

SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to trace the emergence and development of Buddhism in British literature on the example of selected literary works from the 1870s through the end of the twentieth century. The literary works discussed date from 1871 up to 1998. With full awareness of the wide scope of the research problem, the author of the thesis has decided to select a number of representative works of various authors with the intention of presenting a cross-section of reactions to Buddhism rather than to gather singular mentions, motifs or allusions to the religion.

One of the basic assumptions of the thesis is that the discovery of Buddhism, the creation of discourse about this religion, and its presence in literature are inseparable from the colonial activity of the British. Some of the questions which the author attempts to answer in the present thesis relate to the interaction between the coloniser and the colonised culture. For this reason, upon revising the research problem the author decided to apply elements of postcolonial criticism as the main theoretical base. The interdisciplinary character of the research, however, requires the application of other perspectives, for instance, a comparative approach to literature, culture, and religion, creating inevitable methodological pluralism. Finally, the author found it helpful to consult biographical sources about the authors' personal contact with the religion, as very frequently opinions found in interviews and journals complemented or elucidated the approach towards Buddhism presented in their works.

In the nineteenth century, with the knowledge-gathering function of the administration of the British Empire came knowledge of Buddhism, a religion long-lost in India, however present in some forms in Japan, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), and Tibet. The accounts of missionaries and travellers provided some limited insight into the religion of the Buddha and its fundamental premises, though causing a great deal of confusion as to the identity and provenance of its founder. The Indian origins of the religion and the Buddha were discovered and confirmed through independent efforts of philologists and amateur archaeologists, most of whom worked within the net of the British colonial administration. Subsequent research into Buddhist scriptures led to the appearance of a Victorian construction of Buddhism, based mostly on the translation and interpretation of texts, and the beginning of the scholarly discourse on the religion. It was in the 1870s, however, that Buddhism entered the popular imagination of the British with the publication of Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, a best-selling long poem which introduced the Victorians to the story of Gautama Siddhartha. The

poem established the figure of the Buddha as a noble reformer, an ascetic and a sage, in a way comparable to or even competitive with Jesus. The Victorian construction of Buddhism developed into a long-lasting interest in this Asian religion in the decades to come.

India remained under some form of control of the British for over two hundred years. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was taken over by the East India Company to become The British Raj in the late 1850s. The British rule continued up to the Indian Independence in 1947. In *Masks of Conquest* Gauri Viswanathan (1998) divides the British colonial presence in India into two main phases, Orientalism and Anglicism. Orientalism was characterised by a tolerance and empathy towards native customs, while Anglicism heavily depended on the gains of Orientalism, its main agenda being comparing and evaluating native customs against British culture. The British discovery and consequent inquiry into Buddhism can be seen as a result of both those phases. The Orientalist focus on knowledge enabled the search for the lost religion, the Anglicist tendency to compare and evaluate contributed to the reflections on the differences between Buddhism and Christianity, but also to the eventual distortion of the religion. Briefly, even though the Orientalist attempts to discover Buddhism and its sources were at least partially benevolent in nature, the later literary works created on the basis of the scholarship were marked with the Anglicist mission of educating and comparing.

Postcolonial criticism has often addressed Christianisation as the link between colonial conquest and religion. However, in the case of Buddhism, it was the religion of the colonised, or some version of it, which travelled back home with the colonisers and gained interest in the metropolis. The British discovery and eventual appropriation of the religion prove that colonial conquest was not only marked by one-sided influence on the colonised but also led to some profound changes in the culture of the coloniser. The present thesis attempts to answer the question what attracted Europeans to Buddhism and how it was represented, if and how the representation changed together with the dismantling of the Empire, and, the most importantly, if this seemingly benign interest in the religion of the East can also be a manifestation of colonial power.

Importantly, the colonial India can be considered a “contact zone”, defined by Mary Louise Pratt (1992:7) as a place *where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination- like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today* (Pratt 1992:7). Pratt (1992:8) elaborates that the term *invokes the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their*

trajectories now intersect. Consequently, contact zones are places of interaction and exchange between the colonisers and the colonised. According to the author,

a “contact” perspective emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and “travelees,” not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (Pratt 1992:8)

The British presence in India, despite the obvious harmful consequences for the colonised became an opportunity for a cultural exchange. However, the contact of the British with Buddhism happened rarely through direct interaction with Buddhists and the religion, but mostly through the reading of Buddhist texts, carefully collected, translated, and commented upon by Western Orientalists and the contact with archaeological finds and religious artefacts. In case of the British, the “contact zone” is very often elusive, floating, and sometimes purely textual.

Taken the mutual nature of the cultural exchange, the interaction of the British with Buddhism can be perceived as a form of transculturation, *the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds in colonies and metropolises, and is thus ‘a phenomenon of the contact zone’* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2000:213). The term transculturation, as coined by Fernando Ortiz, replaced the concepts of acculturation and deculturation and can be also understood *the transference of culture in reductive fashion imagined from within the interests of the metropolis* (Pratt 1992:244-245). As noticed by Leela Gandhi (1998:131), *the coloniser—as much as the colonised—is implicated in the transcultural dynamics of the colonial encounter.* Thus, the experience of travel and of colonial conquest fashioned the imperial identity or even enriched it with elements of the colonised culture. Gandhi (1998:133) notes: *Notably, the colonial archive itself records the administrative imperative to—at least—‘appear native’ in the performance of governmental power. The evangelical activities of colonial missionaries frequently required the paradoxical and threatening indigenisation of the gospel.*

The presence of Buddhist motifs in British literature outside of their original context can also be considered in terms of cultural appropriation. To illustrate this term, Young and Brunk (2009:2) quote the definition of appropriation from the Oxford English Dictionary: *the making of a thing private property [...]; taking as one’s own or to one’s own use.* Cultural appropriation is, then, the act of taking something that originated in a foreign culture for the use of one’s own culture. The authors list several objects of cultural appropriation including

tangible and intangible works of art, archeological finds, artistic subject matters, intellectual property, genetic material, human remains, as well as religious beliefs and traditional knowledge (Young and Brunk 2009:2). According to the authors, however, not all acts of cultural appropriation are morally questionable. As criteria for distinguishing wrongful from benign appropriation they propose the notion of “profound offence”, which *strikes at a person’s core values and sense of self. It is caused, for example, by the desecration of a religious symbol or by the violation of profound cultural norms, such as those associated with respect for the dead* (Young and Brunk 2009:5). Cultural appropriation may also violate property rights, and more importantly, constitute an attack on the viability and identity of members of other cultures, especially those threatened by a colonial power. The appropriation of religious beliefs and practices is recognised by the authors as especially harmful, as it is very often connected with certain distortion of the original system of beliefs: *To misrepresent and distort the character of other people, and especially of their cultural identity, with the consequence that this distortion becomes the widespread understanding in the dominant culture is, without doubt, a form of harm to people and to a culture.* (Young and Brunk 97-98). Even though the authors refer mostly to the appropriation of Native American religions, the harmful distortions concern also Buddhism in the West, especially in the twentieth century.

The acts of appropriation are, without a doubt, a result of exoticism, explained by Graham Huggan (2001) as a political and aesthetic practice of the production of otherness. According to Huggan (2001:13), *exoticism describes [...] a particular mode of aesthetic perception—one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery.* Even though at times exoticism may serve positive, unifying goals, it is very often a tool for justifying conquest and wrongful appropriation. While, on one hand, exoticism connected with the assimilation of cultural differences, *ascribing familiar meanings and associations to unfamiliar things*, it also distorts the view of the “exotic”, as reachable and available for the taking. The rhetoric of exoticism is based on the fetishisation of otherness which, according to Huggan, masks the inequality power relations between the colonised and the coloniser. Moreover, the process of exotisation is connected with the decontextualisation and cultural dislocation of the "exotic". Buddhism, especially as present in the twentieth-century British literature, may be seen as the "exotic other", an object of fantasy removed from its original context and location, appreciated by the Europeans for its perceived otherness. Finally, it is important to note that Huggan considers extreme forms of

decontextualisation sanctioning cultural ignorance and illustrates the point with a comment from Tzvetan Todorov: *Knowledge is incompatible with exoticism, but lack of knowledge is, in turn, irreconcilable with praise of others; yet praise without knowledge is precisely what exoticism aspires to be. This is its constitutive paradox* (Huggan 2001:17).

The titular reception of Buddhism in British literature can also be considered in accordance with Hans Robert Jauss' definition of the horizon of expectations. Developing the concept of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jauss claims that literary works, as well as ideas, are received through the filter of one's previous experiences and knowledge. Consequently, through the exposition to new works or sets of ideas, the horizon of expectations changes, or broadens, often resulting in a more active, or productive, type of reception. Jauss describes this process as a *continual change [...] from a simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production which surpasses them* (Jauss 1970:8). Works produced as a result of active reception take the form of a dialogue between the text and the readers, arousing such reactions as a *spontaneous success, rejection or shock, scattered approval, gradual or later understanding* (Jauss 1970:14). Since, as further explained by Jauss (1970:8), *the perspective of the aesthetics of reception mediates between passive reception and active understanding, norm-setting experience and new production*, the British reception of Buddhism also ultimately assumed a creative character. The norms and facts established in the scholarly work on Buddhism developed into productive interpretations of the basis of this religion and the life of its founder in poetry and prose. The British construction of Buddhism both reflects the expectations of the coloniser of an "Oriental" religion and involves elements already known and acceptable for a Western reader. Consequently, as assumed by Philip Almond (1988), what Europeans, and especially the British, accepted as Buddhism was a construction of their own making. In twentieth-century literature, the Victorian construction of the religion was supplemented by contact with actual forms of Buddhist worship. From the postcolonial perspective, however, the emergence and further development of the Victorian, as well as the twentieth-century European, Buddhism may be perceived as a manifestation of power over the East through the appropriation of this religion. Finally, as suggested by Gadamer, *what one actually experiences in a work of art and what one looks for is, how true it is, that is, how much it makes one know and recognize the world and one's own self* (cited in Jauss 1970:22). Buddhism, then, offered the Europeans an insight through comparison into their own values and concerns. This either consolidated their Christian viewpoints or partially served as an alternative to the Western outlook on religion and morality.

The present thesis is composed of five themed chapters, the first of which is an introduction to the British and continental European encounters with Buddhism, the following two being devoted to Victorian literature, and chapters IV and V to twentieth-century literature.

Chapter I provides an overview of the philological and archaeological work on the origin of Buddhism and the subsequent appearance of Buddhist scholarship and discourse. Starting with a brief history and main assumptions of Buddhism, the author presents also the history of European and British encounters with the religion. Moreover, the chapter reviews several scholarly attempts to define the nature of the British contact with Buddhism. After Franklin (2008) and Normand (2013), the primary reactions to Buddhism, including *selection, transformation, hybridisation, assimilation, and rejection*, are briefly discussed for consideration in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literatures. Next, the author provides a brief overview of postcolonial theories in order to anchor the subject of British construction of Buddhism in the thought of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Special attention is paid to Said's *Orientalism* in order to place the discourse about Buddhism within the orientalist discourse and power/knowledge structures, which establish a theoretical background for further consideration of British Buddhism as a by-product of imperialism. Finally, the presence of Buddhism in continental Europe of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is discussed, focusing on the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Carl Gustav Jung, and Erich Fromm.

Chapter II analyses three Victorian poetic works: Richard Phillips' *The Story of Gautama Buddha and his Creed* (1871), Sidney Arthur Alexander's *Sakya-Muni: The Story of Buddha* (1887), and Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* (1879). The point of departure for the analysis is the emergence of Victorian Buddhism and the circumstances that allowed for a popular interest in Buddhism. In the discussion of Arnold's work, special attention is paid to the responses of critics, which accentuate the common reservations of Victorian readers towards Buddhism. *The Light of Asia* is also analysed in terms of the parallels with Christianity which the author introduced in order to facilitate the reception of the alien philosophy. Furthermore, the role of Edwin Arnold in the popularization of Buddhism is outlined. Later on, in the discussion of *The Light of Asia* and *The Story of Gautama Buddha and his Creed*, the theme of the perceived convergence of Buddhism with Darwinism and the resulting image of Buddhism as "scientific" is analysed. Based on the three poems as well as nineteenth-century scholarly work on Buddhism, the author also presents Victorian approaches to the concept of Nirvana. The works examined in Chapter II show a tendency to "westernise" the figure of the

Buddha for different purposes. Certainly, such portrayals bear a striking resemblance to the process of mimicry. While the colonisers desired to reform an Oriental “Other” into somebody more recognisable, acceptably Western and non-threatening, the authors of the analysed poetic works managed to do roughly the same with the literary representations of the Buddha creating what may be recognised as a Buddhist-Christian hybrid. While in Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, it seems to be a well-intentioned attempt to familiarise a British reader with the historical figure of the founder of Buddhism, in *The Story of Gautama Buddha and his Creed* by Richard Phillips this process turns to substantial and harmful distortions of the image of the historical figure and his main assumptions. Importantly, the Buddha from all three poems seems to be structured around a Christian ideal of a teacher, thus he is partially stripped of his identity. One of the main issues that discommoded the nineteenth-century reception of Buddhism was the lack of a personal god or deity. All three authors decided not to include this element in their poetic depictions of Buddhism, causing further distortions to the doctrine. Edwin Arnold managed to successfully avoid associations with atheism by vaguely suggesting the existence of an impersonal divine being. Richard Phillips, however, built the narration about the origins of the Buddha’s teaching around his discovery of the non-existence of a higher power, suggesting that Buddhist philosophy was a cunning, however righteous, act of leading his followers towards liberation in the face of an empty heaven. Another basic element of Buddhism which the authors failed to properly convey was Nirvana. The strong association with the annihilation of individual being and the lack of a final reward for a righteous life resulted in a rejection of the original meaning of the term and a transformation into a less sinister unity with the Divine, formulated by Arnold in a picturesque phrase: *The Dewdrop slips/ Into the shining sea* (Arnold 1891:275).

Chapter III traces the Buddhist motifs in Rudyard Kipling’s novel *Kim*, stemming from the author’s upbringing in India. The figure of the writer is also presented in terms of his views on imperialism and Orientalism referring to his poetry and travel writing. Special attention is devoted to the character of Teshoo Lama, a Buddhist character, probably modelled on the Buddha from *The Light of Asia* or inspired by the works of Laurence Austin Waddell. Buddhist motifs, such as the use of a traditional tale called Jataka, and the involvement of imagery such as the Wheel of Life, the Law and the Way, are analysed in terms of their importance for the plot. Moreover, the descriptions of the Wonder House (Lahore Museum) and the interactions between the Curator and the Lama serve as an illustration for a reflection of the British and Buddhist approaches towards religious art and heritage. Finally, the motif of the legend of the River of the Arrow, the motivation for the Lama’s pilgrimage, is traced back

to the translations of Samuel Beal, a probable inspiration of Kipling's. In *Kim*, the only Buddhist character, Teshoo Lama, is built around a similar scheme to the Buddha from the works of the three Victorian poets. Although Teshoo represents the search for the lost origins of Buddhism, his rhetoric, for instance the use of the category of sin, is purely Christian. Teshoo Lama speaks in a very Christian-like manner, but retains an exoticised aura of an Eastern monk. Such a representation surely catered to the expectations of the readers, but, at the same time, the character, even while freely speaking about their religion, seems to be trapped in the discourse of the coloniser. Teshoo represents the British doubts about the authenticity of other branches of Buddhism than the purely textual version of Theravada recovered through archaeological and philological work of scientists working under the auspices of the Empire. Moreover, Teshoo's meeting with the curator of the Wonder House illustrates the British appropriation of Buddhist art and cultural artefacts. Teshoo, a Buddhist monk, seems to be helpless in his search for the places related to the Buddha's life without the careful instructions of the Curator who represents not only the British administration but also the connection between knowledge and power. In the novel Kipling also clearly appropriates the literary form of a Jataka by creating a story based on the general structure of a Buddhist tale and presenting it as an original Indian story. Similarly, Buddhist imagery such as the Wheel is used as a plot device without much consideration for its meaning for Tibetan Buddhists. Even a "prayer" said by the Lama in front of a Buddha statue in the Wonder House, introduced by the narrator as a *wonderful Buddhist invocation* (Kipling 2012:7), are actually the words of Kipling's own poem.

The colonial, nineteenth-century examples of Buddhist characters are reminiscent of the term *aesthetics of decontextualisation* which Graham Huggan applied to describe the nature of exoticism of that time. The representation Buddhism in the literary works discussed in chapters II and III is certainly a result of an Orientalist fascination but it was also subjected to certain distortions and changes. The resemblance to Christianity is a proof of the inevitable comparisons and evaluations of the rival religions. The exoticity and aesthetically pleasing aspects of the works certainly, as further suggested by Huggan, serve as a means of concealing the colonial violence.

Chapter IV, *Buddhism appropriated: the twentieth century*, introduces Buddhist motifs present in literary works of the twentieth century, exhibiting a variety of themes. With the introduction of new sources of knowledge about Buddhism, namely Tibetan and Japanese, twentieth-century writers, such as T.S. Eliot, Iris Murdoch, Aldous Huxley and John Fowles, introduced some elements of the religion into their personal philosophies in order to facilitate

and supplement their narration on the human condition, concentrating on the possible psychological benefits of Buddhism. The presence of Buddhism in twentieth-century literature marks a slight change of attitude towards the religion. Contrary to the nineteenth century, rarely did Buddhism as a whole or the life of its founder become the centre of attention in literary works, but rather some elements of it served as a backdrop, illustration or contrast, often subjected to alterations or re-interpretation. Buddhist characters, on the other hand, came to represent philosophical types, rebels or misfits. In the works written in the twentieth century, created at the time when the colonial dependency started to fade or has already ended, Buddhism, alongside Eastern art and philosophy, became a global commodity. In the twentieth-century British literature, the comparisons between Christianity and Buddhism became more overt and were quite often aimed at criticising European values or supplementing them with spiritual elements. What clearly disappeared were the attempts to westernise Buddhism, as its difference from what was known and familiar became one of its main assets. However, the Buddhist philosophy as presented in the works of twentieth-century writers was not free from distortions. For instance, writers such as Iris Murdoch and Aldous Huxley proposed a metaphorical understanding of the term Nirvana. Huxley perceives Nirvana as the final comprehension of the Divine Ground, a result of total egolessness achieved through the practice of the Eightfold Path. For Murdoch, on the other hand, Nirvana is merely a symbol for the distinction between the material and spiritual dimensions. It can be speculated that whilst the nineteenth-century rejection of Nirvana as a cessation of the cycle of rebirths was caused by strong belief in a reward in heaven, the twentieth-century approach was rather demythologised, rejecting the literal meaning of the cycle of Samsara and the liberation from it in Nirvana and replacing it with an association with the human condition and struggle towards liberation through the comprehension of reality.

Importantly, the twentieth century exoticism seemed to be less connected with the concealment of colonial violence than in the nineteenth century and more with the development of globalisation. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, (2000:100) define it as *the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide. In effect it is the process of the world becoming a single place.* The authors explain that globalisation does not involve a one-sided exchange of goods and ideas, *[it is not] a simple, unidirectional movement from the powerful to the weak, from the central to the peripheral, because globalism is transcultural in the same way that imperialism itself has been* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2000:102). Globalisation has its roots in imperialism and is partly its consequence. According to Huggan, together with the

expansion of globalisation, exoticism *has shifted [...] from a more or less privileged mode of aesthetic perception to an increasingly global mode of mass-market consumption* (Huggan 2001:15). The fascination and the production of “otherness” turned into a market for the consumption of “exoticness”: *the ‘exotic’ merchandise of tribal/ethnic cultures; the ubiquitous products spawned by a globalised consumer culture; the manufactured scenarios of a Western tourist industry bent on selling the latest version of the cultural other to consumers* (Huggan 2001:240). Huggan explains that those two forms of exoticist representation, colonial, in the nineteenth century, and postcolonial, in the twentieth are interlinked. For those two the author assumes the terms of, respectively, *aesthetics of decontextualisation* and *commodity fetishism* (Huggan 2001:16). While in the nineteenth century the exotic appeal was based on the aesthetic appreciation of the culture of the colonies from the safety of the coloniser’s privileged position, in the twentieth century it was the availability of all aspects of “exotic” margins for consumption. As noticed by Aijaz Ahmad in his work *In Theory*,

This idea of the availability of all cultures of the world for consumption by an individual consciousness was, of course, a much older European idea, growing in tandem with the history of colonialism as such, but the perfection and extended use of it in the very fabrication of modernism [...] signalled a real shift, from the age of old colonialism per se to the age of modern imperialism proper, which was reflected also in the daily lives of the metropolitan consumers in a new kind of shopping: the supermarket. (Ahmad 2008:128)

For Ahmad, a “metropolitan supermarket” with a large variety of goods imported from all around the world is an illustration for the state of mind of an artist of those times: *[it was] he who could now draw upon a whole range of cultural artefacts from around the globe (Indian philosophy, African masks, Cambodian sculpture)* (Ahmad 2008:129). Indubitably, Buddhism can be perceived as one of the commodities for global consumption, which also becomes apparent in some works of British literature.

The final chapter, *Buddhist utopias: Lost Horizon by James Hilton and Island by Aldous Huxley*, includes an analysis of the two utopian novels which utilise Buddhism in the creation of imaginary, perfect societies. The starting point for the discussion of the novels is a presentation of utopian motifs in various schools of Buddhism, such as Pure Lands or Buddha-fields and the Tibetan legend of Shambhala. Hilton’s novel is placed within the subject of the mythologisation of Tibet and religious movements, such as Theosophy, which contributed to the perception of the country and its religion as mystical and magical. Huxley’s *Island* is analysed in comparison with his earlier dystopian novel *Brave New World* with the

assumption that the Buddhist society of Pala serves as a counterpart and a remedy for the horrors of the oppressive Western dictatorship.

India, as a contact zone between the Western and Eastern cultures, was a place of bi-directional cultural exchange for the coloniser and the colonised. However, this transculturation took place in the conditions of unequal power balance and the knowledge gained by the British about Buddhism was not neutral, but a demonstration of the intelligence-gathering skills of the Empire. In the case of the British discovery of Buddhism, the Orientalist curiosity about the lost religion of India was connected with the Anglicist imperative to compare, evaluate, and eventually use the gained knowledge for the benefit of the Empire, whether as a proof of scholarly skills or as a means of proving the cultural superiority of the West. Over the course of two centuries, the British reception of Buddhism shifted between the acceptability and unacceptability of certain elements of this religion. The inquiry into the reception of Buddhism indicated that the British were interested mostly in the philosophical, particularly moral, aspects of Buddhist philosophy and in the life of its founder. The hybridised nineteenth-century image of the Buddha, as an Asian Jesus or a Hindu Luther, stemming from the works of Arnold, Alexander, and Philips, contributed to the generally sympathetic representation of Buddhist characters, as illustrated by the figure of Teshoo Lama in Kipling's *Kim*. The images of the Buddha in late-Victorian poems are also devoid of miracles and any signs of supernatural powers in order to accommodate the rationalist expectations of the era, but also to add credibility to the historicity of the figure. Kipling's Lama, devoted to his pilgrimage and art, resembles a figure of a typical Western ascetic rather than miracle-maker. The image of the Mahatmas, or mystical Tibetan monks popularised by Theosophy, however, visibly added an aura of magic and mystery to the portrayals of Buddhists, as seen in the examples of Murdoch's James from *The Sea, the Sea* and Hilton's High Lama from *Lost Horizon*. Therefore, while the nineteenth-century images of Buddhism attempted to find common ground and similarities to Western culture and Christianity, the twentieth century partially transformed it in the search for otherness, wonder, and obscure knowledge.

The pursuit of the potentially wondrous capabilities and ancient wisdom of the Tibetans resulted in a specific representation of the country in Hilton's *Lost Horizon* and Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea*. Tibetan Buddhism, perceived by British orientalist scholars as a degenerate version of the original teachings of the Buddha, in twentieth-century works of fiction came to represent potentially beneficial ancient knowledge. In Kipling's *Kim*, India was presented as a

holy land in which the Tibetan monk seeks the uncorrupted origins of his religion. In *Lost Horizon*, conversely, the foundations of world philosophy, religion, and art are safeguarded in an unattainable part of the Snowy Range.

It can be assumed that the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century prejudice against Tibetan Buddhism was caused by a belief in the truth-telling properties of Buddhist scriptures, indicating the “purity” of only the lost Indian Buddhism, which they hoped to reinstate. What contributed to this prejudice was also an association of Tibetan Buddhism with Catholicism, which resulted in the derogatory term *Lamaism* being applied to it. However, the image of the mystical Tibetans, introduced by Theosophy and popularised in Hilton’s novel, managed to establish a new vision of Tibet, as an elusive stronghold of ancient wisdom against the potentially self-destructive West. It can be concluded that the twentieth century managed to break with the Victorian purified and textual vision of Buddhism by involvement in Japanese Zen and Tibetan Buddhism. The symptom of this change was the emergence of utopian fiction featuring the religion of the Buddha as a central element in the imaginary societies.

The elements of Buddhism that proved to be well-received and partially assimilated were, first and foremost, the Four Noble Truths, including teachings on the nature and possible alleviation of suffering. Contrasting with the Christian vision of salvation through the grace of God and final reward in heaven, the Four Noble Truths promised a personal path towards liberation. What indicates the assimilation of the Buddhist teachings on suffering in twentieth-century literature is, for instance, T.S. Eliot’s inclusion of the Fire Sermon in *The Waste Land*.

The means of the liberation, the Noble Eightfold Path, resembling the Christian Decalogue, not only accommodated Edwin Arnold’s vision of the westernised Buddhism but also supplemented T.S. Eliot’s outlook. For Aldous Huxley, the Path was a crucial part of his Perennial Philosophy and was instrumental in gaining insight into the Divine Ground. Moreover, letting go of the past, understood in Buddhism as a clinging that leads to suffering, constitutes a prominent element of Iris Murdoch’s *The Sea, The Sea*, Huxley’s *Island*, and Fowles’ *Magus*.

In the nineteenth century, knowledge about Buddhism was a result of the colonising and intelligence-gathering activities of the British. The religion, its history, doctrine and heritage were subjected to scientific investigation, a result of which was a purified and prescriptive vision of what Buddhism was and should be. The Victorian Buddhism, no longer present in the imaginary land of the Orient, but in translations of texts, commentaries and academic works, served as a potent inspiration for fiction, but also demonstrated the real and symbolic power of the West over the East. In the twentieth century, despite the arrival of new sources

of knowledge about Japanese and Tibetan traditions, Buddhism provided writers with a wide array of ideas that could be incorporated in the Western framework of thought. The literature of both centuries was characterised by a generally distorted vision of Buddhism, which was a result of the attempts to pair the interpretations of the philosophy with the concerns of the times. It can be assumed that the colonial reception of Buddhism was connected with attempts to westernise it and recreate it on the basis of Western notions of religion and philosophy. The postcolonial reception was based on a pursuit of “otherness” and potential remedies for what was perceived as a crisis of spirituality.