19).

The chief difference between the first and second 'Bills' is Kipling's more relaxed attitude towards economic strategies in the latter. This may reflect a very successful personal and business relationship with Doubleday senior whose meticulous 'methods & manners of publishing' he admired and whose 'whole spirit & outlook of it' he appreciated.[122] Their correspondence, as well as the annotations on the 'Outward Bound' proofs, shows how the two worked closely and in harmony, or as Kipling put it in the second 'Bill of Instructions' '—ship and cargo tack for tack' (p. 12).[123] This collaborative partnership supports Rachel Buurma's challenge to the perceived binary between the 'purely economic agendas' of publishers and 'moral/aesthetic agendas' of novelists.[124] Kipling even retrospectively includes Frank Doubleday as a fellow shipbuilder, recounting to his son that 'For that trade *we* built and equipped a little sailing ship which *we* both loved' (p. 11, emphasis added). In the second 'Bill of Instructions', Kipling gives over more explicit editorial flexibility, permitting Nelson to choose the samples and to sell 'goods in bulk or single' (p. 11). 'I have left the sole choice of the number and the natures of the samples upon *thy* head', he writes, adding that 'It is long since I had house or hearth in thy land, and markets, even when they are watched, shift like shoals' (p. 18). While there are personal reasons for Kipling's looser grip on his cargo, the 1911 Copyright Act had enshrined greater

[117] Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 4. For more on Conrad's opposition to steamships see Steel, *Oceania Under Steam*, pp. 54–5.
[118] Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea* (Marlboro, 1988), p. 64.
[119] [Advertisement], 'Porter & Coates' Publications', in Harry Castlemon, *Frank on the Lower Missisipi* (Philadelphia, PA, 1896), p. 2.
[120] See P. Holakooei *et. al.*, 'Early Opacifiers in the Glaze Industry of First Millennium BC Persia: Persepolis and Tepe Rabat', *Archaeometry*, 59 (2017), 239–54.
[121] Rudyard Kipling, 'Being The Instructions to the Nakhoda, The Captain, of this Ship, 1935', pp. 15–16.
[122] Qtd. in Howard C. Rice Jr, '"Into the hold of Remembrance": Notes on the Kipling Material in the Doubleday Collection', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 22 (1961), 105–17 (p. 109).
[123] See Rice, '"Into the hold of Remembrance"'.
[124] Rachel Sagner Buurma, 'Publishing the Victorian Novel', in Lisa Rodensky (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 2013), 97–110, (p. 90).

protections for authors. By this time, writers, literary agents, and publishers were able to launch new works in a variety of formats while also 'releas[ing] new editions and collections of back stock in inexpensive reprints for sale in global markets'.[125]

The second note served as a foreword to *A Kipling Pageant* (1935) and, along with the first, was republished that same year by Doubleday, Doran & Co. These limited-edition volumes were distributed as a 'Christmas memento' to other 'men of the seas': 'friends and colleagues in the world of bookselling and publishing'.[126] The image of the small sailboat on the main title page and the steamboats which accompany the individual 'Bills', gesture towards Kipling's successful literary ventures during a period of rapid change and to the long friendship enjoyed between the Kipling and Doubleday families (see Figs 1 & 2). Yet, his use of nautical imagery and language here, as well as in the examples previously discussed, also speak to some key developments in the world of British book publishing at the *fin de siècle*. While Kipling's 'Three Decker' poem presented characters and readers as passengers and participants in the voyage, his two later 'Bill of Instructions' focus on the shipping of literary products. Readers are now customers who—like critics—access textual goods once the vessel is docked in harbour, 'sideways to the quay, with all hatches clear' (p. 30). Perhaps most importantly, while the author determines the route, the publisher is appointed to steer the vessel. With the circulating libraries now much less influential, the relationships between publishers and with their authors became more pivotal. Both lines of work had gone through a process of rapid professionalization and the book trade's participants needed to establish new international networks: 'men of the seas' must work more collaboratively to ensure safe passage of literary cargo.

CONCLUSION

Nautical language was a frequent feature of late-Victorian culture. A swell of metaphors were produced through actual contact with ocean environments and were also generated and re-made by contemporary writers. Metaphors of writing as shipbuilding, categorizations of certain literary styles and forms as different kinds of vessel, and representations of publishers, authors, and critics as participants in a new seascape of textual production and circulation demonstrate the depth of maritime influence upon many literary discourses of the period. Meanings flowed in both directions: press-contributors reporting on steam propulsion and iron-plating often harkened back to maritime poetry and fiction and used insistently aesthetic and literary language to characterize the 'Age of Sail'. The 'welter of marine associations' in the period, and the porousness between the literal and symbolic, produce slippery and disorderly meanings.[127] Even well-worn and seemingly robust metaphors like 'three-decker' prove somewhat fluid, as gendered critiques of female authors and readerships reveal.

Nonetheless, patterns emerge. Those who championed the virtues of textual brevity and pace often railed against the 'three-decker', a term used to describe outdated wooden warships and the three-volume novel (as well as certain styles of journalism). For others, the evocation neatly combined nostalgia for both the old-style of Victorian novel and the 'wooden world'. However, by the *fin de siècle* the change in taste from the multi-volume novel to more pared-down fiction with fewer subplots and characters was considered just as inevitable as the ascendancy of ironclad steamers. Writers including Kipling and Stevenson grasped the metaphor of shipbuilding and seafaring to articulate their own literary ambitions and to appeal to the nautical imaginations of the public. Yet their accounts, among many others, also show an acute awareness of commercial pressures upon style and form.

[125] Graham Law and Robert L. Patten, 'The Serial Revolution', in David McKittrick (ed.), *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, V1, 1830–1914* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 144–71 (p. 170).
[126] 'A Note from the Publisher', in Rudyard Kipling, *Two Forewords* (New York, NY, 1935), pp. 3–4 (p. 4).
[127] Kerr, *The Victorian Novel and the Problem of Marine Language*, pp. 2, 247.
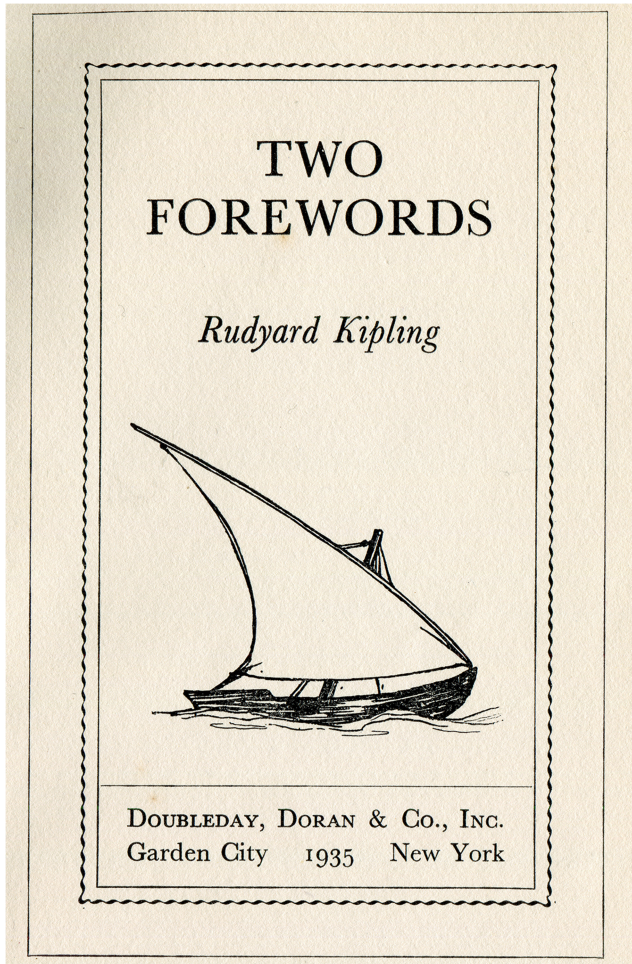
FIG. 1. *Two Forewords* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1935).

The maritime world continued to offer expressive possibilities to twentieth-century writers who drew on the ocean, and water metaphors more broadly (the most obvious being 'stream of consciousness') to gesture towards a new poetics. According to Daniel Albright, many embraced 'a wave model of literature' which spoke to a modernist project preoccupied with the abolition of boundaries in which 'the whole universe of discourse becomes fluid' and wherein disorientated 'authors are all seasick from a lack of any determinate horizon of meaning'.[128] Nineteenth-century writers also exploited the imaginative potential of nautical metaphors, but seem inclined to pay more attention to the world of ship construction and propulsion than to the ocean itself. This focus does not constitute 'hydrophasia'—a term coined by Margaret Cohen to describe the persistent forgetting of the sea (especially in critical writings of the early to mid-twentieth century).[129] The period's conceits remain moored to marine materiality and historical realities—not only in nautical affairs but in publishing and global book distribution, which were

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[128] Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 19, 21, 26.
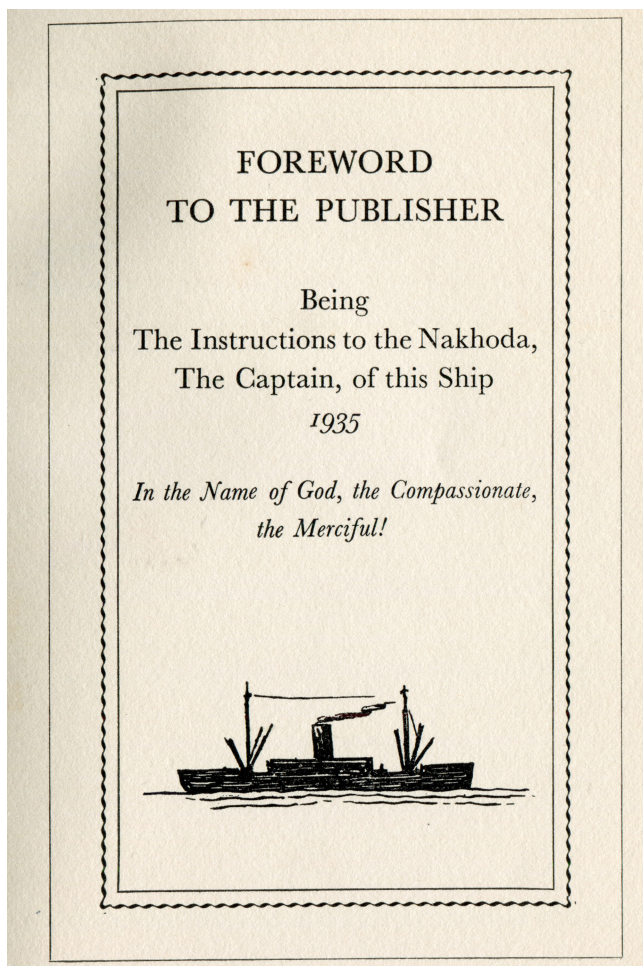[129] Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 14.

FIG. 2. 'Foreword to the Publisher [1935]', *Two Forewords* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1935).

greatly impacted by steamships. Gilmartin's claim, made in relation to Victorian novels, that 'the maritime as a literary motif is not "merely metaphorical"' and that 'the material and poetic are intertwined, symbiotically dependent' rings true for late-Victorian literary criticism and journalism.[130] The absorption of literary and nautical realities into the late-Victorian imagination reflects a period of unprecedented change, not only in naval architecture and technologies but also in print culture.

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[130] Gilmartin, '"The perils of crossings"', p. 85.