PUBLIC LECTURE  Wednesday February 22, 4 pm AH 3222

Picaros of the Anglo-World: Kipling, Twain, and Cold War Innocence

How did British concepts of imperial destiny cross the Atlantic and enter the American mind, particularly as a shrinking UK sphere gave way to an expanding US one in the twentieth century? Some evidence indicates that American culture-makers consciously refurbished British models for our own age of global hegemony; other evidence indicates that British writers such as Kipling were already counter-appropriating the perceived vitality of America to shore up a fading British hegemon before WWI. In either case, certain narrative plots and generic patterns transect the rising-and-falling curve by which we chart the double-phase history of British and American power, a history unfolding in the space recently christened by James Belich as the “Anglo-World.” In this talk, I’ll concentrate on Huckleberry Finn and Kim as national epics of boyish innocence pointing to the deep imaginative need, among both Cold-War American and Late-Victorian British readers, for an endlessly open frontier. To situate the interpretive work in a longer trans-Atlantic reception history (1880s to 1960s), I’ll compare the canonical value of Twain and Kipling among midcentury critics such as F. R. Leavis, T.S. Eliot, and Lionel Trilling.

WORKSHOP  Thursday February 23, 4 pm AH 3222

“Realism Wars”

***RSVP for pre-circulated reading

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