Reading the Child between the British Raj and the Indian Nation

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Abstract

We all claim to ‘know’, in some manner, what a child is and what the term ‘child’ means. As adults we designate how and when children should develop and decide what is ‘good’ for them. Worries that childhood is ‘disappearing’ in the global North but not ‘developing’ sufficiently in the South propel broader discussions about what ‘normal’ development, individual and national, local and global, should mean. The child is also associated across artistic and cultural forms with innocence, immediacy, and simplicity: in short with our modern sense of ‘interiority’, as Carolyn Steedman has shown. The child is a figure of the self and the future that also connotes what is prior to ‘civilised’ society: the animal, the ‘primitive’ or simply the unknown. The child is, according to Jacqueline Rose, the means by which we work out our relationship to language and to the world and, as Chris Jenks expresses it, ‘the very index of civilization’.

In this study I begin with the question that Karin Lesnik-Oberstein asks: ‘why is the child so often portrayed as ‘discovered’, rather than “invented” or “constructed”?’. I am concerned with how the child is implicated as ‘knowable’ and with asking what we may lose or gain by applying paradigms of childhood innocence or development to the nation as it is imagined in British and Indian literature at the ‘zenith’ of the British Raj. In order to unpick the knot of factors that link the child to the nation I combine cultural constructivist approaches to the child with the resources of postcolonial theory as it has addressed subalternity, hybridity and what Elleke Boehmer calls ‘nation narratives’.

In the period that I concentrate on, the 1880s-1930s, British and Indian discourses rely upon the child as both an anchor and a jumping off point for narratives of self and nation, as displayed in the versatile and varied children and childhoods in the writers that I focus on: Rudyard Kipling, Flora Annie Steel and Mulk Raj Anand.

Chapter 1 begins with what have been called sentimental portrayals of the child in Kipling’s early work before critiquing the notion that his ‘imperial boys’, Mowgli and Kim, are brokers of inter-cultural compromise that anticipate a postcolonial concern with hybridity. I argue that these boys figure colonial relations as complicated and compelling but are caught in a static spectacle of empire in which growing up is not a possibility.

Chapter 2 turns to the work of Flora Annie Steel, a celebrated author in her time and, I argue, an impressive negotiator between the positions of the memsahib (thought of as both frivolous and under threat) and the woman writer determined to stake her claim to ‘knowledge’ of India across genres. From Steel’s domestic manual, The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook, to her ‘historical’ novel of the Indian Mutiny, the child both enables the British woman to define her importance to the nation and connotes a weakness against which the imperial feminist defines her active role.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the work of Mulk Raj Anand, a ‘founding father’ of the Indian-English novel, who worked to unite his vision of an international humanism with the Gandhian ideal of a harmonious, spiritually inflected Indian nation. I look at Anand’s use of the child as an aesthetic position taken by the writer from the colonies in relation to the Bloomsbury avant-garde; a means of chronicling suffering and inequality and a resource for an idiosyncratic modernist method that has much to say to current theoretical concerns both with cosmopolitanism and materiality.
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Seek those images
That constitute the wild
The lion and the virgin,
The harlot and the child

W.B. Yeats ‘Those Images’
Introduction

A 2012 survey by the National Literacy Trust in Britain firmly links reading to academic achievement, prompting the Director, Jonathon Douglas, to urge that ‘we give children time to read in their daily lives’.\(^1\) In the BBC report on the findings, a spokesman for the Department of Education endorses the recommendation, asserting that children should master reading as early as possible in order to benefit from ‘magical and powerful books’ such as *Harry Potter*, *Animal Farm* and Dickens’ novels. This standpoint exemplifies how contemporary society is captivated by an idea of the child as formed through cultural and creative practices but is also concerned to ensure that childhood is healthy and happy inline with empirically evidenced models of individual development: ‘In a world of so many distractions for young minds, the place of literature is more important than ever’.\(^2\)

Social concerns for the child propel research into how childhood is ‘disappearing’ due to economic, educational or sexual pressures, consumerism and the effects of technology upon imagination and play.\(^3\) Amidst this forest of anxieties, the view that books must make better citizens confronts the disorderly, wild or animalistic qualities

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\(^2\) Burns, ‘Children’s reading “pushed out” by other activities’, 7 September 2012.

often called ‘childish’ and used to blame social unrest on ‘uncivilised’ people. A recent example is the riots in British cities in Summer 2011 that led to heated debate over ‘the broken society’ in which ‘the twisted moral code’ of a few brought misery to many. On the one hand, there were censorious and morally indignant denunciations of those involved, on the other, attempts to understand grievances, including poverty and marginalisation, in order potentially to address them. A large part of the discussion was around the role of young people and their reactions to the events. Such rhetoric of civilization versus wildness necessarily involves children and their education. The demand that we fix the ‘broken society’ along with the return-to-tradition banner of reforms being formulated by the Education Secretary, Michael Gove, in 2013, makes clear that the investment in the creativity of children is dependent upon an atomistic view of development in which the attainment of certain skills and capabilities precedes the exercise of imaginative faculties that must remain within the sphere of the ‘normal’.

In her critique of developmental psychology, Erica Burman identifies this ‘rush to competence and “mastery”’ as linking the infant to productive labour, screening out

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4 These terms were used in Prime Minister David Cameron’s speech on 15 April 2011. See transcript at http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2011/08/society-fight-work-rights [accessed 30 May 2013].


7 The proposed reforms can be viewed at http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Schools.aspx [accessed 2 June, 2013]. The policies have led to the National Union of Teachers passing a motion of no confidence. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22558756 [accessed 2 June, 2013].
‘the indeterminate, ambiguous and non-instrumental’ features and rendering the context in which growth occurs invisible.\textsuperscript{8} The refusal to factor in social and economic difference by focusing on the individual child is likewise a problem with child-centred theories of ‘progressive’ education. As Burman argues, the natural, romantic image of the child who, with the right guidance, will realise their inner potential opposes the ‘whole child’ to the ‘damaged’ or ‘disadvantaged’ child so that ‘underlying the playing, autonomous child lurks a model of an aggressive and primitive being whose instinctual impulses need to be indulged in order to ward off later emotional complexes (and social problems)’.\textsuperscript{9}

As I go on to investigate, opposed but interdependent images of the child, including autonomous/savage, whole/damaged, creative/aggressive, are valuable in analysing how assumptions about what children are and what they should do were instrumental in formulating British colonial purposes in India and Indian resistance to them. The rhetorical relation between the child and the nation places the desire for a ‘real’ child in parallel with the need to discover a ‘real’ Orient in colonial discourses. In anti-colonial narratives, it involves the (re)discovery of a nation whose growth can urgently counter that of the coloniser. In both cases, narratives of development are attached to the concept of the child.

Claims about protecting children’s ‘better natures’ via their learning are usually promoted as responding to ‘new’ knowledge of the child. However, as Sally


Shuttleworth contends in her analysis of child psychiatry, ‘they probably tell us more about our cultural investment in certain ideals of childhood than the actual social position’.10 Shuttleworth’s unpicking of the prolific literary and scientific discourses on child development in the Victorian period dismantles the belief that the ‘actual’ position of the child may be clarified by attaining more adequate knowledge of children. Similarly, the data in the 2012 survey cannot explain the discrepancy between extensive recording of children’s reading habits and the lack of evidence that a more intelligent, creative population admirably au fait with Dickens is being produced.11

There is a sense in these discourses that what will be learned about the child has already been decided; Gove’s approach repeatedly returns to his own educational experiences. As Walter Benjamin argued in 1929, remembering the books or toys they enjoyed in childhood, ‘everyone becomes […] a reactionary’ wishing to feed children the diet he or she had.12 Benjamin likens children’s reading to consumption rather than production, denying the instrumentalist position epitomised by current educational policy as well as by the liberal ideals behind the late nineteenth-century expansion of education: ‘Their reading is more closely related to their growth and

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11 The National Literacy Trust survey shows very little change in reading habits between 2009 and 2011.

their sense of power than to their education and their knowledge of the world’. The growth Benjamin endorses is not the forced recall of facts that Dickens satirised in *Hard Times* or even the urge to empathise with others; it is ‘a process of absorption’ resulting not in the satisfaction of an appetite for information, but in the unpredictable increase of a barely defined ‘power’. The conflict is not between imagination and consumption, but between the responsible, controlling adult and the demanding growth of the child. As I go on to elaborate, in connecting discourses of the child to those of colonialism, the complex dynamics of this relationship mean that to ‘give’ time to children to read may be a risky move for the adult intent on their own didactic purpose.

Karin Lesnik-Oberstein discusses the range of attitudes and emotions that we have as adults towards the concept of the child and the time and space called ‘childhood’:

Some adults claim to ‘be children still’, others see parts of themselves as ‘the child’, yet others deny having anything left of the child. Some want to ‘return’ to childhood, others express the wish to leave it behind for ever.

Given this complex and selective process of defining the child, Lesnik-Oberstein finds that analysing the concept as ‘written, discursive, textual’ is impeded by the desire to find a ‘kernel’ of the self or of ‘reality’, to be ‘sure of the knowable child’.

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children’s literature and, to a lesser extent, children in literature. In the period that this study addresses, the 1880s to 1930s, the confluence of the good book with the well-being of the child had considerable significance. In *The Child and His Book* (1891), E.M. Field celebrates ‘our own age, which seems to own no dearer wish than that of making the children happy’.\(^{18}\) She sets children apart as imaginative beings in the tradition of nineteenth-century affective writing that, owing much to Romanticism, passed beyond an interest in the child’s education and, as Benjamin puts it, ‘insinuated itself into his mind’.\(^{19}\) Able to make wonders out of the simplest forms, spontaneous in their reactions, children for Field nevertheless rely upon adults possessing knowledge of what it means to be a child: ‘whoso would cast the spell of his art over the mind of a child must see the world through eyes like those of a child’.\(^{20}\) In this assertion, a well-known one in relation to children’s literature, the word ‘like’ is the crucial connector/separator between adult and child. ‘Like’ expresses not only an affiliation with the child that the adult once was, but ‘the adult-child hierarchy’ that Lesnik-Oberstein describes: “‘Looking through the eyes of the child’ is […] a metaphor to be interpreted as an expression not only of concern and understanding, but also of invasion, domination, and control: “looking through the eye of the child” also implies looking through the “I” of the child’.\(^{21}\)

In Field’s terms, claiming both to be the child and to have external knowledge of that child means taking responsibility for children as future citizens. However, Lesnik-

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\(^{19}\) Benjamin, ‘Children’s Literature’, p. 252. In *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC books, 2006), Hugh Cunningham argues that the interest in childhood that arose in the eighteenth century was consolidated in the nineteenth.


\(^{21}\) Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children’s Literature*, p. 57.
Oberstein emphasises that, in analysing what the child and childhood mean, it is not the child who remains unexamined, but the subjectivity of the interlocutor. As Kathryn Bond Stockton suggests: ‘The child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were. It is the act of adults looking back. It is a ghostly, unreachable fantasy’.22

In the writings I examine by Rudyard Kipling and Flora Annie Steel, prominent spokespeople for the British ‘parenting’ of India, the child may be a miniature soldier, a cherub, a tragically lost babe, a savage or a ghost. In Mulk Raj Anand’s anti-colonial texts, the child can bring inspiration, protest or crushing despair but cannot resolve inequality or the lack of mobility afforded the subaltern. Given the discomfort in recognising that these polarised positions cannot be funnelled into a coherent adult subject, but rather stem from that subject’s incoherence, Bond Stockton wonders whether we should stop ‘talking of children’ altogether.23 However, as the focus of the National Literacy Trust report indicates, and as the involvement of the child in the most controversial and violent cultural discourses of the Victorian period corroborates, we never do.

According to Jacqueline Rose, this is because our desire for stability and mastery relies upon the ‘ongoing sexual and political mystification of the child’ that James Kincaid investigates as vital to the Victorian investment in childhood innocence and

23 Bond Stockton, p. 5.
beauty. The adult wishing to recognise a ‘real’ child monitors and measures childhood and claims that the nation can be assessed by the literacy and cultural preferences of its children, their mental and physical states and their political status. Burman’s assessment of the 1959 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child concurs with Chris Jenks’ view that the child becomes ‘the very index of civilization’. Burman makes clear how the child as an unquestionable idea is premised on colonial history: ‘this child signifies modernity so that ‘the “right” to childhood is adopted as a transcultural universal that links First and Third Worlds in a relationship of patronage and cultural imperialism’.

In a set of processes that is continuous and impossible to circumvent even through critical reflection, the child is installed as a central tenet not only in educational or sociological discourses, but across cultural, scientific, political and historical ones. In examining and potentially destabilising these processes, it is important to realise that knowledge of the child (or the desire for it) cannot provide a map in which adult-child relations are an analogy for those between coloniser and colonised. As Benita Parry identified early in the development of postcolonial studies, there is a danger that colonialism becomes allegorised from being a specific mode of the many that make up imperialism to become ‘a notion applicable to all situations of structural domination’. As Gayatri Spivak emphasises, ‘agency’ as used to refer to collective action and the ability to resist oppression is different from ‘subject-formation’ and

25 Lesnik-Oberstein, Children’s Literature, p. 3.
27 Burman, Deconstructing, p. 55.
different again from biological growth.\textsuperscript{29} Children may not have agency, but they are considered as emergent subjects whose categorisation depends upon the belief that they will be able to claim agency when they become adults, thus realising their biological potential. In contrast, the position of the colonised subject without agency is that of the ‘subaltern’, which, although its usefulness as a category may be debated, describes existence outside of ‘lines of social mobility’.\textsuperscript{30} The child, whether imagined as able to resist or not the hegemonic power of adults, is not in this ‘position without identity’ because, as a category, it may be related to discourses of class, gender or race that are not originary but provide what Spivak calls ‘a recognisable basis for action’.\textsuperscript{31}

Perry Nodelman’s article ‘The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children’s Literature’ draws upon Edward Said’s seminal \textit{Orientalism} (1978) to dissect adult-child hierarchies. His approach has, as Clare Bradford says, ‘come to be accepted almost as a given of children’s literature criticism: that children constitute a colonised group \textit{spoken for} by adults just as Orientals are \textit{spoken for} by Orientalists’.\textsuperscript{32} Nodelman’s intervention highlights the circularity of the investments placed in the child: ‘the more we claim to know about childhood, the more we find ourselves

\textsuperscript{31} Spivak, ‘Scattered speculations’, p. 476.
insisting on its mysterious otherness — its silence about itself — and the more we feel the need to observe yet more, to interpret yet further’. However, it raises questions around how we produce the colonised or the child as ‘other’ and, crucially, compare one with the other. Sue Walsh finds, in the first place, a difficulty with audience: whilst adults write children’s literature for children (as once or maybe still ‘like’ themselves), Orientalists write (or wrote) for their peers and, in accordance with Said’s argument, ‘to produce and confirm difference’. Children’s literature is, therefore, ‘much more ambivalent’ and less dependent on specific historical and political relations in its production of difference than Orientalist discourse, even when we factor in the perpetual fascination with the East as exotic, as I do in this thesis.

There were educational and social attempts to ‘civilise’ Orientals, particularly in the liberal ambition to spread civilisation in the early nineteenth century, of which Thomas Macaulay’s 1835 ‘Minute on Indian Education’ was a part. However, colonised subjects of ‘lower’ races were not expected to attain the stage of civilisation of those who studied them, nor were they allowed parity with the West/the adult once independence was actually achieved. As I discuss below, the notion of primitive societies occupying other places and alternative times rendered such a model of

34 Sue Walsh, Kipling’s Children’s Literature (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 32. For a discussion of the impact of Said’s concept of Orientalism and critiques of its Foucauldian theory of power and separating of textuality and material relations, see Moore-Gilbert, Post-Colonial Theory.
35 Walsh, Kipling’s Children’s Literature, p. 32.
37 Achille Mbembe discusses how the West’s ‘invention’ of the other was not the same across all regions. While in India there were motions towards the acculturation of Indians to British ways, Africa was ‘the supreme receptacle of “absence”, “lack”, and “non-being” — in short, nothingness’. See On the Postcolony (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), p. 4. Marianna Torgovnik agrees that India, as well as Egypt, Eastern civilisations and colonies whose inhabitants were non-indigenous were often thought of as ‘a midway stage between the primitive and the civilized’. See Gone Primitive: Savage Intelects, Modern Lives (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 60.
development impossible and, by the late nineteenth century, commitments to policies of improvement were replaced by regimes of discipline and control that arguably remain active in neo-colonial political configurations.

Walsh’s key critique of Nodelman’s position hinges on the way knowledge of the child or the colonised is assumed to be available. It is a criticism that Walsh also applies to Said on the grounds that both critics vacillate between representation as making the child or the Orient what it is and ‘re-presentation’ as ‘a reaction to something encountered in the “real”’ that means there is a child or an Orient that has been misrepresented by those who claim to speak on its behalf.38 A number of confusions stem from the problem with the ‘real’ that Walsh identifies. On the subject of postcolonialism and children’s literature, Roderick McGillis and Meena Khorana assert that ‘children remain the most colonised persons on the globe’ and therefore cannot benefit from postcolonial positions.39 They juxtapose this sliding scale of colonisation to the claim that, because children and their literature are outside ‘the traditions of mainstream culture’, they are ‘always postcolonial’ and recognising ‘their’ literature is ‘a postcolonial act’.40

This use of one discourse to determine another empties colonialism and postcolonialism of their historical, political and economic constituent factors and gives children the autonomy that the very analogy to colonialism denies them. It installs the concept of the postcolonial, much agonised over by critics in its struggles

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38 Walsh, Kipling’s Children’s Literature, p. 34.
to ‘re-place’ Western language, culture and canonicity, as legitimate only because of its relation to a spirit of resistance located in the child (and by implication also the adult, Western subject who defines that child). Reliant as it is on a secure sense of the adult self and on colonialism as a euphemism for conscious, individualised acts of control, such criticism is not able to make sense of cultural or political change. It cannot engage with Fredric Jameson’s theory of literature as ‘a socially symbolic act’ that Neil Lazarus cleaves to in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* or Rose, Lesnik-Oberstein and Spivak’s cases for the child and the colonised as contested discursive categories; it is therefore reduced to discussing the content of texts as being the ‘truth’ of the world.42

Claiming to draw on the work of Rose and Nodelman, Supriya Goswami grants the child agency as ‘a unifier and consolidator of British and Indian relations’ in Sara Jeanette Duncan’s *The Story of Sonny Sahib* (1894).43 This is in direct opposition to Rose’s statement that children’s literature is not ‘the passive reflection of changing values and conceptions of the child (images of childhood)’ because ‘what is at stake in an image of the child is not the child first and then the image, but the child as the most fitting representative for the gratifying plenitude of the image itself’. 44 For Rose, it

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44 Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, p. 139.
can never be the child who animates inter-racial understanding and British pride; rather, it is the need for this narrative that necessitates such an image of the child.

E. M. Field’s Mutiny novel, *Bryda* (1888), is a case in point, placing the happiness of the child within a didactic framework that highlights difference. The British child’s superiority is exemplified in the ability to play, which the ‘serious’ Indian children do not know how to do.\(^45\) While the heroine, Bryda, is able to see herself as ‘inside a story book’\(^46\) and, by implication, to imagine a way forward, the ‘dull’ minds of the Indian children are testimony to their want of imagination that amounts to a lack of agency.\(^47\) Rather than uniting coloniser and colonised, as Goswami argues of the young Sonny, the child ‘between’ British and Indian cultures is proof of their division, covering up a violent rupture in colonial relations by reference to a culturally innocent child safely inside the children’s literary text.

As Walsh clarifies, when Rose argues that, ‘Literature for children is […] a way of colonising (or wrecking) the child,’\(^48\) she is discussing J.M. Barrie’s *The Little White Bird* (1902), in which the children are shipwrecked on an island in a mode that ‘is emphatically literature for boys only’.\(^49\) As I explore in Chapter 1, the position of the colonised (or the wrecked or abandoned subject) is a live one that can be taken both by the British and the Indian boy in colonial texts. However, I am in agreement with Walsh that it cannot be applied to all child readers because, apart from the fact that colonial literature also involves girls, ‘childhood is not and never has been there to be

\(^{46}\) Field, *Bryda*, p. 119.
preserved, and it is that fantasy of preservation, that “wrecking”, or fixing in place, which for Rose, in her discussion of a specific historical situation, constitutes “colonising”.\textsuperscript{50} Colonising serves to complicate the idea of the child rather than to simplify that of the colonised by removing it from its political moorings. Rose is not referring to oppression of children by adults, but to the way in which ‘the production of an identity such as “childhood” is always, inevitably, on behalf of the group so defined by others’.\textsuperscript{51}

In order to critically examine the child not as colonised, but as a figure that takes part in constructions of the colonised other, I utilise the theoretical work of Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein both to analyse colonial fiction, as Walsh does in her study of Kipling, and to consider anti-colonial literature by marrying these approaches with the resources of postcolonial criticism. I maintain, following Phillipe Ariès’s seminal study \textit{Centuries of Childhood}, that the child and the colonised are politically and historically constituted and that their representations in literature are not separate from those in other cultural or historiographic discourses, nor are they more or less ‘truthful’ in absolute terms.\textsuperscript{52} Bill Ashcroft perceives that the ‘trope of the child’ in colonial texts is ‘a unique tool for managing the profound ambivalence of imperialism’.\textsuperscript{53} This is valid in that it highlights the power of the child in closing down critique and justifying inequality on the basis of developmental differences.

However, the theoretical imperative of my argument is that we must go further and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Walsh, \textit{Kipling’s Children’s Literature}, p. 45.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Philippe Ariès, \textit{Centuries of Childhood} (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, first published in French, 1960). Ariès argues that the cultural and moral values attached to the child and to the family have changed over time, contrasting medieval and Renaissance attitudes to what are now termed ‘children’.
\end{itemize}
ask whether there is still a ‘real’ child proposed as behind the trope and whether the political and cultural positions and unwilled repetitions of power structures facilitated by that child as metaphor or figure for the nation can remain unexamined because we believe we ‘know’ what the child means.

Paul de Man, whose work was influential on Spivak’s analyses of colonial texts, distinguishes ‘figure’ from ‘metaphor’. Whilst ‘metaphorical mystification’ implies ‘identity and totality’, figural language is premised on a lack, producing ‘anything but a recuperation’. The unstable relations between the stories that make up Kipling’s *Jungle Books* and their Preface are an example of this difference. Because of the linguistic and cultural games played in the text, it refuses formally, as well as thematically, to allow the jungle to be read as India or Mowgli to be read as a child able to ‘make present’ colonial relations. As de Man’s ‘figure’ implies, the child is a resource that infers the potential of figural language. The tissues, organs, bones, instincts, feelings ‘of’ the child offer incredible possibilities for signifying self/nation/race/growth but they do not so much manage their ambivalences as translate them into parallel patterns of figuration to be read. Claudia Castañeda’s choice of the term ‘child-figure’ places emphasis on the child as a rhetorical figure that is also ‘a bodily figure of the human in global time and space’ and therefore able to be anatomised, matched with and distinguished from other figures in changing combinations.  

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As Castañeda’s connections between neuroscience, feminism, technology and transnational media demonstrate, ‘local-global’ manifestations of the child play vital roles in determining how we view the nation, the state and the role of development. The child is therefore an obvious time-space issue for postcolonial literature theory. Bradford and Sujala Singh have analysed postcolonial children as representing national and cosmopolitan identities while Clare Barker uses the child to investigate the politics and aesthetics of disability in postcolonial literature. Bradford focuses on contemporary children’s texts from settler colonies, while Singh’s brief engagement covers the child characters and narrators of internationally known South Asian authors. My study aims to explicate a part of the colonial ‘back story’ or hinterland to current engagements with nationalism and hybridity via the child, of which the writers Singh deals with are prime examples. My primary focus is on using the concept of the child to ‘see’ the ways in which narratives of nation and subject-formation are ring-fenced by placing that child (who is also, as I explore below, a primitive or animal figure) as the innocent, simple other that resolves or sets aside the power dynamics of linguistic representation. Whilst I concentrate on the British-Indian context, the continuing debate over Fredric Jameson’s theory of ‘Third World’


literature as national allegory shows that there is an ongoing imperative across post-
and anti-colonial situations to consider ‘local-global’ figurations of growth and
progress, enabled by and including the child, as having a complicated and contested
history in which the postcolonial is another chapter rather than a whole new book.58

In the colonial and anti-colonial texts that I discuss and, I would argue, in the
postcolonial texts that follow them, it is in representations that deal in knowledge of
the child — moral, religious, scientific, psychological, pedagogical — that the work
of reading and the construction of meaning is most forcefully denied. Lesnik-
Oberstein’s observation that efforts to strip cultural concepts of their ‘garments, body
and bones’ in order to reach ‘a core’59 would be better used in studying these
phenomena that are the forms of culture is in sympathy with Spivak’s description of
her critical practice as vigilant because of the vulnerability of its knowledge:

We must know the limits of the narratives, rather than establish the narratives as
solutions for the future, for the arrival of social justice, so that to an extent they are
working within an understanding of what they cannot do, rather than declaring
war.60

By acknowledging the tropes that enable political structures, histories and subject-
positions, Spivak argues that it is possible to ‘be vigilant against simple notions of
identity which overlap neatly with language or location’.61 Her work persistently
points to the need for projects that aim to counter colonial brutality and its legacies to

58 See Fredric Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,’ Social Text, 15 (Autumn 1986), 65-88. Jameson theorises allegory as heterogenous and discontinuous, thus projecting the nation as a contested and changeable concept. Aijaz Ahmad famously criticised Jameson’s theory as latently Orientalist. See ‘Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the “National Allegory”’, Social Text, 17 (1987), 3-26. Lazarus defends Jameson’s efforts as in accordance with a Marxist analysis of modernity that spotlights the Western canon as a ‘false universal’ to which other literatures should not have to be compared. See The Postcolonial Unconscious, p. 104.
engage with the rhetorical figurations of colonial discourse. Nevertheless, she recognises that all positions necessitate ‘a representative essentialist position’ decided in spite of the instabilities of concepts and cultural affiliations and connected with actual conditions or daily practice.\(^{62}\)

This is the contested place-taking that troubles a postcolonial theory that, as Arif Dirlik and Lazarus have argued, emerges from the Western academy dependent on the very global capitalist structures that it criticises, just as legislation on children’s rights relies upon expectations put in place by the global North.\(^{63}\) Linking postcolonial writing to discourses of terror, Elleke Boehmer identifies two dominant modes of postcolonialism: ‘a globalised and hybridized inflection and a “resistance” inflection.’\(^{64}\) The first is ‘concerned with cross-border exchange, and as privileging creolized, “deregulated”, Rushdiesque writing’, the second with continued opposition to imperial and post-imperial practices.\(^{65}\) The postcolonial as instigated through global connectivity and almost synonymous with the transnational is criticised by Lazarus as: ‘an undifferentiating disavowal of all forms of nationalism and a corresponding exaltation of migrancy, liminality, hybridity and multi-culturality [. . .] a refusal of an antagonistic or struggle-based model of politics’.\(^{66}\) This ideological critique is also

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implicitly formal in attaching renewed importance to texts that Boehmer calls ‘nation narratives’ that eschew the demands of the market in ‘global’ literature.\[^{67}\] Spivak, although contesting the tunnel vision of nativism and particular forms of nationalism, has also distanced her work from an inflection of the postcolonial that risks valorising cosmopolitanism by ‘placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past’.\[^{68}\] As I understand it, the still-open question both for Spivak and for materialist critics, including Lazarus, Dirlik and Parry, is whether, in the move from colonialism to neocolonial global organisation, postcolonialism ever happened and, if so, how.

Spivak maintains the usefulness of deconstructive practices in taking apart the idiom of the local and the global in order to express, in some way, oppression and inequality. Such a self-critical postcolonial thinking that recognises the inadequacies of theory but is interested in the contingency of political and social acts on those of reading and writing is most useful in my work on the child. I am committed to interrogating the latent or unacknowledged after-lives of colonialism in global politics and modernity through engaging with colonial texts in relation to postcolonial debates.\[^{69}\] My analysis will show that the after-effects of these texts are, if not definitively postcolonial, then at least inter-colonial in connecting the idea of the child before and after decolonisation with political and cultural formats for self and nation.

\[^{69}\] This imperative is expressed by Laura Chrisman in ‘The imperial unconscious? Representations of imperial discourse’, *Critical Quarterly*, 32.3 (1990), 38-58.
In the context of postcolonial theoretical debates, the idea of the child as attached to the nation is one half of a conflicted pairing. As Homi Bhabha writes:

[…] whether we talk about transnationalism, post-nationalism, de-nationalization, what you have to be aware of is what part of nationness is being recycled and reiterated, transformed, reapproximated, and retranslated. The important thing to understand is that we live in translational times […] the ground beneath our feet is a shifting, sliding ground.70

This idea of the nation as undergoing continuous re-construction may well be related to the fluctuation in images of the child. However, both concepts also involve the fixity demanded by our desires to stand on secure representational ground. Connected to the family, the community, the state and the human, the child is an idea perhaps more capacious than the nation. Burman proposes that the fascination with the child as the centre of ‘inviolable structures of subjectivity’ on which we impose our personal or collective notions of development can be useful not as an ‘eye’/’I’ through which to work out our relations to language and/as power, but as a ‘lens’ through which to view discourses of nation and development:

As with women’s studies, the study of children and childhoods offers both a distinct field and a lens by which to view other disciplines, and practical and theoretical disputes. […] it is hard to identify any social issue that is not touched upon by, or relevant to, the study of childhood. Rather it is its ghettoisation, its separation from those wider debates, that needs to be contested.71

The pointer towards feminist thought is a useful one that Lesnik-Oberstein also exploits in asserting that ‘there is much ground to cover before one could reach a hypothetical “real” child or woman’, however, ‘the case with “woman” is much more


71 Erica Burman, Developments, pp. 6-7. Burman critiques the way representations of the child are used in global marketing campaigns and international development agendas to normalise prescribed forms of social, sexual and economic relations, (p. 4).
familiar’. Questioning the global or the transnational via the idea of woman can be a means to avoid countering imperialism’s binarisms with a forced sameness. The aim of thinking across or between women is comparable to working with the malleable child figure that is one of the ‘protective fictions’ (including myths, dreams and fantasies) that Rose identifies as constitutive of the self and the nation, but not easily delimited by them.

**Between the British Raj and the Indian Nation**

This thesis examines how the child works to articulate British imperialism and Indian resistance both in texts ‘for’ children and those that focus on children in order to address ‘adult’ themes. I work with Rose’s proposal that we rely upon childhood for our own security and Lesnik-Oberstein’s question: ‘why is the child so often portrayed as “discovered”, rather than “invented” or “constructed”?’. I am concerned with how the child is implicated as ‘knowable’, ‘just there’, or as figuring wish fulfillment, in narratives of British colonialism and Indian nationalism at a decisive cultural moment between the 1880s and the 1930s. I ask what we may lose or gain by applying paradigms of childhood to ‘nation narratives’. India is represented across Anglo-Indian writing as both the ‘child’ whose growth is to be debated and the jewel in Britain’s crown. Britain is depicted as both a modernising and paternal power and the violator of Mother India in Indian writing in English. Both these perspectives on the colonial relationship rely upon the idea of the child and of childhood, as a recognisable stage or process, in order to express their ideals of nationhood.

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76 Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children’s Literature*, p. 36.
As J.R. Seeley set forth in *The Expansion of England* (1883), if India was seen as Britain’s child rather than her slave then she was ‘a part of England’ and required careful governance until she was mature enough to claim her independence. The composite volume *The Indian Empire Reader* (1898) is an example of how this notion was offered to child readers through a spectrum of factual and fictional texts giving an overview of Indian culture, geography and politics. The selection draws on the work of well-known commentators on India across the century. In combining the Benthamite progressive policies of Macaulay with the focus on institutions and government of James Mill and the top-down liberalism of John Strachey, it fleshes out the view of India as a child whose welfare not only informs British governance but buttresses her sense of nationhood. For Britons, ‘the wide extent of their empire arises mainly from their roving disposition, their energy, and governing powers’, while Hindus (considered less civilised than Muslims) are weak, inward-looking and have never ‘thought of their country as a whole’. As one culture is forward-looking and the other unimaginably backward, ‘a wise despotism’ is appropriate.

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77 J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 2nd edn. (1883; London: Macmillan, 1900), p. 184. Seeley’s argument that, ‘We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind’ (p. 10) rests on the view that the eighteenth century was a time of unimaginative reliance on profit and plunder while in the nineteenth century the realisation occurred that Britain’s power and history are to be found in her empire, which carries ‘moral and intellectual consequences’, (p.15).


India as static versus Britain as dynamic creates what Josna E. Rege describes as a ‘problem of action’ for the Indian-English novel. The cultural rhetoric and colonial policies that infuriated Mulk Raj Anand and his fellows in the All-India Progressive Writers Association positioned India as both child and savage, making the novel, and arguably other less marketable genres, both essential to anti-colonial resistance and a reminder that Indian culture was considered untimely by those who wrote and taught British literature. Referencing Samuel Smiles’ popular *Self-Help* (1859), the *Indian Empire Reader* proposes an individualist model of development in which the Indian people will become ‘more and more enlightened’ in order to have ‘a larger and larger share in the government of a country’. However, this rhetoric of growth, built as it is upon mid-century liberal optimism, papers over the yawning division between Macaulay’s commitment to training Indian minds and Strachey’s advocating centralised administration and rigorous discipline while denigrating attempts to ‘civilise’ the colonised population. This rupture in the imperial narrative necessitates conceptions of the East that can stabilise circulating anxieties about British degeneration and Indian political resistance that, as Alex Tickell definitively shows, fed on the fears generated by the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

This British image of India combines ideas of the child as a willing learner, a disruptive wrecker and a primitive object of disgust and fascination. India defines the horizon that makes Britain, as Seeley declares, not just Great but ‘Greater’. The child

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82 Murdoch, ed., p. 4.
83 Alex Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature 1830-1947* (London: Routledge. 2012). The Mutiny was an unprecedented challenge to British rule in India that changed the focus and nature of colonial politics to bring into being what became known as ‘the new imperialism’. The British classed the uprising as a sepoy (soldier) rebellion but Indian historiography also characterises it as the First War of Independence and the Indian Rebellion. My reason for retaining the title ‘Mutiny’ is simply that this is the one most used in the primary sources I discuss.
as a racial past still visible in/as India is, in Jo-Anne Wallace’s formulation, an ‘ancient piece of history’ that, in the colonialisist reformulation of child and nation, makes room for ‘the parent-child logic of imperial expansion’. As part of the ‘imposition of Western historiographical models’ and the capitalist configuration of values in colonial India that Ranajit Guha gathers together as ‘improvement’, faith in the power of books was triangulated with industrialisation and Christian moral values to decide what was best for India. Seeley argues that ‘since we do not rule by the will of the people of India, we must needs rule against their will. The love of independence presupposes political consciousness’. India as an unselfconscious child and her development, whether framed as falling behind or being precocious before lapsing into decline, had to be subject to scrutiny. The ‘powers and pleasures’ of the nineteenth-century family were extended to colonial relations, given ‘unity in the image of the child’ as, in Rose’s terms, the ‘psychic glue’ linking the subject to the nation.

The child installed by the colonial imagination as a source of origin on the one hand and the assurance of potential growth or change on the other was vulnerable and able to be resisted, partly because of its hegemonic appeal. As Homi Bhabha’s theory of

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84 Wallace, p. 175.
87 Seeley, p. 264.
88 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: 1, The Will to Knowledge (1976; London: Penguin, 1981), p. 46. Foucault argues that the mobile sexualities of this broadly conceived family were narrowed down to a ‘singular conjugal relationship’ in the twentieth century, suggesting that the parental relationship of Britain and India had to become unsustainable.
89 Rose, Peter Pan, p. 143. The second citation is from Rose, States, p. 3
mimicry proposes, colonial discourse writes its own counternarrative.\(^{90}\) My approach, therefore, challenges the positioning of the child as a basis for similarity between subjects, cultures, and races. The writers on whom I concentrate, Rudyard Kipling, Flora Annie Steel and Mulk Raj Anand, all produced varied oeuvres over long lives in which their literary reputations were inseparable from the ‘imperial forms’ of cultures that they wrote from.\(^{91}\) These forms were made and re-made during a period characterised by ‘anxiety side-by-side with self-proclaimed mastery over an ordered India’.\(^{92}\) Different as their concerns are, from Kipling’s masculine imperialism to Steel’s feminist pragmatism and Anand’s humanist/socialist vision, the urgency and delicacy of the meanings attached to the child have ramifications for the understanding of their work concerning India and the broader discursive atmospheres of imperialism. Tracking how conflicting valuations of the child operate shows, at the very least, that the child is more than a figure for facile universalism and may enable a more politically relevant and critically nuanced understanding of the colonial dynamic between Britain and India that has shaped the political and cultural relationship they have today.\(^{93}\)

**THE EMERGENCE OF THE CHILD**

The modern focus on the child is a turn of mind that inherits its presumptions and structures from the latter part of the nineteenth century, although interest in the child began to arise earlier. As Shuttleworth elaborates, the definition of objects as ‘for’

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\(^{93}\) Current scholarly work on British-Indian cultural connections has been brought together with media representations and public discussion in the Open University project, *Making Britain: South Asian Visions of Home and Abroad* (2007-10). See http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/ [accessed 1 June, 2013].
children in the eighteenth century led to the designation of entire fields as dealing with the child and a corresponding array of methodologies for ‘child study’.

Following the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), constructions of childhood were exposed to the emerging discourses of evolutionary psychology as well as psychiatry and anthropology. Attempts to define and understand childhood cannot be separated from natural science or from the drive to explore and categorise other countries and cultures; indeed it is these enterprises that obviate the need for a concept of the child that can then be used to figure the relation between ‘primitive’ and civilised societies.

Johannes Fabian delineates how anthropology used Darwin’s theory of biological evolution ‘to demonstrate the operation of evolutionary laws in the history of mankind’. Darwin rejected efforts to read any inherent meaning into evolution:

> The mere lapse of time itself does nothing either for or against natural selection. I state this because it has been erroneously asserted that the element of time is assumed by me to play an all-important part in natural selection, as if all species were necessarily undergoing slow modification from some innate law.

However, evolutionary anthropology as well as psychology and racial science utilised Darwin’s work to tell stories of civilisation that, Fabian argues, effectively shrunk the huge, discontinuous span of ‘natural’ time (evolutionary time) and used it ‘to replace faith in salvation by faith in progress and industry’. Fabian capitalises ‘Time’ in order to emphasise how it became a concept that necessarily involved ‘civilization,

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95 Fabian, *Time*, p. 12.
97 Fabian, *Time*, p. 17.
evolution, development, acculturation, modernization (and their cousins, industrialization, urbanization), overlaying with human detail the ‘incomprehensibly vast’ geological time theorised by Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830). The relevance of Fabian’s critique to this thesis is exemplified in the following argument:

A discourse employing terms such as primitive, savage (but also tribal, traditional, Third World […] does not think, or observe, or critically study, the “primitive”; it thinks, observes, studies *in terms* of the primitive. *Primitive* being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought.

Thinking *in terms* of the child is similar to thinking about culture, history or identity as temporal but within a ‘spatialized Time’ that provides ‘a taxonomic approach to socio-cultural reality’. The child/primitive are constructed by means of temporal devices that designate ‘difference as distance’. In their association with the primitive, the colonised native and the child remain part of a long preamble to the productive time of empire.

Marianna Torgovnik stresses that the term ‘primitive’ is not a neutral one, but a construction that is seductive in offering ‘universal truth about human nature’. Torgovnik indicates how contradictory or composite ideas of the primitive, which can include animal, wild, non-white, barbarous and female, are not ‘misreadings’ of ‘real’ people or places that we can remedy, but nevertheless have implications for the ways

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100 Fabian, *Time*, p. 15.


in which political and economic relations have been enacted to privilege what is, according to Torgovnik and Michael Bell, a monolithic unified West.\(^{103}\)

I make mention of the myriad uses of the primitive that have been discussed in recent scholarship because the ‘temporal distancing’ that enables the primitive to be thought of is essential to understanding the nineteenth-century idea of the child and its legacies.\(^{104}\) The primitive promises geographies, spectacles and social structures that contribute to, even enrich, understandings of the child and childhood.\(^{105}\) The caveat to recognising this likeness is that it does not satisfy our desire to ‘know’ the child. Both the primitive and the child may be represented as either wholly other or as subject to improvement over time and both can be considered as the origin of the human. Any society considered to be ‘developing’ can no longer be primitive, while any child becoming an adult is no longer \textit{infans} (‘without speech’). In examining how these binaries work within narratives of nation, the important point to make is that there cannot be a primitive child, but only a child-as-primitive or a primitive-as-child. The use of discourses denoted as ‘primitive’— religion, myth, folklore and so forth — to re-imagine or, as Lazarus argues, to contest modernity are, however, important in anti-colonial and postcolonial representations of the child.\(^{106}\)


\(^{104}\) Michael Bell’s \textit{Primitivism} (London: Methuen, 1972) has been followed by studies including Chris Bongie, \textit{Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism and the Fin de Siècle} (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991) and Gina M. Rossetti, \textit{Imagining the Primitive in Naturalist and Modernist Literature} (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006).


\(^{106}\) See Lazarus, \textit{The Postcolonial Unconscious}, Ch. 1.
Nineteenth-century interest in the child developed in tandem with recapitulation theories in which early growth was seen to mirror the ancestry of species, human and animal, and phylogeny in which racial differences were plotted according to the different time-lines of the various peoples of the globe; the ‘Now’ of non-white races was equivalent to the ‘Then’ of the white adult.  

In the 1890s, a Child Study movement arose, taking its cue from Darwin’s ‘A Biographical Sketch of an Infant’ (1877), based on observations made in 1840. This brief article includes the query: ‘May we not suspect that the vague but very real fears of children, which are quite independent of experience, are the inherited effects of real dangers and abstract superstitions during ancient savage times?’  

Although Darwin is cautious in his use of the term ‘effects’, Castañeda takes his suggestion to point towards an evolutionary biology in which the experience of ‘the savage’ is ‘played out in the body of the child’. Certainly, it had the effect of piquing interest in the means and methods for observing the child.

It was the popular writings of James Sully that launched the new fashion for psychology. His ‘Babies and Science’(1881) was followed by numerous journal articles and his tour-de-force Studies of Childhood (1895). While Darwin is concerned with distinguishing between innate and learned characteristics rather than with cultural recapitulation, comparing the human infant to ‘the dog’ and ‘the

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107 Fabian, Time, p. 63. Stephen Jay Gould details the interaction of these theories with earlier models of ‘the great chain of being’ and also shows how recapitulation was central to Freud’s early work. See Ontogeny and Phylogeny (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).  
109 Castañeda, p. 12.  
110 Francis Galton included children in his mass anthropometric measuring schemes from the early 1880s. Other influential psychological works include James Mark Baldwin’s Mental Development in the Child and the Race (1895).
primitive’ in isolation, Sully advocates observing the child in the nursery and treats nurturing itself as having an evolutionary function. As Shuttleworth says, following Herbert Spencer and G.H. Lewes, who envisaged mental qualities being inherited, Sully’s infant ‘is not an animal but rather the equivalent of primitive man […] he starts life at a higher level than the race’s starting point.’ Sully’s primitive is remarkably unthreatening, suggesting that, as Denise Riley puts it, ‘the study of “primitives”, of natural history, and of the behaviour of the human infant might constitute well-ordered steps to the fuller knowledge of “finished” mind’. Such a reassuring model could afford to give space to the playful child emphasised in Friedrich Fröbel’s *The Education of Man* (published in German 1826 and translated into English in 1887). Fröbel’s ideas were important in connecting education to literature in accordance with the British Child-Study Association’s wish to find newly successful methods of education by returning to the child’s own ‘nature’. The state that Sully called ‘primitive egoism’ was linked with creativity rather than savagery and, as Shuttleworth asserts, with the very act of studying: ‘The role of experimenter is transferred from the scientist to the child, who […] becomes in itself the embodiment of literary and scientific creativity’.

This burgeoning interest in ‘primitive child-thought’ was the consolidation of earlier notions of natural child development given space by the emergence of middle-class family life in the eighteenth century and brought to intellectual attention in

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112 Riley, *War in the Nursery*, p. 47. Riley discusses how Sully’s theories both required and distrusted the observational capacities of mothers, maintaining that infant-watching is best done by professionals (pp. 49-51). I discuss the fraught relations between mothers and doctors in Chapter 2.

113 See Shuttleworth, pp. 302-3.

Rousseau’s initiation of the Romantic conception of the child.¹¹⁵ Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) are positioned by Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein alongside Rousseau’s philosophy as providing the foundations for later paradigms of child development.¹¹⁶ Anthony Krupp details how Locke was troubled by the possibility that, because children were defined as ‘beings that have not yet attained the age of reason’, they could not be categorised as human, or, in a move that would have crucial implications for imperial conquest, as men.¹¹⁷ Locke’s empiricism posited children as deficient but nevertheless able to be differentiated from the idiot and the savage, the other ‘others’ to rational Man. This was possible through careful attention premised, as Lesnik-Oberstein shows, not on innate creativity, but on good breeding.¹¹⁸

Rousseau and Locke’s encounter with the child as having ‘unproblematic access to objects of the real world’ which by-passed ‘the imperfections of language’ was closely followed by the Romantic cult of the child.¹¹⁹ This phenomenon took its dictum from Wordsworth’s ‘The Child is Father of the Man’ that was taken up by nineteenth-century emphases on innocence.¹²⁰ Judith Plotz’s term ‘the sequestered child’ aptly describes this child alone amidst nature, unwittingly inspiring the adult, a notion that would find purchase in the imperial exploits for which the adventurous

¹¹⁵ Sully, p. 99.
¹¹⁶ See Lesnik-Oberstein, pp. 82-99.
¹¹⁸ Lesnik-Oberstein counters approaches that find a ‘universal’ child in Locke’s work, showing that the education he advocated was tailored to social position rather than a common idea of human nature (pp. 86-7).
¹²⁰ Low shows that the ‘natural’ aspects of the child were used to structure a ‘pastoral politics’ in imperialist fiction in which, as I discuss in relation to Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, the empire took the place of the country that was viewed as in decline because of industrialisation and a perception of urban degeneration. See *White Skins*, Ch. 2.
child of the nineteenth century was fitted. Rousseau’s claim at the opening of Émile, ou de l’Éducation (1762) that ‘We know nothing of childhood’, marks a moment when locating the child became increasingly important to European societies promoting a well-defined national culture that engaged in colonial conquest.

The attention paid by the Victorians to childhood is evidenced in the publication of ‘novels of child development’ by Dickens, Eliot and the Brontës, which pondered what it was to be a child and found in childhood explanatory factors for adult difficulties. As Carolyn Steedman argues, ‘the child-figure becomes a central vehicle for expressing ideas about the self and its history’. At this time, a ‘golden age’ of children’s literature created worlds billed as belonging to children that adults willingly entered into. Literature specifically for children broadened from the instructional tales of Maria Edgeworth and Mrs Sherwood towards adventure fiction for boys and domestic fiction for girls by the likes of Charlotte Yonge and Elizabeth Sewell. Both strands aimed to entertain rather than instruct and were supplemented by the fantastical fairytales of Lewis Carroll and Charles Kingsley. Field considers that Edgeworth’s morality was ‘carefully kneaded in’ rather than imposed and yet had become less acceptable to children and their parents, who were looking both for useful information and ‘enlivenment’. The realism and fantasy that Field identifies as the key modes of writing for children are not opposite, but rather complementary,

121 Judith Plotz, Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Ch. 2.
123 Shuttleworth, p. 2.
124 Steedman, Strange Dislocations, p. 5. Steedman brings theories of physiology together with literature in her discussion but does not relate them explicitly to imperialism.
because both rely upon the child to establish the authenticity of the story and the credibility of the author.¹²⁹

Shuttleworth and Steedman show that the sexualisation, medicalisation and neurotic concern with childhood that has happened since 1900 (a point that Shuttleworth calls the Freudian revolution) and that is epitomised in the conflicted modernist representation of the self is ‘prefigured’ in the complexity of the Victorian view of childhood in which there was ‘no unanimity, no single […] construction of the inner child.’¹³⁰ Concomitantly, there was no singular definition of nationhood, but many interweaving versions that, as I discuss in the following section, kept the question of what it meant to be or not to be British at the forefront of discussion. The playful inventiveness that Juliet Dusinberre identifies in the flourishing children’s literature of the period can therefore be interpreted not only as a positive reflection of scientific and cultural discovery, but as reacting to national concerns about colonialism and modernity as attached to the child.¹³¹

In the fabric of turn of the century imperial confidence that I examine in relation to Kipling and Steel, there are anxieties and loose threads of thought — on race, gender and nationality — that are drawn together by pinning the child firmly to the nation. In the case of Anand, who writes from the position of the educated colonial, individual or national narratives cannot even be posited without the violence of an imposed culture being recognised and wrested from its original form to be sculpted into a new

¹³⁰ Shuttleworth, p. 3.
‘Indian language’ and the potentiality of a postcolonial self. From this perspective, modernism cannot afford too much pessimism, and the child is required to reinvigorate the shared values of the human. I approach the 1880s-1930s as a transitional period in which concepts of both child and nation were reframed. Anglo-Indian writers turned the child as a model of both innocent stasis and timely growth into an imperial ambition. The legacy of their success had the unexpected consequence of nurturing the revolutionary hope that colonial structures would be overthrown, allowing Anand in the 1920s and 30s to present himself as a ‘child’ reared on British literature in a culture branded as weaker or premature. Representing what Raja Rao hoped would be an English dialect ‘as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American’, pre-1947 Indian-English writing is torn between the child as figuring anti-colonial protest in the name of ‘Mother India’ and as involving economic and political growth in the Western secular mode.

**OF CHILD OF NATION: CONSTANCY**

All the texts I discuss share a determined focus upon the ability of the child to express something fundamental about the nation, kinship and the human. Stories of nationhood are like tales of childhood in that they are usually retrospective and formed not by intrinsic national qualities but from comparison with other nations or cultures, as Krishan Kumar has argued. If we allow the child to figure the nation in

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the unstable manner that de Man and Bhabha indicate, these stories also serve the function of bringing to awareness the aspirations and difficulties of nation-formation.

Partha Chatterjee has made pertinent observations on India in this vein, stating that the transition to independence passes through stages in which, as Fanon perceived, the nation is forced painfully into being in a manner that should not be interpreted as derivative of Western models. Indian nationalists of the late nineteenth century had turned to Vedic India, considered by Max Müller and other Orientalist scholars as Hindu civilisation’s Golden Age, as a precedent for what Chatterjee views as historical agency. As Letizia Alterno discusses, imagining the nation as a ‘mythical space’ was continued in the Indian-English novel by Raja Rao, who drew upon Hindu religious-mythological traditions, including the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads (or Vedānta).

For Guha and the Subaltern Studies group, the retelling of stories about ancient India by bourgeois-nationalist historiography is a sign of arrested development, a failure of


136 The masking of Indian culture by Western forms meant that nationalist thought could draw upon the notion of India as tabula rasa. See Sarkar, Modern India, p. 6. Lesnik-Oberstein discusses Locke’s concept of tabula rasa in relation to the child as indicating not an initial presence but ‘an absence of presence (of innate ideas and concepts)’, which is required in order to determine the meaning of adulthood. See Children’s Literature, p. 91.

radical hopes in which the nation is made to tell ‘a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite’ that is actually ‘the ideological product of British rule in India’. Gandhi countered this problem by insisting that Western history writing was an irrelevant habit, not to be fought against, but simply to be ignored. Gandhi looked back to ancient texts in order to resist the very idea of national development:

I believe in the saying that a nation is happy that has no history. It is my pet theory that our Hindu ancestors solved the question for us by ignoring history as it is understood today and by building on slight events their philosophical structure. Such is the Mahabharata. And I look upon Gibbon and Motley as inferior editions of the Mahabharata.  

These debates on the meaning of nation support Lazarus’s argument that nationalism is not an essentialist phenomenon, but ‘the engine of collective daring, ingenuity, and capacious social imagination’. The demand for constancy in Indian historiography works in defiance of a Western historicism that Dipesh Chakravarty describes: ‘somebody’s way of saying “not yet” to somebody else’. This paring down of colonial discourse turns the idea of India as a child back onto Britain, exposing her rhetoric as a form of bullying actually associated with an uncivilised idea of the child: figurations of the child even in ostensibly simple or direct language can always be contested. In order to investigate how children and childhoods are discovered or rediscovered between genres and across Indian and British historiographies I therefore

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140 Lazarus, The Postcolonial Unconscious, p. 64.  
raise the question that Antoinette Burton asks: who counts (and who counts most) as a subject of imperial history and how is this subjectivity instigated?¹⁴²

The primary subjects in this thesis are boys. This is partly due to historical shifts in literary and cultural fashion, as Catherine Robson suggests in identifying the ‘retrospective’ (female) and ‘anticipatory’ (male) modes of childhood in the nineteenth century that I examine in Chapter 1.¹⁴³ In the twenty-first century, Burman has made clear that international development discourses promoting a normative ‘modern’ motherhood merge women and children into a single unit in need of assistance. This means that questions of gender may be subsumed within the more time-limited and financially lucrative ones of childhood.¹⁴⁴ Girls are rarely accorded sustained narratives in the literature that I examine. If girls play an active part, their behaviour, and often their dress, is ‘boyish’.¹⁴⁵ In Chapter 2, I address this by including texts that indicate how imperial structures were imitative of domestic ones and vice versa, allowing the complications of the nineteenth-century family that Foucault identifies broader exposure. I also suggest that Steel’s On the Face of the Waters (1896) is more compelling when read as a novel about women’s demand for independence than as a heroic romance.

¹⁴⁴ Burman, Deconstructing, p. 58. On boys, see Burman, ‘Gender and Childhood in Neoliberal Times: Contemporary Tropes of the Boychild in Psychological Culture’, in Children in Culture Revisited: Further Approaches to Childhood, ed. by Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 18-34.
¹⁴⁵ For example, Kipling’s ‘The Daughter of the Regiment’, Plain Tales from the Hills (1888). Similarly, in Field’s Bryda, ‘A Soldier’s daughter must learn to be brave’ (p. 39).
In the case of Indian women in this period, they are not served by the attempts of Steel and others to allow them fictional space, even though ‘the uplift’ of women was a popular activist cause. J.S. Mill's measure of the nation by its women and Katherine Mayo’s diatribe on the horror of child-rearing in *Mother India* (1927) are indicative of Western fiction’s dealings with Indian women as it moved from erotic appeal and exotic representation to a concern with sexual and violent practices (child marriage and *sati* primarily) and social conditions. In Kipling’s work, Indian women are figures of tragic longing and gruesome demise. In Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), and in prominent nationalist discourses during the 1920s and 30s, the Indian woman is an appealing outline usually to be filled in, as I go on to consider, by the beleaguered but beautiful image of Mother India awaiting the revolution wrought by male politicians and visionaries. In this thesis, I wish to acknowledge the often hard-to-find discursive presence of the elevated or oppressed Indian woman, but also to shift the focus towards how the child functions when examined as a figure detached from the woman or mother.

In the work of Kipling and Steel, Indian children are presented in contrast to the intelligent and courageous British boy, pre-imagined as figures of a glorious but decayed past. I recognise that, in the contexts of a hegemonic cultural take-over in which the concept of the child was formulated according to European paradigms,

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146 In *The Subjection of Women* (1869) Mill argued that the emancipation and education of women was an indicator of civilisation. Mayo included a litany of criticisms of India as a barbarous society in her polemic against self-rule. See also Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993).

there is no Indian (pre)history of the child to be retrieved via colonial texts. There are, however, other positions that the Indian child may hold besides that of the effigy of arrested development typified in Kipling’s ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’ (1888) in which the child is an object of fascination and affection but, because of his mirroring of a past civilisation, cannot be presented as growing up. Indian children also operate, particularly in the case of Mowgli in *The Jungle Books* (1894), as slippery allegorical veneers beneath and around whom may be found some of the complexities of imperial society that Steel points to in collecting folktales from native boy storytellers in *Wide-Awake Stories* (1884).

Anand also addresses the problematic inheritance of the Indian child (and the colonised child more broadly) in depicting the struggles into consciousness of Munoo in *Coolie* (1936) and Bakha in *Untouchable*. These boy protagonists possess the desire for discovery essential to adventure literature, and they also struggle with the drama of self-actualisation epitomised by the work of the young Anand’s literary hero, James Joyce. But they do so with a peculiarly Indian and politically expedient investment in a national future that is not yet assured and which requires that they find a new direction for the nation through the resources of the English novel through which they are fashioned.148

These inter-cultural negotiations indicate that, where the figure that I am calling the ‘constant child’ appears, there is often a concern to deny difference, whether of

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148 Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gora* (1910) is an example of an internationally recognized Indian-language *Bildungsroman* at this time. Written in Bengali, it is often considered a response to *Kim* because the boy concerned thinks he is a Brahmin before discovering he is Irish. It can be read as anticipating postcolonial hybridity, although it is primarily concerned with issues of its time, including the 1905 partition of Bengal and the conflict between militant Hindu nationalism and peaceful resistance.
gender, culture or race.\textsuperscript{149} Children and nations are proposed in order that their physical boundaries and bodies, their voices and their life goals, are there to be discovered, deciphered and described; to be, in Rose’s terms, ‘colonised’. Impelled to find continuity in the child, these systems are also motivated by the requirement for growth, which, as I will now consider, operates in tandem with the constant child.

\textbf{O F C H I L D O F N A T I O N: G R O W T H}

The paradox that Rousseau found when he addressed the unknowability of the child in \textit{Émile} becomes a problem for the developing nation that imagines itself in the child: the ‘natural child’ who is the epitome of freedom and whose growth is a pressing concern can only be produced by ‘intensive parental labour and control’.\textsuperscript{150} In Indian nationalist discourse, these efforts position the child as either a fighter for Mother India or the unfortunate consequence of Indian women’s downtrodden position. In the British colonial imagination, adherence to a ‘civilising mission’ that requires a dutiful child is undermined by fears of disorder, contamination and loss of national prestige that are associated with children and those described as children: the working classes and colonised populations. This leads, in the 1890s, to the rise of a popular imperialism that itself is seen as contaminating the liberal ideals of the mid-nineteenth century and above which the empire-building British boy must be elevated.

In Britain, child development became intimately linked to the health of the empire as part of increasing public concern with childhood from the 1860s to the 1890s. This created ‘scopic regimes’\textsuperscript{151} through which physical, psychological and social factors were analysed. As Stoler asserts, ‘attention to child welfare increased exponentially

\textsuperscript{149} See Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, pp. 98-9.
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\textsuperscript{150} Shuttleworth, p. 6.
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\textsuperscript{151} Jenks, \textit{Childhood}, p. 68.
when it became linked to national interest. Shuttleworth finds that the medicalisation of the child’s mind proceeded in tandem with detailed physical developmental models. Any deviation from ‘normal’ mental processes, such as precocity or an overactive imagination might be an aberration of the mind or even evidence of mental damage inflicted by overzealous educators. Such concerns over mental health are in evidence in a number of Kipling’s stories of military life, where young ‘boys’ are fighting far from home, while in Steel, signs of distress in the Anglo-Indian household are kept firmly held in check by the ‘magnetic power’ of the memsahib.

British children in India were typically sent home to school around the age of seven and, E.M. Collingham demonstrates, were the subject of a great deal of medico-social discourse. Joseph Fayrer’s 1872 lecture ‘On the Health of European Children in Bengal’ is a prime example:

The child must be sent to England, or it will deteriorate physically and morally — physically because it tends to grow up slight, weedy, and delicate, precocious, and with a general feebleness not so easily defined as recognised — something expressed not only in appearance, but in the very intonation of the voice — morally, because it learns from its surroundings much that is objectionable, and has a tendency to deterioration, which can best be avoided by the removal to the more bracing and healthy atmosphere of Europe.

The passage assumes the reader has knowledge of the ‘normal’ child that Shuttleworth identifies, but the difficulty of defining non-normative growth allows

152 Stoler, p 120.
153 In the latter case, Shuttleworth identifies Dickens’ *Dombey and Son* as a case study utilised by psychiatrists.
possibilities to proliferate. The use of plant analogies, common in educational
discourse as exemplified by Fröbel’s invention of the term Kindergarten, does not
mean that ‘natural’ growth will naturally occur. If the child is figuring the growth of
the race as a whole its growth must be ‘timely’ and demonstrate robustness rather than
deterioration. It must be defined against those it is also used to represent: the
‘feebleness’ of Indians who are both ‘delicate’ and ‘precocious’ plays on widely held
prejudices against Hindus as weak, effete and reaching maturity prematurely before
entering a steep decline.

Fayrer claims to speak for the benefit of poorer parents in India who cannot send
children home to school. However, in judging that ‘the Anglo-Saxon’ cannot
acclimatize himself to India as ‘the native races’ have, he reinforces class/race
separation to the extent that the body of the privileged child and its location become
signs of status and health. The ‘middle-class aristocracy’ thus contributes to the
denial of the diverse reality underlying ‘the seductive vision of British India as an
dempire almost exclusively for Europeans of power, wealth and respectability’: nearly
half the Europeans in India fell into the category of poor whites. Elizabeth Buettner
sees a clash between this ‘quest for a secure racial and class status’ and ‘the cultural

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157 Kindergarten means not only a garden for children but of children, allowing them to grow freely
through play.
158 These were articulated in G.O. Trevelyan’s The Competition Wallah (1864) that Kipling read on his
journey back to India in 1882.
160 Francis Hutchins, The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India (Princeton: Princeton
161 David Arnold, ‘European orphans and vagrants in India in the Nineteenth century’, The Journal of
Imperial and Commonwealth History, 7.2 (1979), 104 – 127 (p. 124). See also Harald Fischer-Tine,
Low and licentious Europeans: race, class and ‘white subalternity’ in colonial India (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009).
ideals of domesticity and family intimacy”¹⁶² that I investigate in relation to Kipling’s early stories and Steel’s *The Complete Housekeeper and Cook* (1888). Attitudes towards children are devised according to their race and gender in order to produce unimpeachable public indicators of status.¹⁶³

This study utilises Kipling and Steel as case studies of an Anglo-Indian literature informed by this wider British cultural milieu and, at times, participating in a perceptible antagonism towards metropolitan assumptions about both empire and childhood. The association of Kipling (and to a lesser extent Steel) with popular imperialism belies the recognition that, when he began his literary career, ‘imperialism’ was a newly coined word mostly used amongst public figures.¹⁶⁴ Thomas Metcalf details how Disraeli’s period in office (1874-1880) shifted the focus from settlement colonies to India, from colonial self-government to the empire as a source of national pride in what Gladstone described as a world of ‘jealous nations, competing for favourable positions in the sun’.¹⁶⁵ The new conservatism tapped into fears of unrest prevalent since the Mutiny and ‘a growing distaste in the late Victorian era for the liberal industrial order, its individualism and spirit of competition’.¹⁶⁶ What resulted was both a ‘Golden Age’ of Anglo-Indian order under Lord Dufferin as Viceroy (1884-88) and a nostalgia for a pre-industrial period of simplicity, according to which India’s backwardness gave Britain an unquestionable reason to rule her.

¹⁶³ See Buettner, Ch. 3.
¹⁶⁶ Metcalf, pp. 59-60.
Nevertheless, during the 1880s, there was no popular appetite for imperialism. Rather, international diplomacy and assertion of moral superiority proved sufficient to further ‘the great cause of peace, civilization and Christianity’. As C.C. Eldridge argues, by the late 1870s, the ‘civilising mission’ extolled by Disraeli and Lord Salisbury was not that far removed from Gladstone’s belief in the British constitution and the benefits of civilisation that flowered from it: ‘the one object we have in view is that peace and order may be maintained, and that races and creeds which for centuries have lived in feud should henceforth live in amity and goodwill’. It may have been this cross-party appeal that enabled imperialism in the 1890s to become a potent mode of affective attachment to Britain in a rapidly modernising and globalising political climate.

The ‘new burst of imperial activity’ that occurred after 1880 was recognised only gradually by a public that lacked any cohesive concept of imperialism. The pressures of local crises in colonies in Africa and the Pacific, ‘a scramble for territory’, economic depression and incipient native nationalisms contributed to a new phase of expansion: ‘the extension of the Pax Britannica would, it was suggested, bring safety, personal freedom and new economic and intellectual opportunity to all’. It is at this juncture that colonial conquest, along with prowess in adventure, combat and governance, are explicitly attached to the child. Kipling’s poetic tributes to

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167 Hansard, 2 May, 1876, ccxxvIII 2002-4 cited in Eldridge, p. 244.
169 Eldridge, pp. 248-9;
imperialism bring the flag-bearing British boy into the foreground while, for Steel, the work of empire should rightly be the work of everyone and, this thesis argues, is the means by which women achieve a competency and control that allows them equality with men over India-as-child. ‘The gentlemanly forces’ that promoted empire in the eighteenth century were thus expanded to shape the Raj.\textsuperscript{171} Indian landowners and the English-educated elite became ‘junior partners in the imperial enterprise’ in a royal assembly designed to impress what Cain and Hopkins call ‘the new generation of mighty but loyal subjects’\textsuperscript{172} through the show of taking Indians into the aristocratic family.

Into this family is born the figure that Don Randall calls the ‘imperial boy’. Randall defines the boy in Kipling’s work as linking youth, masculinity and empire to produce, in Jenny Sharpe’s formulation, a ‘Western epistemology of the subject’ that is also able to unsettle the binary oppositions that structure imperial discourse.\textsuperscript{173} In Randall and John McBratney’s opinion, the adaptive qualities of the imperial boy are premised upon his adolescence, which opens up possible avenues for development but, for McBratney, is also the point from which the focus narrows towards dutiful imperial manhood.\textsuperscript{174} For the purposes of this study, I do not separate adolescence from childhood, but rather work with what Krupp calls the ‘unit-idea’ of childhood as encompassing both.\textsuperscript{175} As Chapter 1 will show, I contest the notion that the adolescent is ‘a more thoroughly legible figure’ than ‘the childish raw material’ on which it is premised.

\textsuperscript{172} Cain and Hopkins, p. 332.
\textsuperscript{173} Jenny Sharpe, \textit{Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 15, cited in Randall p. 24.
\textsuperscript{174} Randall and McBratney take up Robert F. Moss’s theoretical paradigm in \textit{Rudyard Kipling and the Fiction of Adolescence} (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982).
\textsuperscript{175} Krupp, p. 16. That is to say, where a subject is deemed in the text to be a child, I treat it as such.
based and Chapter 3 pursues this argument further in examining how growth may be curtailed or arrested, and the concept of adolescence rendered irrelevant, when the European \textit{Bildungsroman} is reconfigured by Indian writers.\textsuperscript{176}

The imperial boy is formed from a number of contradictory cultural currents.\textsuperscript{177} As Joseph Bristow shows, state education enabled imperial rhetoric to address all those able to read the popular press. From the late 1870s, boys magazines, such as the \textit{Boys Own Paper} (founded in 1879 and known as the \textit{BOP}) began to bring together readers from all classes under a unifying ideology that presented the British as a superior race or breed and countered the immorality of the penny dreadfuls.\textsuperscript{178} As Bristow puts it, ‘imperialism took on all the attributes of moral and educational improvement’.\textsuperscript{179}

As Patrick Brantlinger says, ‘Much imperialist discourse was […] directed at a specifically adolescent audience, the future rulers of the world’\textsuperscript{180} and, as such, sought both to entertain and to explain the Empire. M. Daphne Kutzer finds that ‘empire is presented as natural and good for children’,\textsuperscript{181} and the essential values of the imperial adventurer, ‘resourcefulness, leadership, pluck, moral virtue and chivalry’,\textsuperscript{182} are often blended with fairytale and sentiment (as they are in Steel and Kipling’s imperial children). Both Kutzer and Brantlinger note that adventure tales often include maps

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Randall, p. 11.
\item Randall, p. 25.
\item The ‘dreadfuls’ were cheap magazines featuring sensational and violent storylines that flourished following the education act of 1870.
\item Kutzer, p. 10.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and instructions in activities such as sailing, shooting and survival tips, as did the

*BOP.*

This ‘ethnographic gloss’\(^{184}\) in tales of exotic fantasy prompts recognition that neither the sentimental tale nor the adventure story have a commitment to realism as representing what is ‘true’, despite having much investment in ‘scientific’ or naturalistic discourses. Therefore, we should not, my analysis will suggest, expect imperial boys to conform to or contribute towards developmental models of subjectivity or, indeed, of history. Rather, such a culturally composite but apparently uniquely British figure indicates how colonial rhetoric worked to convince the rest of the world to interpret culture in a European way. The familial connotations of imperialism serve as much to impose intractable ties as to label naturally occurring ones in a way that diverts attention from a severe squeezing of the Indian economy, the frustration of educated Indians at the slow pace of reform in employment and citizenship rights and the use of a rhetoric of ‘martial races’ by the British.\(^{185}\) Bose and Jalal point out that: ‘By the time Curzon was building a marble monument to Victoria’s memory on the sprawling green of Calcutta, Indian nationalists were already discussing *Swaraj* and planning to turn the raj itself into a bad memory’.\(^{186}\)

This turning tide is recognisable in representations of the child and India-as-child that imagine development as the possible beginning of degeneration. Degeneration drew

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\(^{184}\) Kutzer, p. 2.

\(^{185}\) Cain and Hopkins emphasise that the value of Britain’s exports to India increased nearly five times between 1870 and 1914 while India absorbed an increasing quantity of Britain’s exports until World War I, making India her primary market in the empire and principal trading partner (p. 333).

together ‘a medico-psychiatric and natural-scientific’\textsuperscript{187} language, utilising earlier theories of phylogeny, phrenology and physiognomy but surpassing them in influence. Evolutionary thought and Darwinian natural selection were found to be compatible with the idea of the fixity and hierarchy of human races: ‘Far from dislodging racial ideas, evolution strengthened them, and provided them with a new scientific vocabulary of struggle and survival’.\textsuperscript{188} By the 1880s, degenerationist thought had moved from what Daniel Pick identifies as a ‘sub-current’ to medical, evolutionary and racial theory to become a prime scientific interest.\textsuperscript{189} Pick demonstrates that rather than being simply a euphemism for poverty, disease and misery, degeneration was a slippery term that facilitated a key mode of thinking about modern life, and discourses of childhood and society were ‘powerfully inflected by biological theories of decline’.\textsuperscript{190} Steel’s concern with miscegenation and immorality in the empire implies that, when the child and the native are connected as being both fascinating and revolting, accepted ideas of progress and evolution are bound to be called into question.

Nationalism in India faced the challenge of countering ‘a kind of self-reproducing pathological process’ from the position of an ancient civilisation taken to have declined to a point where it must be treated as the ill-trained child of a modern


\textsuperscript{189} Pick, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{190} Pick, p. 5.
imperial power. Taking advantage both of Indian narrative traditions and of the need expressed by social and political discourses for youthful vigour, reformist Hindus promoted a pure, reinvigorated and masculinised form of religion, which could counter the charges of physical weakness and moral depravity heaped upon Indians, particularly of the Hindu faith. The process of conceptualising Hinduness in accordance with totalising ideas of history, religion and global relations meant having to unite the diversity of India into one nation. This was a process that involved, as Chetan Bhatt puts it, ‘an abstracted Hinduism being claimed to provide for the greatest co-existence of diversity’. Bhatt describes how the Hindutva focus on ‘children, youth and ideological inculcation’ has increased from the early twentieth century with great attention given to educational institutions, seen as the prime vehicles for the cultural reproduction of the ‘Hindu nation’.

As Partha Chatterjee and Eric Hobsbawm emphasise, in the nineteenth century political priority had to be given to creating a national past in order to posit the nation of India at all: ‘because in the mode of recalling the past, the power to represent oneself is nothing other than political power itself’. The build-up of Indian resistance movements so brutally shut down when power transferred from the East

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191 Pick, Faces, p. 22.
192 Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 206. The 1871 census established the category ‘Hindu’ and reformist groups, such as the Arya Samaj (founded 1875), began to formalise ideas of Hinduism as a modern religious identity. The Brahmo Samaj (conceived in 1830) reformed the prevailing Brahminism of the time and instigated the Bengal Renaissance. These groups gradually narrowed their focus towards a nationalist agenda from the 1920s onwards. In 1925, B. Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing Hindu paramilitary volunteer group that placed emphasis on male strength and virility.
194 Bhatt, p. 209.
195 Bhatt, p. 209.
India Company to the British Parliament in 1858 achieved legitimacy in the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The call of nationalist rhetoric became increasingly impatient with the INC’s insistence on co-operation with British policies. The anthology Changing India (1939), edited by Raja Rao and Iqbal Singh, is testimony to the range of debate on nationalism from 1839 onwards. From the thought of Raja Rammohun Ray, ‘the first of our moderns’, to the new socialism of Nehru, the work is evidence of the intertwining of literary, cultural and political thought on the subject. It also suggests the many pressures on the Indian populace urged through Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s song Bande Mataram to act as loyal children of ‘Mother India’ and called by the communist Subhas Chandra Bose to defy the British en masse.

The symbolic representation of India as mother took root in colonial Bengal, which had a tradition of mother goddess worship that, Jasodhara Bagchi says, was connected to motherhood being a ‘culturally privileged concept’. Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s 1882 novel Anandamath, based on the Sanyasi rebellion of the 1770s, provided the initial literary connection of the land with the mother, passionately defending Bankim’s belief that Bengal had to have a history that was, as Chatterjee puts it, ‘the glorious deeds of one’s ancestors’.


198 In the late 1930s, Hindi was declared the official language of India and Bande Mataram was adopted as the national anthem. In 1939, Bose, founder of the Indian National Army, defeated Gandhi to become president of the Congress. The council did not back his resolution for a massive civil disobedience movement, and he resigned just before World War II broke out.


200 Chatterjee, The Nation, p. 76. Chatterjee writes that there were many histories being written in Bengali at this time, but they were dismissed by Bankim as ‘adolescent literature’. Bankim’s preferred historiographic model was not one of ‘indigenous’ consciousness, but a European one that could be
Bande Mataram (‘I bow to you, Mother’) is sung collectively throughout the novel. It went on to become the ‘most potent patriotic slogan’ for nationalist movements from the early twentieth century. In addition, the physical prowess and ascetic behaviour of the disciples (both male and female) challenges the effeminate and cowardly image of the Bengali male by positing the ‘compensatory imaging of the valiant Hindu’. The novel’s children/fighters, whilst exhibiting strength and unity, are placed in the position of the pre-sexualised child. Gender remains an irrelevance because the acknowledgement of sexuality cannot happen until emancipation. As I discuss further in relation to Anand’s work, the placing of the child as supplicant can also be viewed as a taking back of the childlike position occupied by the British boy in imperial narratives through self-abandon for the sake of the collective in the Ghandian mode. It is a way of addressing the split in Indian politics of the early twentieth century between imagining India as a modern nation re-claiming her history and seeing her as a revitalised rural idyll to which, paradoxically, her already enormous number of urban poor have no access.  

Approaching Indian English literature as the unplanned child of colonialism, George Orwell wrote in 1935 that, ‘an English-language Indian literature is a strange adapted to India’s purposes. Anandamath was translated into English as The Abbey of Bliss by Naresh Chandra Sen-Gupta in 1906 and as Dawn over India in 1941 by Basanta Koomar Ray. For an account of the controversial differences between the two see Weickgennant Thiara, Ch. 4.  

Sarkar, p. 163. In Sudipta Kaviraj’s opinion, the ending of the novel in which British rule is presented as providentially determined goes against the ‘evidence of the historical reception’ of the novel and is influenced by the predicament of the Indian middle classes as dependent on the British for education and employment. See The Unhappy Consciousness:. Bankimchandra Chattopadhayay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 50.  


Rege locates this as a problem of imagining agency that involved re-defining action itself: the need for ‘an indigenously “Indian” call to action’ (p. 3).
Though Orwell's diagnosis of the Indian-English novel as a doomed form was patently inaccurate, his recognition of its inbuilt ambivalence as an aspiring national literature written in the language of the coloniser has been a continuing challenge for criticism. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar identifies its ‘most important’ novelists as Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Anand. These highly productive ‘founding fathers’ of the Indian-English novel simultaneously but in distinctive ways followed Bankim’s aims to write distinctively ‘Indian’ literature whilst also, particularly in the case of Anand, looking towards Europe, where Tagore had gained and lost a reputation through the translation of his work into English. All three writers considered English their own and used it strategically not as an ‘alien’ language but as ‘one of the Indian languages available to a politically engaged literature.

Aside from their use of English, these writers had in common a determination to represent peasant-subaltern groups, to trouble lines of division, be they of caste, class or colonialism, that, as Alterno observes, can be examined in their use of the figure of Gandhi and his campaigns for Swaraj (self-rule). As Harish Trivedi points out, in novels by British writers of the time, Gandhi is ‘entirely, conspicuously, and so

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207 Rao, ‘Foreward’, Kanthapura, p. v. Gandhi was opposed to the idea of English as a national language on the grounds that Hindi was the only possible common language for the masses. He nevertheless used English in his campaigns of ahimsa (non-violence) and satyagraha (passive resistance). See Young India, 18 June 1931, cited in Alterno, p. 67. In The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), Meenakshi Mukherjee discusses how English in India remains ‘a language of power and privilege’ (p. 171).
208 Alterno, pp. 59-88.
inexplicably absent’. Therefore, in reading Indian authors as international or even proto-postcolonial, we need to remember that the political coordinates that they put in place were directly opposed to those in Britain. In 1931, Dora Dennison Ross writes to her husband in India that Gandhi has behaved ‘shamefully’ in demanding complete independence. Despite this, he is invited to Buckingham Palace, where he is described as ‘in his usual garb … a not-too-clean loin cloth, shawl and sandals’. Such a representation of a popular and powerful Indian politician as childish and disobedient indicates the rhetoric Indian-English writing must counter in its use of the child.

The growth in confidence and urgency of Indian writing in English during the 1920s and 1930s occurred simultaneously with the ‘emergency’ of modernist art that questioned the secure foundations of the nation and the self. Writers from the colonies had to negotiate the reluctance of the metropolitan publishing industry and were usually forced to spread themselves thinly across media. Anand wrote journalistic pieces as well as broadcasting for the BBC during the 1930s and 40s, all the time aware of his embattled position as an ‘incomer’. For Anand, writing in English was strategic because he could not find a publisher for his work in Urdu, but it was also paramount for his project of creating an international literature that also

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211 Dora to Edward Dennison Ross, 6 Nov. 1931, Ross Collection, III, fol. 10.


addressed the plight of India in the 1930s. Anand’s figuration of the child addresses the position of the subaltern, forcing together as impossible siblings the child as a supplicant before Mother India and the child as the forger of a new nation that must make the most of colonial forms, but also move beyond them.

**TRANSCULTURE/TRANSGENRE**

The remit of this study is to navigate the awkwardness of the unequal comparison in which the British child, more specifically the British boy, is at the forefront of, and is a front for, an imperial project that relies upon India-as-child even as anti-colonial resistance mounts. To facilitate this analysis, writers as removed from each other as Kipling and Anand must occupy, at least briefly, the same critical space. The debate on how to measure infancy, maturity, and, therefore, historical time itself is one that has to be calibrated in a transcultural way in order that we do not fall into the trap of seeing Indian writing in English as secondary or derivative, coming as it does after the English curriculum had been road-tested in India. I do not wish to proffer cross-cultural relations as reconceptualising what Parry, Ahmed and Lazarus see as the unbridgeable chasm of colonial violence, but rather to suggest that, however challenging, situating the child between cultural spaces and figurations is more productive than looking at them separately. It also allows a calibrating of particularities in the recognition that, if we claim that our child is the ‘real’ child, we wrench the child from biological, cultural and historical determinants so that, in the reverse of our intentions, as Castañeda asserts, ‘the child becomes the global’. 214

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214 Castañeda, p. 106.
Similarly, in the case of genre, I place prominent canonical texts alongside lesser known or less appreciated ones. The Bildungsroman form to which both Kim and Untouchable owe something of their formal make-up, and which takes on a proto-feminist trajectory in Steel’s On the Face of the Waters, is indubitably harnessed to European imperialism because of its reliance on the subject active in a world of technological progress and capitalist economic growth. The apotheosis of imperial youth in Kim, Kipling’s kaleidoscopic ‘farewell’ to India, is repudiated by the tortuous subjectivity of the Indian worker in Anand’s socialist response to the disenchantment of European modernism. But the attachment to the child is retained and crafted into a political question. Jed Esty argues that the novel could not have arisen without colonialism and modernism could not maintain the equilibrium between self-building and nation-making that the Bildungsroman requires. It therefore seems imperative to examine the place of the child in genres other than the novel.

I turn to short stories, autobiographical texts and fairytales in order to avoid the impression of a clear narrative thread operative in the novel form that connects the diverse and contradictory discourses of childhood between the 1880s and the 1930s. According to Maurice Blanchot, novelistic narration ‘is already marked by an ideology to the extent that it assumes that the individual, with all his particular characteristics and his limits, is enough to express the world, that is to say it assumes that the course of the world remains that of the individual’. The heteroglossia of Kim and the global reach that has come to be associated with the Indian-English novel

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must therefore be appreciated alongside more obscure or forgotten instances where
growth is hindered or arrested in ‘small’ or insignificant texts. I compare texts whose
initial impact has led to their repeated re-imagining, primarily Kipling’s The Jungle
Books (1894), Kim (1901) and, to a lesser extent, Steel’s The Complete Indian
Housekeeper (1888), with those that have received less attention or have been
considered more monochrome or overly sentimental in their presentation of the child:
Kipling’s stories of the 1880s, Steel’s On the Face of the Waters (1896) and Anand’s
Seven Summers (1951) and memoir Conversations in Bloomsbury (1981). By reading
across each author’s oeuvre it is possible to see the unevenness in configurations
involving the child and to appreciate their reverberations between times and places.

Firstly, I consider Kipling’s ‘Indian period’ (from the mid-1880s to the publication of
Kim in 1901), which has, in large part, been responsible for the disagreements
between his defenders who appreciate its ‘electrifying’ inventions and detractors who
find his knowing imperialism hard to take.217 Beginning with early stories often
dismissed as ‘sentimental’ or ridiculous, I separate out the ingredients of the British
boy and trace how they reappear, often in unpredictable ways, in the rich India of his
later texts. The appeal of the imperial boy as a versatile broker of cultural compromise
is frustrated by the fixity of inheritance and breeding and the appeal of the primitive
and the animal that is also a challenge to growth. These factors are crucial to a
consideration of Kipling’s later rethinking of Britishness in world history, first from
inside the fairy ring in Puck of Pook’s Hill (1908) and Rewards and Fairies (1910),
then as part of a battered imperial consciousness following the First World War.

217 Charles Allen, Kipling Sahib: India and the Making of Rudyard Kipling (London: Little, Brown,
In Chapter 2, Flora Annie Steel’s writing provides a compelling contrast to Kipling’s position as ‘bard of empire’. Her epic novel of colonial intrigue, *On the Face of the Waters*, has fallen into literary no-mans land while her phlegmatic manual for British housekeeping in India was re-issued in 2010 in a glossy new edition. In relation to *The Complete Indian Housekeeper*, I look closely at both the British child and the figure of the Indian servant that operates both to extend familial structures outwards towards public ones and, being childlike, troubles the links between national and racial growth. I then consider the Indian storyteller in Steel’s *Wide-Awake Stories* and the division between the angelic child and the child at risk from degeneration in her Mutiny novel. The child across Steel’s writing is a necessary but often worrisome figure, side-lined in favour of the competent memsahib, who is at once a passionate imperialist and, arguably, a feminist.

Steel and Kipling’s rhetoric of colonial purpose is opposed by Mulk Raj Anand, the subject of Chapter 3. Anand’s texts shatter the crucible of British colonial education that has defined his cultural consciousness in order to negotiate Indian nationalism as requiring its own galvanizing literary artifacts. Anand considers how India’s past, whether stolen or concealed by colonialism, can be refigured through fractious literary forms associated with modernism. An idealist attachment to a Romantic-style child in the autobiographical *Seven Summers* is transformed in the vignettes of *Conversations in Bloomsbury* into an aesthetic position. In *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, the child becomes an estranged figure used to confront the challenges of socialist reform and anti-colonial nationalism. I propose that, by this point in the 1930s, the contours of the imperial boy have been broken as incipient nations begin to make inroads into
Western literature and culture. As Bell declares: ‘Rather than modernism being reluctantly disturbed by an incipient late-colonial conscience, although that is part of it, modernism was itself the means for a diagnostic understanding of the colonial mentality’. 

In the work of the three writers I discuss, the child is a colonial contact zone that, in one moment, breaks the threads that bind the nation and, in another, knots them back together. The structures of nation, race and gender that I uncover through the child are never completely visible and certainly not commensurable with each other or containable, however capacious or versatile a text may be. Linking discourses that speak of the child with colonial political and cultural formations that bring the child into play in order to strengthen their own narratives means being aware that neither is ‘for’ the child, but both can and do use the child as their origin and their driving purpose.

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218 I refer here to Edward Said’s notion of the ‘Voyage In’ made by colonial writers. See Culture and Imperialism, pp. 288-315.
Chapter 1

Sweet and Versatile: the child in
Kipling’s Indian fiction

This chapter scrutinises the figure of the ‘imperial boy’ in Kipling’s oeuvre, focussing on his role in conflicted colonial rhetoric and in imagining Britain’s post- or neo-colonial future. Don Randall contends that protagonists like Mowgli and Kim are ‘literary figures whose fictional deployments articulate a Eurocentric and imperial world-view’ but nevertheless ‘represent sites of contingency […] in between formations of the subject encoded as “European, imperial” and “non-European colonial”’.¹ Such a liminal rendering of the boy is of crucial importance in analysing the changeable forms of Kipling’s texts: at once bristling with imperial confidence and attentive to the worries and depressions that characterised the late nineteenth-century British imperial mindset, they do not produce an easy child.

This said, we must also recognise that the imperial boy does not walk alone as the only child in Kipling’s corpus. This chapter proposes that he cannot be interpreted as conforming to accepted models of child development or as the triumphant sum of earlier, or ostensibly simpler, forms of the child. This is particularly pertinent because of the link between the child and national or racial growth during a period of colonial anxiety that denies to India the metaphor of adolescence as a gateway to the adult state of ‘civilisation’ that the British Empire is struggling to claim as its own.

¹ Randall, Kipling’s Imperial Boy, p. 3.
I therefore examine the imperial boy both in conjunction with Kipling’s other children and the ‘others’ they are metaphorically fastened to. I view this limpid figure through the ‘lens’ of the child to explore how the boy as a ‘culturally hybrid mediator of imperial power’ in *The Jungle Books* (1894) and *Kim* (1901), that have frequently been read as the pinnacle of Kipling’s achievement, relates to the lisping British infants, fated native children, and working-class heroes of his early fiction. My intention is not to deny the complexity and comprehensiveness of these admired works. However, I do question Randall’s designation of the boy as ‘a figure forged to enable a coherent envisioning of the relationship between British subjectivity and the British imperial project.’ I do so because approaching Mowgli and Kim as linchpins between Britain and India, strength and weakness, risks interpreting culture and empire as analogous to child development, despite Randall’s carefully anti-essentialist analysis of colonial subjectivities. This paradox has a wider implication, for if the imperial boy is the vital but vulnerable link between coloniser and colonised, the liminality of adolescence may be read as having to be followed by a more ‘grown-up’ literature in a way that anticipates and legitimates postcolonial re-readings of Kipling.

In order to define the imperial boy, Randall brings postcolonial theory’s interest in hybridity in colonial and postcolonial texts to a moment in Anglo-India that David Gilmour calls the ‘Empire’s zenith’. Gilmour delineates Kipling’s political life: ‘his early role as apostle of the Empire, the embodiment of imperial aspiration, and his later one as the prophet of national decline.’ In this story of public and poetic

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2 Randall, p. 88.
5 Gilmour, p. x.
disillusion we might expect the powers of the imperial boy to wane. However, the shaking up of colonial patterns that he performs has become a prominent attraction of Kipling’s work, surviving the disintegration of his imperial ideal precisely because this boy is associated with the multiple articulations of global literature and cosmopolitanism.

Taking onboard Laura Chrisman’s point that it is important to resist proposing a clean break between colonial and postcolonial discourses, I suggest that the imperial boy’s survival is enabled by a construction of the child and/or the nation that may be hybrid and unsettling but is still always ‘just there’. Chrisman calls for a shift away from ‘images/allegories/tropes’ as signifying others to the analysis of ‘contradictory formal dynamics and ideological codes which produce certain forms of Othering but are not reducible to it’. My approach aims to make this move through a comparative approach to Kipling’s texts. I focus upon the child as a phenomenon that, although represented as ahistorical, natural and linguistically transparent, is premised upon ‘systems of purpose’ driven by the need for knowledge. In this case, the child is ‘discovered’ in order to satisfy the material and cultural desires of British colonialism, to produce what Lesnik-Oberstein calls ‘beliefs expressed as knowledge’.

The boy epitomised by Kim as ‘Little Friend of All the World’ has his origins in the very forms that he challenges, namely the emphasis on breeding and national character exemplified in late nineteenth-century adventure fiction and scientific and medical discourse. He depends upon the opposing ideas of the child that I defined in

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7 Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children’s Literature* p. 17.
the Introduction: the constant child of ahistorical insight and the growing child of potential and promise. The ‘trope’, to use Ashcroft’s term, or the ‘metaphor’, to use Jameson’s, of the child appears through seemingly obvious but frequently unpredictable or opaque textual strategies that, taken together, amount to what Sara Suleri calls the ‘rhetoric’ of British India. Focussing on the ambiguities of the boy alone does not, therefore, elucidate the desires he satisfies or the categorisations that he challenges, nor can he be expected to contain the restless bulk of colonial ideology. As Sue Walsh argues, where Mowgli is ‘a potential source of trouble’ for the process of classifying and categorising, his being animal/human, child/adult, British/Indian are just some of the ways that the text disturbs these differentiations, questioning whether they can ever be clearly drawn.⁹

In order to circumvent the pull towards postcolonial knowingness that the imperial boy is involved in, I look to Rooney and Nagai’s recognition that ‘a need for closure’ as regards to ‘the unspeakable aspects of colonial rule’ vies in critical appreciation of Kipling with ‘possibilities set in motion by imperial history that may have hardly begun to realise themselves’.¹⁰ I concentrate upon the child’s ability to represent the potential or promised development of the colonial nation and/or its colonised population, as opposed to childhood as signifying a stage that will inevitably be passed through. While the imperial boy has much to offer postcolonial approaches to Kipling, it is important to recognise his reliance on an unquestioned idea of the child as natural, curious or innocent that, in its very versatility, may be read as supporting

⁹ Walsh, Kipling’s Children’s Literature, p. 52.
what Satya P. Mohanty calls ‘relations of rule, deeply ingrained habits, attitudes, even images of self and world, [which] pervade our own current social practices’.11

Critical assessments of Kipling’s work that rely on a developmental model view the sentimentality or simplicity attached to children and animals in the early Anglo-Indian stories as trivialities to be skipped over on the way to the culture-confusing virtuosity of the imperial boy. David Trotter suggests that in a number of the early stories there is ‘not much vitality’,12 while Jan Montefiore comments that the psychic struggles of George in ‘The Brushwood Boy’ (The Days Work, 1898) take ‘a boringly unthreatening form’.13 In my analysis of stories that have been deemed inconsequential, or even ridiculous, I question this idea of the simple or sentimental child as easily comprehensible by considering how it contrasts with, but also paradoxically enables, the richness that critics have found in the tales of Mowgli and Kim.

A parallel negotiation of growth from simple to increasingly complex forms happens when locating Kipling’s work as of, but soon surpassing, the tradition of Anglo-Indian literature. In a review of Kipling’s early short stories, Andrew Lang was captivated: ‘Mr Kipling is a new writer, or a writer new to the English as distinct from the Anglo-Indian public. He is so clever, so fresh, and so cynical that he must be young’.14 Youth

14 Andrew Lang, unsigned review of In Black and White and Under the Deodars, Saturday Review, 10 August 1889, pp. 165-6, repr. in Kipling: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge, 1971), ed. by Roger Lancelyn Green, pp. 44-46 (p. 46). Lang was recommending the six Wheeler’s Railway Library series booklets that later made up the collection Wee Willie Winkie for publication in England. From 1882 to 1887 Kipling worked as a staff writer on the Civil and Military Gazette. In 1887 he moved to
and novelty are used to define Anglo-India as a site of literary production that is able to offer a ripening insight into the cultures and structures of the Empire whilst retaining the exoticism of Orientalist fantasy. However, as B.J. Moore-Gilbert asserts, what seemed outrageous in London was often routine in Anglo-India. Kipling’s work received more muted reviews in this somewhat insular community with a literary tradition that Moore-Gilbert calls ‘a minor one’ but that increasingly expressed a sense of a separate political and cultural identity and ‘a vision of the metropolis as “other”’.

Anglo-Indian literature sways between imperial romance and the man-making narratives that Kipling discovered in reading old newspaper files: ‘men sang of just the same subjects as we did — of heat, loneliness, love, lack of promotion, poverty, sport and war’. This contextual detail does not explain the ‘Good stuff and Bad’ in Kipling, returning us to J.M. Barrie’s bemused response to the difficulty of his literary genealogy: ‘He owes nothing to any other writer. No one helped to form him’. This said, it is important to acknowledge that the texts I concentrate on in this chapter, the story collections Plain Tales from the Hills and Wee Willie Winkie (both published in 1888), The Jungle Books (1894) and Kim (1901), do come to us out of this Anglo-Indian milieu, though they may mix with many literatures and versions of the child along the way.

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The Pioneer for which he wrote numerous stories and the travel sketches ‘Letters of Marque’, later collected in From Sea to Sea (1900).


16 Moore-Gilbert, Kipling, p. 7.


18 This is the title of a review of In Black and White and The Story of the Gadsbys by Charles Whibley in the Scots Observer, 20 September 1890, repr. in The Critical Heritage, ed. by Green, pp. 59-62.

Before looking in more detail at the relation of Kim and Mowgli to Kipling’s earlier child protagonists, I would like to give a brief overview of what happened to the imperial boy when Kipling turned his attention away from India. While moulding Mowgli and Kim, Kipling took up residence in America, frequently travelled to South Africa and continued a large output of imperial verse, making him a proudly British and an ambitiously international writer. Following the Oriental panorama of *Kim*, his ‘last word on India’, and the family’s move to Sussex in 1897, his attention turned towards a British landscape saturated with the stories of older empires that we find in the later ‘children’s’ books, *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). Rural England, diminished by lack of income and loss of its population to the cities that Rider Haggard described as ‘the ominous migration of the blood and sinew of the race’, is revivified in the Puck books through ‘the truth whereby the Nations live’. Kipling described *Puck* as ‘a sort of balance to, as well as a seal upon, some aspects of my “Imperialistic” output in the past’, suggesting that the need for ‘the overlaid tints and textures’ was specific to an early twentieth-century England that took its lessons best from the child: ‘the tales had to be read by children before people realised that they were meant for grown-ups’.

Dan and Una in the Puck books express awed interest in the world as Kim and Mowgli do. However, they are not inventive, acting their own ‘small play’ but obedient to Puck as his potentially fruitful audience. As Diane Purkiss points out,

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20 Kipling did not live in India again after his move to London in 1890. Recent critical interest has focussed on Kipling as an international writer, as evidenced by work presented at the ‘Rudyard Kipling: An International Writer’ Conference at The University of London, 21-22 October 2011, abstracts are listed at http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_londonconf.htm [accessed 1 April 2013].
‘Una and Dan are tame’. The seriousness beneath even the most outlandish tales in the Puck books finds a geographical articulation in their focus on an idyllic British landscape that was perceived to be under threat. In *Rural England* (1902) Haggard sees Britain as potentially marginal to her own empire: ‘some parts of England are becoming almost as lonesome as the veld of Africa. […] If unchecked, it may in the end mean the ruin of the race.’ For Haggard, the economic shift towards urban capital has precipitated the physical and mental weakness that British troops, ‘town-reared men’, were accused of during the Boer war. He asks, ‘should not rural England have the same benefit of the experimental investment of money as is freely granted to savage Africa?’

This is not simply a matter of Britain remaining a strong imperial centre but one that decides, through production and education as tenets of ‘civilisation’, the biology and psychology of her future inhabitants: ‘the national temperament is undergoing modification’. The falling numbers of children that Haggard admires going to village schools are the same ideal children that Kipling’s Puck books present, brought up ‘to appreciate natural things’ rather than ‘the artificial joys’ of civilised but ‘pleasure-seeking’ man. Learning to love nature and therefore protect England happens in the Puck books through myth, folklore and historiography as methods of establishing the British nation as prior to, and therefore continuing beyond, its empire:

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26 Haggard, pp. 540-41.
27 Haggard, p. 568.
28 Haggard, p. 558.
29 Haggard, p. 568.
30 Haggard, p. 568.
“That is the sorcery of books”, said Puck. “I warned thee they were wise children. All people can be wise by reading books”’.

The difficulty of negotiating a ‘new’ Englishness for late-imperial times led both Haggard and Kipling to predict the disintegration of masculinity and Britishness in the crisis of ‘high civilisation’ brought by World War I. In Kipling’s writing the children who previously were educated by visions of empires past become tragic, unnerving or eerie visions themselves, to the extent that, in ‘Mary Postgate’ (1915) and ‘The Gardener’ (1925), we encounter what David Bradshaw calls the ‘symbolic cremation of British youth’. The child in these later tales is not the fleet-footed explorer of foreign lands: both Joseph Bristow’s ‘empire boy’ and the imperial boy have become just footnotes that invoke the child as a forecaster of pain. In ‘The Gardener’, the young boy Michael tells Helen, whom he believes is his aunt but is revealed as his mother, “‘I’ll hurt you as long as I live’” and “‘when I’m dead I’ll hurt you worse’”. The child foretells his own death although the story does not centre on the ‘many, almost children’ that Kipling eulogises in The Irish Guards in the Great War (1923). Instead it is the suffering and transformation of the woman living ‘some sort of second life’ that the narrative traces.

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31 Puck, p. 100. This notion of rescuing the child through a combination of nature and literature operates in many children’s text of the Edwardian period, a prime example being Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden (1911).
32 Haggard, p. 575.
36 Debits and Credits, p. 283.
I am suggesting that reading the child across Kipling’s oeuvre, not necessarily chronologically but with an attention to the appeal of teleology, facilitates a fresh consideration of the changes that took place between the heyday of the adventurous boy in the 1880s and the crushing of confidence that war brought. More broadly, considering the incursions and digressions taken by the child in Kipling’s work as it contributes to the sedimented representations of India in English literature may also yield insights into how the barbed encounters of colonialism resist being transformed into the cosmopolitan worlds that Rooney and Nagai suggest cannot force the closure of ‘the pathologies of imperial melancholia’.37

My argument proceeds by pinpointing the inextricable and often defiant connection between the child, childhood and India in Kipling’s early poetry and journalism in order to inform an analysis of his early stories. While the containment of childhood within the domestic in the ‘Simla tales’ fails to produce the imperial boy, they carry a sense that to allow too much derring-do at the expense of dutiful work would risk removing the gravitas from the metaphor of the native as a child in need of both care and discipline. The child as connected to what is primitive or alien is a recurrent shadow in these texts as India produces grief or frustration in her British inhabitants. I explore how apparently sweet and emotional stories like ‘His Majesty the King’ and tragic and truncated ones exemplified by ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’ might be read as gestures towards both the prowess and the discontinuities of the imperial boy as they make connections between the child and structures of race, gender and class in an Anglo-Indian society that, as Kipling’s reputation grew, was repackaged and directed towards an eager metropolitan public.

37 Rooney and Nagai, p. 11.
Subsequently, I approach the *The Jungle Books* as not necessarily an allegory of British India, but rather as texts in which the shifting categories of human and animal, age and race are embedded in a linguistically challenging idea of the child and of India. Lastly, my discussion of *Kim* highlights the triangulation of child, race and nation that all these texts contain to enquire what kind of Britishness can be said to have seeded itself in the soil of empire before the imperial boy is called upon to fight in the fields of Europe.

**THE CHILD AS HOOK AND ANCHOR**

Charles Allen presents Kipling as something of a magpie writer gleaning shiny details from the Anglo-Indian experience defined first by the childhood that ‘charged his imagination’ and then by his seven years as a journalist. Many of Kipling’s stories begin with an epigraph or introductory verse that might be described as the germ of an idea prepared to ‘hook’ readers into tales in which the child and childhood are the subject of precious insights. However, the epigraphs do not always ‘fit’ with the stories that follow:

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God’s mercy is upon the young
God’s wisdom in the baby tongue
That fears not anything.  
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‘Tods’ Amendment’, to which this verse is attached, does locate wisdom in a small boy’s words, however it is that of the native marketplace, which is also associated with suspicion and intrigue, leaving open questions over whether fearing nothing is a positive stance and over how exactly the child is connected with his most familiar environment, native India.

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39 ‘Tod’s Amendment’, *Plain Tales*, p. 179.
In Black and White (1888) extends this disingenuous connection between the child and the native: the Introduction is written by ‘Kadir Baksh, Khitmutgar’ and details how a book about ‘black men – common people’ has been written by a Sahib who ‘is my father and my mother’. The servant records that he has ordered pages that he cannot decipher but that are given import by his belief that ‘such is the wisdom of the Sahib-log that, upon opening this thing, they will instantly discover the purport’. The teller puts himself in the position of a child in a great imperial family by drawing on the paternalist mode of imperialism. Kipling also plays upon the fictional status of these relations by bringing animals into the family circle in the Preface to The Jungle Book. The ‘Editor’ acknowledges a debt to ‘Bahadur Shah, baggage elephant no. 174’ for the history behind the tales ‘Toomai of the Elephants’ and ‘Servants of the Queen’ as well as proclaiming his gratitude towards a porcupine, a wolf, a bear and a mongoose described in terms that include ‘savant’ and ‘fellow-voyager’. Such an ironic presentation of authenticity both asserts the transparency and truth of children, Indians and animals and merges these identities through an attention-seeking artifice within and between text and paratext that denies that authenticity is possible.

The servant’s narrative is proffered as unmediated, for it falls literally from the sky in the manner of scriptures that Johannes Fabian associates with ‘sacred Time’: ‘even as

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40 Kipling, Soldiers Three and In Black and White (1888; London: Penguin, 1993), p. 93. Steel describes the khitmutgar as having responsibility for waiting at table, serving breakfast and small meals, washing up and cleaning the pantry. According to Steel his ‘slovenly habits’ must be kept in check: ‘He should not say the kettle is boiling when it is not. This is an inexcusable offence, but universal’. See Flora Annie Steel, The Complete Indian Housekeeper, ed. by Ralph Crane and Anna Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 82-3.
41 Soldiers Three and In Black and White, p. 94.
I picked the pages one by one with great trouble from the floor, when the *Sahib* had
gone to bed, so have they been placed: and there is not a fault in the whole account.43
However, these paratexts — Tod’s ‘baby tongue’, the worldly knowledge of animals
and the ‘claim to honour’ of Kadir Baksh — are not to be accepted as gospel, but to
be read in tension with the narratives that follow them. They may even be regarded as
directing the reader away from the desire to fix what is simple, primitive or prior in
relation to the present. It goes unacknowledged in the Introduction that the stories
contained in *In Black and White* include ‘On the City Wall’, in which even docile
Indians are caught up in a violent uprising. This may lead us to consider whether what
Salman Rushdie calls ‘experiments in voice’,44 so prominent in the paratexts, not only
provide diversity but contribute to what Francis Hutchins calls ‘the illusion of
permanence’.45 The epigraphs ensure that we are primed for what Benita Parry calls
‘the idiom of grateful dependence from villagers and servants’ within the stories.46
However, in their wealth of detail and proud fictionality, they are ‘strangely
impenetrable’, often not preparing us for the violent assault of the tales themselves.47
Along with Kipling’s use of ready-made ‘childish’ forms, from nursery rhymes to
fairytales, these paratexts highlight the problem that the clarity produced by the child,
the colonised subject or the animal as a narrative perspective can also be a form of
obscurity.

43 Fabian, *Time*, pp. 13-16; *Soldiers Three and In Black and White*, p. 94. According to Fabian’s
argument, this mode of time is relinquished in favour of the post-Darwinian model of ‘spatialized time’
needed to classify the multiple human and non-human data of the world in terms of distance from each
other.
44 Salman Rushdie, ‘Introduction’, *Soldiers Three and In Black and White*, p. x. Rushdie refers to
Kipling’s determination to render the Cockney, Irish or Northern speech of ‘the ordinary British
soldier’.
45 Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence*. Parry extends Hutchins’s formulation to claim that a
knowledge and a fear of alternative utterances in ‘On the City Wall’ impels a ‘pre-emptive reply to
Indian opposition’ in which a dialogue with resistance is gestured towards even when these voices are
129.
46 Parry, *Postcolonial Studies*, p. 129.
In ‘Nursery Rhymes for Little Anglo-Indians’, privately published in *Echoes* (1884), the simple rhyming form involves the child in a brutal, if unsubtle, parody that is the polar opposite of Kadir Baksh’s devotion to colonial ‘scripture’:

Hush-a-by, Baby,  
In the varandah!  
When the sun drops  
Baby may wander.

When the hot weather comes  
Baby will die —  
With a fine *pukka* tomb  
In the ce-me-te-ry.\(^{48}\)

The sharp flippancy of these verses is exceeded only by those on married life in a collection published while Kipling was enduring a long, feverish summer in Lahore.\(^{49}\)

The parodies continue like stepping stones across the hardships of Anglo-Indian life:

Jack’s own Jill goes up to the Hill  
Of Murree or Chakrata.  
Jack remains, and dies in the plains,  
And Jill remarryes soon arter. [sic]

The use of Indian words and places suggests that these verses were deliberately for the jaded ear of an Anglo-Indian readership. The term *pukka* references the ‘Anglo-Indian patois’ that had grown sufficiently complex to require its own dictionaries; in 1886 Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell’s “*Hobson-Jobson*: A *Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Kindred Terms*” was published to which many of Kipling’s own phrases were later added.\(^ {50}\) The dictionary delights in rhyming words and puns,
liberally using the Kiplingesque tactic of making anecdote read like authority. Rather than being a purely utilitarian effort it seems designed to be taken up as a curiosity. Similarly, the poem above uses the familiar children’s characters and the colloquial wink in ‘Jack’s own’ to pitch the text on a knife-edge between humour and cynicism, drawing even a reader unfamiliar with Anglo-India into its orbit.

_Echoes_ failed to impress in India, while it was considered ‘clever’ by the small British readership Kipling had in Britain. The enforced rhythm of ‘ce-me-te-ry’ and the hasty linking of ‘remains’ and ‘plains’ across ‘dies’ in the excerpt above gives Jill’s final line a blow that is perhaps too jauntily close to the bone in a community where ‘a discourse of family sacrifice’ circled around infant mortality as well as familial separation. Kipling’s first commercially published work, _Departmental Ditties_ (1885), is similar in its moods but finished with more finesse. In ‘My First Book’, he recalls the first edition as ‘a sort of book’ wrapped in brown paper and tied with red tape like a government document. By disguising his ‘unmanneredly’ verses as administrative papers Kipling puts his own spin on Lang’s recognition of the writer as an outsider able to see the real, secret India beneath the official cover. The irreverent Kipling of this period sells himself as ‘a journalist unkempt and inky’ who possesses

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52 Allen, _Kipling Sahib_, p. 167.

53 Buettner, _Empire Families_, p. 112. Buettner shows that later accounts of Raj life drew extensively on Kipling’s own writing about childhood, making his life and work a nostalgic resource (p. 122).

something of the freedom and enthusiasm looked for by adults in children, as well as an ‘unofficial’ sense of truth and fun.\textsuperscript{55}

In the examples I have considered, Kipling anticipates his critics by making the manly importance of empire stoop to the whims of a youthful author. As we will see, the child he proposes, both as a disruptive way of seeing India and as a means of promoting Britain, is a means of exploiting the amassed resources of empire for comedy, curiosity, development or enlightenment. Although they often rely upon provocative detail, Kipling’s texts do not use the child only to hook our interest but also to provide an imaginative anchor in a period of anxiety over the nation’s youth that came to a head during the unexpectedly lengthy and difficult second Boer War (1899 to 1902). This emphasis is already visible in stories such as ‘Wee Willie Winkie’, which focus on the intelligence and physical ability of the British boy.\textsuperscript{56}

With the burgeoning imperial mood, Kipling’s persona became synonymous with a masculine tune of imperialism that for Indian writers emerging out of the colonial education system was almost impossible to drown out, as I discuss in Chapter 3. This phenomenon intersects with readings that produce Kipling and India as inseparable: the exotic fact-from-fiction India of his popular works ‘becomes the reality of India

\textsuperscript{55} Inscription in a copy of \textit{Wee Willie Winkie} presented to Mrs Edmonia Hill, repr. in \textit{Early Verse} ed. by Rutherford, p. 457. Kipling signs off as ‘Wee Willie Winkie’.

\textsuperscript{56} Anna Davin shows that the connection between the requirements of empire and healthy children had been made earlier in the century but the discovery of the poor physical condition of working-class recruits provided the impetus for a raft of social reforms including the school medical inspection services and compulsory physical education. See ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, in \textit{Patriotism: the Making and Unmaking of British National Identity}, 3 vols., ed. by Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989), I, pp. 124-42.
and becomes, after the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy, the explanation and the cause of the Kipling who writes that India."\(^57\)

Reading the child in such a circular situation cannot be straightforward and requires holding opposite Indias and opposite ideas of the child up to face each other, as Kipling’s own texts do in the disjunction between epigraphs and tales. India and childhood are in some way equivalent: absorbing but disturbing, changeable but magnetic:

> Flying-fish about our bows,  
> Flying sea-fires in our wake:  
> This is the road to our Father’s House,  
> Whither we go for our soul’s sake!

> We have forefeited our birthright,  
> We have forsaken all things meet;  
> We have forgotten the look of light,  
> We have forgotten the scent of heat.\(^58\)

In ‘The Song of the Wise Children’ (1902), both India and childhood are alive as times and spaces of happiness and freedom that it is possible to re-experience. Again the momentum of sea travel is imagined through flying, which may reference the British flag over an India which, rather than being an outpost of empire, is the source of her strength. As J.R. Seeley fervently argued, India was the measure of Britain’s greater-ness and giving her up would (and did) amount to the end of the British Empire. The poem continues:

> We shall go back by the boltless doors,  
> To the life unaltered our childhood knew –

\(^{57}\) Walsh, *Kipling’s Children’s Literature*, p. 78. Walsh is referring to Kutzer’s *Empire’s Children*, which includes the assertion: ‘that such a country spawned as contradictory and at times confounding writer as Kipling is not surprising,’ (p. 14).

To the naked feet on the cool, dark floors,
And the high-ceilinged rooms that the Trade blows
Through

The urgency to recapture the ‘life unaltered’ sets up a sharp contrast between India as a ‘shining land’ of freedom and England as requiring vigilance against the destruction imagined in ‘Recessional’ (1899): ‘Far-called our navies melt away: | On dune and headland sinks the fire: | Lo, all our pomp of yesterday | Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!’. 59 While this patriotic inquisition was written for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, the narrator of ‘Song of the Wise Children’ appeals to the Anglo-Indian community with ‘They shall receive us and understand’ and concludes ‘When we return to our Father’s house | Only the English shall wonder why’. The future tense of the poem picks out India as a dreamland whose ‘year by year’ hardships are easily wished away. India’s sensuality, which we might also read as her economic and political value, is the prize for the unremitting heat, boredom and banality of Kipling’s work-a-day empire. The concern articulated in ‘Recessional’ is with a weakening masculinity and the stirrings of political resistance cloudily represented as ‘India’s malignant power’. 60 It is between these imperial vectors of constancy and growth, triviality and seriousness that the child must be read.

PLAIN TALES AND ‘SMALL BOOKS’: KIPLING’S EARLY STORIES

The majority of the stories collected in Plain Tales from the Hills and Wee Willie Winkie were first published as ‘turn-overs’, short fictional pieces introduced after Kipling fought for fiction to be added to the Civil and Military Gazette. Wee Willie Winkie brought together three of the books Kipling had published in the Indian

Railway Library Series. In these pamphlet-style texts, the stories were collected into ‘types’ to be read by train passengers. The ‘mordant vignettes’ of Anglo-Indian life in the initial volume, *Under the Deodors*, were to be read alongside the imperial gothic tales of *The Phantom Rickshaw* and the four stories ‘of children’ in *Wee Willie Winkie* in order to offer a cross-section of British India, ‘genre by genre and style by style’. The advertisement in the first edition of *Wee Willie Winkie* describes the other works in the series: ‘illustrations of the four main features of Anglo-Indian life, viz., the Military, Domestic, Native and Social.’

The cover shows a young boy in army uniform facing away from the viewer while armed, elaborately turbaned, and bearded tribesmen stand pensively over him. In the corner is an elephant.

Both collections were revised for publication in Britain in 1890 and were greeted with surprise and appreciation. *Plain Tales* was received as a pertinent intervention in the metropolitan image of Anglo-Indian society as being dull aside from ‘the seamy side of Anglo-Indian life’. Like *Departmental Ditties*, the short stories were valued for their apparent veracity to a ‘curious little world’, as well as their artistry. Lang wrote of the new ‘literary star’:

> At last there comes an Englishman with eyes, with a pen extraordinarily deft, an observation marvellously rapid and keen; and, by good luck, this Englishman has no official duties: he is neither a soldier, nor a judge; he is merely a man of letters. He has leisure to look around him, he has the power of making us see what he sees; and, when we have lost India, when some new power is ruling where we

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61 These contained the majority of the tales that Kipling wrote for the *Week’s News*, the weekly supplement of *The Pioneer*, the *Gazette’s* sister-paper. *The Pioneer* gave permission for the re-publication of the stories and supported the young writer in leaving for England to further his career.


64 Andrew Lang, ‘Mr Kipling’s Stories’ in *Essays in Little* (London, 1891), pp. 198-205, repr. in *Kipling and the Critics*, ed. by Elliot L. Gilbert (London: Peter Owen, 1965), pp.1-6 ( p. 3).

ruled [...] future generations will learn from Mr Kipling’s works what India was under English sway.\(^{66}\)

The impression that the writer whom Henry James called ‘an infant monster’ had appeared fortuitously to serve up India for a hungry home readership marks the juncture where the appetite for fantasy and adventure meets the requirement for knowledge that will secure Britain’s imperial future.\(^{67}\) There is a sense that, because British readers are ‘seeing’ India in Kipling’s work, they are again in possession of her.\(^{68}\) India is positioned as the child and Lang’s conviction that the British Empire, like the Roman Empire imagined as its forerunner, would come to an end imposes a developmental model on the colonial nation, making his intervention an historical as well as a literary one. The impulse to read Kipling’s work as an historical or ethnographic resource makes colonial subjectivity, anchored in the child who moves between the ‘two separate sides of my head’, the prime site of the colonial nation.\(^{69}\)

In Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space, John McBratney argues that criticism must pay attention to ‘the extra-textual, material conditions that shape discourse and are shaped by it in turn.’\(^{70}\) I have detailed the publication history and reception of these texts in order to suggest that the enforced brevity of the short story, particularly when in a newspaper column, means that the child and his relation to the nation must be swiftly and deftly defined. As reviews of Kipling’s early work show, partly because the

\(^{66}\) Lang in Kipling, ed. by Gilbert, pp.1-2.
\(^{68}\) This link between empire and nostalgia became more prominent after Indian independence, particularly with the ‘Raj revival’ of the 1980s that included the 1984 TV series adapted from Paul Scott’s The Jewel in the Crown (1966) and David Lean’s adaptation of E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India (1924) in the same year.
\(^{70}\) McBratney, p.xxiii.
stories were sold as suitable for journeys and spare moments, they were accepted as
the entertaining output of ‘a bright, clever and versatile writer who knows he has
captured the public taste’, but is yet to produce a novel. They therefore are not
expected to provide a comprehensive account of the imperial boy or the Indian child.

The child as formed from a series of instances in the early stories is part of Sara
Suleri’s theorisation of an ambivalent and insistent textuality of power that reaches its
apotheosis in Kim: ‘once colonial adolescence has reached its crisis, there can be no
transition into a comforting myth of “growing up” or an attainment of maturity’. Rather than this being a problem for these quick-hitting early texts in the way that it
could be said to be in Kim, their circularity indicates that development is not a central
issue for these boy protagonists who are not the heroes of empire or even in
possession of all the raw ingredients of the imperial boy. For one thing, these boys
have clear boundaries that they sometimes approach but rarely cross. The child in
‘Wee Willie Winkie’, for instance, is introduced thus:

His father was Colonel of the 195th, and soon as Wee Willie Winkie was old
enough to understand what Military Discipline meant, Colonel Williams put him
under it. There was no other way of managing the child.

The Tommies that are allied with the child here and in ‘The Drums of the Fore and
Aft’ are also raw recruits subjected to discipline by the educated officers, indicating
that class difference is as unassailable as the division between adult and child and
contributes to an easily digestible map of Anglo-Indian life. The potential for
subversion is limited for boys whose alliances include soldiers of various ranks and

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71 Anonymous article in The Times, 25 March 1890, repr. in The Critical Heritage, ed. by Green, pp. 51-54 (p. 54).
73 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 249.
servants but do not encompass all races, religions, castes and classes, as Kim’s do. Their function seems more to secure the weak spots in the imperial fabric and to do so from a position of safety.

These are ‘Simla tales’ centred in a parochial society and as keen to exploit its sentimental preoccupations as Kipling’s more satirical tales skewer its absurdities. Of these child-stories, only ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ with its English setting and interiorised horrors, enables the affective pull of the child to combine with the ingenuity born of familial separation that later becomes necessary to the imperial boy as he survives in an alien landscape. Punch, whose England never becomes the comfortable second skin that Mowgli finds in his jungle and Kim in his India, has a linguistic ability neither the Simla boys nor the ordinary Tommies possess. Experiencing his adventures through books, the story of Punch implies that the child must engage in communication or translation to overcome threats or impediments in order to drive forward the narrative of empire beyond the local concerns of British India. Lang defined Kipling’s children as providing refreshing ‘sentiment’, while his ‘native tales’ were those where he could be sure of ‘certainty in his effects’. I now turn to an example in which the British child is imagined as an Indian ruler and another in which working-class boys restore Britain’s military might. I suggest that considering how these apparently straightforward early fictions compose the child and the colonial subject can enable a fuller appreciation of the dynamics between child and empire in the canonical later texts.

74 Lang in Kipling, ed. by Gilbert, p. 6.
RULERS AND MASCOTS: ‘HIS MAJESTY THE KING’ AND ‘THE DRUMS’

In ‘His Majesty the King’ the six-year-old Toby defines his nursery as his ‘territories’:

At the door of the nursery his authority stopped. Beyond lay the empire of his father and mother — two very terrible people who had no time to waste upon His Majesty the King. His voice was lowered when he passed the frontier of his own dominions, his actions were fettered, and his soul was filled with awe because of the grim man who lived among a wilderness of pigeon-holes and the most fascinating pieces of red tape and the wonderful woman who was always getting into or stepping out of a big carriage.75

The child’s situation both mimics the status of his parents and that of a native ruler. He has authority over Indian servants because he is a sahib but he has power because he is a ‘king’. However, the serious work of empire takes place outside his territory. The father is associated with an ironically exotic landscape of administration, while the mother takes on the ‘wonderful’ inaccessibility of a native queen, recalling what Ania Loomba calls ‘a recurrent colonial fantasy […] whose wealth testifies to the riches of the “Orient” and whose gender renders those riches vulnerable to the European self’.76 The mother’s extra-marital affair drives the story’s plot, in which Toby develops a fascination with the ‘parkle cwown’ meant as a present from her lover and intercepts the gift.77 Toby also sees his father’s red tape as ‘fascinating’, suggesting that, in crossing the frontier, he will breach the child/adult divide and take over, in Oedipal fashion, the father’s Kingdom.

75 Wee Willie Winkie, pp. 289-90.
77 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 296.
Whether read as a potential empire-builder or a native prince, Toby’s attitude to his parents is one of awe and wonder, and theirs to him is first neglect then guilt. Highlighting the way this structure of guilt and appeasement works in the family, Lockwood Kipling writes that he and his wife are ‘willing slaves to our small emperors, feeling that the best we can given them is but poor compensation for the loss of their birthright’. In ‘His Majesty the King’, when ‘the flush of possession and secret delight’ dies away, Toby becomes seriously ill, a crisis that results in his mother’s affair and her husband’s neglect of his family being revealed, followed by the reconciliation of child and parents and the restoration of the family circle according to Lockwood Kipling’s expectations.

The lack of satisfaction achieved by Toby’s ‘secret delight’ in the role of desirous native ruler suggests a need for public recognition that can be read in relation to the imperial pomp that Thomas Metcalf identifies as a feature of the late Raj. The imperial Durbar ‘gave a visible, institutional shape to the late nineteenth century ideology of difference’ and the British sought to define their rule in Indian terms by placating native Princes in theatrical style. An Indian Maharajah and his son, who model themselves on English gentlemen, are described in Letters of Marque (1891), based on Kipling’s travels in Rajasthan and Bengal. The piece shows just how tempting it was to read Indian royalty in British class terms and to interpret the child as a figure whose miniaturisation of colonial forms allows both parody and a mutual appreciation between ruler and ruled. The Maharaja’s son has a lisp, as Toby does in

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79 Metcalf, Ideologies of the Raj, pp. 195-6. See also Nicholas B. Dirks, The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom (University of Michigan Press, 1993). Tickell notes how the durbar was transformed into a ‘medieval pageant’ that ‘drew as much on a British feudal past as an Indian one’, Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, p. 118.
‘His Majesty the King’, placing them in the mode of Sonny in Steel’s *On the Face of the Waters* as the innocent child who can revitalise adult relations and unify coloniser and colonised:

“Are you here to see my faver and the horses?” It was the Maharaja Kanwar, the Crown Prince, the apple of the Maharaja’s eye and one of the quaintest little bodies that ever set an Englishman disrespectfully laughing [. . .]. As befits his dignity, he has his own carriage or carriages, his own twelve-hand stable, his own horse and retinue.80

The connection of the child both with a pre-linguistic, or at least not-yet-competent, innocence alongside the need for public signifiers of status means that he is both treasured by and other to the serious world of imperial administration. As Sara Suleri argues, the rhetoric of possession masks a potent anxiety that what is desired has already been lost or grown out of. When the parents regain the moral and emotional centre of ‘His Majesty the King’, they refocus attention on the child who thereby gains but also loses, for the boundaries between his territory and their empire are erased at the moment he passes from the retrospective mode of childhood as allied with Indian social forms to the anticipatory mode in which he is the future of the family/nation/empire.

In ‘The Drums of the Fore and Aft’, the working-class boys Jakin and Lew, whose speech is of ‘some London gutter’, are unaware of their place in the grand machine of empire.81 Only at their deaths do they accidentally rouse a regiment to a courageous advance. They fight and play as ‘finished little fiends’, explicitly contrasted within

80 *Letters of Marque* in Kipling Abroad: Traffics and Discoveries from Burma to Brazil, ed. by Andrew Lycett (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 52. Despite raising critical hackles, lisping childish speech is one of the registers by which Kipling’s texts negotiate the child as an active and changeable idea in the colonial imagination. In ‘Tods’ Amendment’ (*Plain Tales*), Tods, who like Toby is six years old, wields power over adults but does not speak ‘childishly’: he has a public role as the mouthpiece of native opinion and his insights result in a change to the parliamentary bill. Unlike Toby, Tods is a translator to be heard rather than an ‘emperor’ to be appeased.

81 *Wee Willie Winkie*, p.304.
their own tale with ‘the clean-run youth of the British middle-classes’ who shall ‘in
the matter of backbone, brains, and bowels, surpass all other youths’:

For this reason a child of eighteen will stand up, doing nothing, with a tin sword in
his hand and joy in his heart until he is dropped. If he dies, he dies like a
gentleman. If he lives, he writes Home that he has been ‘potted’, ‘sniped’,
‘chipped’, or ‘cut over’, and sits down to besiege Government for a wound-
gratuity until the next little war breaks out, when he perjures himself before a
Medical Board, blarneys his Colonel, burns incense round his Adjutant, and is
allowed to go to the Front once more.82

Here the boy of eighteen is referred to not as a youth or adolescent but as ‘a child’
who dies ‘like’ a gentleman. While most drummer boys were in their teenage years,
until the nineteenth century there was no minimum age for recruits and when
translated into a popular literary theme the drummer was often much younger.83 The
duty of the drummer was in transmitting the commander’s orders to the rest of the
company, a position which meant he was at the literal and symbolic centre of the
action. The passage uses this fixed image of the drummer boy as a foil to the dynamic
British boy soldier. It combines the derring-do of adventure fiction and the
boisterously self-effacing banter of school stories to ‘explain’ what the British boy is.
‘The Drums’ does not have an epigraph, whereas ‘Wee Willie Winkie’ is prefaced by
‘an officer and a gentleman’, suggesting that the middle-class boy, despite his small
stature, is predetermined to ensure the safety and development of both the lower
classes and the native population. It is for him to make sure that the efforts of the likes
of Jakin and Lew keep the empire moving towards the future.

82 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 303.
83 Catherine Robson, ‘Girls Underground, Boys Overseas’, p. 123. Robson bases her account on D.
The ideal of the army as a ‘beautifully unreliable machine’ is, the narrator of ‘The Drums’ admits, a fantasy that he believes will be achieved ‘thirty years from this date’ when boys have been educated to think ‘for themselves’, which the working classes cannot do. Children and the poor are excluded from the civilising aims and economic riches of an empire that must renew itself through breeding strong men. In morally upright imperial fiction, however, they must be delivered from child labour and given a dignified function: in the story’s final lines, ‘Jakin and Lew, whose little bodies were borne up just in time to fit two gaps at the head of the big ditch-grave for the dead under the heights of Jagai’. The deaths of the boys give the regiment pause for thought, but the inference that the ‘two gaps’ already exist raises the question of whether they were always destined to die. The contrast between their ‘little’ bodies and the height of the mountain leads us to wonder whether these boys are made to mean something greater in death, or whether it is their very ‘littleness’ as working-class lads that allows them, in a pre-World War I world, to die at all.

Discussing Hardy’s Boer War poem ‘Drummer Hodge’ (1899), Catherine Robson identifies a change in meaning in the death of the child between Dickens’ Little Nell in the 1840s and Hardy’s drummer boy. While Nell is a figure of ‘national nostalgic fantasy’, Hodge resists both this backwards movement and the forward momentum of the imperial boy, placing him at a ‘switchpoint’ in ‘the symbolic power of childhood’. The sadness of Hardy’s poem in which the uncoffined Hodge becomes

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84 *Wee Willie Winkie*, p. 302. 1918 marks thirty years from the publication of this farcical tale of ‘little war’ soldiery. Kipling’s ideas about placing ‘children’ on the front line are more scrupulously examined in his work of this later period, following the death of his son John in battle in 1915.
85 *Wee Willie Winkie*, p. 332.
86 Robson, p. 122. Robson identifies Peter Pan and Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden* as other intermediate figures indicating confusion around what is demanded of the child in relation to race and gender.
part of an alien landscape contrasts markedly with Jakin and Lew’s humorous antics and moderately ceremonious and geographically precise burial. Their loss participates in the earlier form of the dying child as invoking an enabling nostalgia that makes way for British gentlemen to fight for the empire’s future. This would have been as impossible for Kipling after the Boer war, ‘a first-class dress parade for Armageddon’, as it is in Hardy’s poem.87

In analysing these two tales it becomes clear that the child is implicated in narratives of possession and loss that define the tasks and ideals of empire. The child as proud Indian ruler or tragic battlefield mascot marks the cultural, class and racial distinctions that feed into the convoluted identifiers of Mowgli and Kim. Before thinking about the boy at large in the jungle/empire, I wish to analyse two boys placed at the borders between the family and threatening enemy spaces. Rather than inviting us to read colonialism or class in terms of family, ‘Wee Willie Winkie’ and ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ use the boy to narrate boundaries between coloniser and colonised, giving us a contradictory account of the child as innocent and yet able to exploit powers that he is not supposed to know he has.

IMITATION/Separation: ‘Wee Willie Winkie’ and ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’

In ‘Wee Willie Winkie’, the domestic child is allied with the Tommies as energetic and intuitive but prone to misadventure. He strays from home in an imitation of manly bravery, initiating a confrontation with parental authority and an inter-racial encounter in which the natives describe him as the coloniser’s ‘God’. Winkie’s first attempts at manliness happen while he is still under a parental regime modelled on the army:

When he was good for a week he drew good conduct pay; and when he was bad, he was deprived of his good-conduct stripe. Generally he was bad, for India offers many chances of going wrong to little six year-olds.  

Although ‘little’, the child is able to comprehend army rules, implying that he is equal in intellect to the subalterns and, despite his innocence, knows what a child should be. ‘Winkie’ surpasses his fairytale name to demonstrate his manly potential by naming those whom he will later command: ‘Do you mind being called Coppy?’ he asks the subaltern, ‘It is because of ve hair you know’. These words encode an intimacy with the lower classes that is more prominent in the story than the child’s connection to native life, although the latter is still a factor.

Winkie’s position in relation to authority mirrors that of the Afghans who want to kill him in that he is rebellious against restrictions and uses his position strategically to evade his father’s ‘law’. His disobedience in riding onto the riverbed without permission turns out to be of benefit because he rescues Coppy’s fiancée, Miss Allardyce, thus demonstrating a germ of boyish ingenuity:

Almost at the foot of the inhospitable hills, Wee Willie Winkie saw the Waler blunder and come down heavily. Miss Allardyce struggled clear, but her ankle had been severely twisted, and she could not stand. Having fully shown her spirit, she wept, and was surprised by the apparition of a white, wide-eyed child in khaki, on a nearly spent pony.  

The young saviour then collapses in sobs before pitting himself against ‘ve Bad men’, whose threats he later dismisses with ‘this is child’s talk’. Winkie’s fluctuating position as boy/man, coloniser/colonised is flanked by the polarised

88 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 249.
89 Wee Willie Winkie, p.249.
90 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 255.
91 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 256.
92 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 257.
physical threats of parental-military discipline and native violence. His potential for manliness is directed along strict lines in which heroism lies in his courageous intention but survival depends upon his status as a child whom the Afghans don’t think it wise to kill. While appreciating with humour Winkie’s adult pretensions, thereby sharing an ‘adult’ perspective, the tribesmen are not sufficiently enculturated to restrain their violence except through the perceived threat of annihilation: ‘if we touch this child they will fire and rape and plunder for a month, til nothing remains’. The story therefore justifies colonialism even, or especially, when the categorisations of child/adult, British/native are being defied.

The imperial narrative is built up in a sheltered environment, which, despite having features in common imperial adventure, remains in the sentimental tradition of Little Lord Fauntleroy (1882). Winkie does not possess the intricate mesh of knowledge given to Kim, but he does play a child’s part that amply demonstrates the narrative problem of both affect and innocence. He stands like the boy in Felicia Hemans’ popular poem ‘Casabianca’ (1826): ‘A creature of heroic blood | A proud though child-like form’. Hemans’ verse does not simply celebrate chivalry, but is also what Susan J. Wolfson calls ‘a grim meditation on patriotic and patriarchal obligations’. It displays a doubleness in which, according to Isobel Armstrong, ‘an affective mode, often simple, often pious, often conventional’ is ‘subjected to investigation,

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93 Wee Willie Winkie, p. 258.
questioned or used for unexpected purposes’.\textsuperscript{96} The heroic ideal connects therefore with sentimental aesthetics and an affective force attached to women and to children that is identifiable in Kipling’s Anglo-Indian protagonists. However, as Robson argues, by the 1880s, any association between childhood and femininity had to be tightly controlled in the male colonial narrative. Winkie’s boyish performance occurs within a paternalistic military frame that suggests he is playing a well-rehearsed part that belongs to the child. Winkie’s innocence, like the emotional extravagance that Armstrong discusses, is produced by knowledge of his position and is, insofar as it tells us anything about the child, a well-wrought illusion.\textsuperscript{97}

The separation of child and family required for the enjoyment of heroism does not always work as safely as it does in ‘Wee Willie Winkie’. In ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ the child is a psychically conflicted figure eager to escape into fiction.\textsuperscript{98} While the other stories in the original Wee Willie Winkie volume work as parables of empire that may instil right behaviour, this tale concentrates not on action but on imagination:

“This,” said Punch “means things, and now I will know about everything in all the world.” He read until the light failed, not understanding a tithe of the meaning, but tantalized by glimpses of new worlds hereafter to be revealed.\textsuperscript{99}


\textsuperscript{98} The story is often used by critics to resolve the frustration of reading Kipling’s autobiography Something of Myself, which has been referred to as ‘cryptic’ (John McClure, Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction. (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 15) and ‘muted’ (Andrew Lycett, Rudyard Kipling (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000), p. 82). Montefiore’s recent study calls the autobiography ‘reticent yet revealing’,\textsuperscript{98} inferring that a kind of critical reading between the lines by way of attention to the fiction is required.

\textsuperscript{99}Wee Willie Winkie, p. 270.
The sense that unknown worlds exist in order to be discovered recalls the intimations of an assured imperial future in ‘The Drums’ and ‘Wee Willie Winkie’ and the awe of Toby towards adults in ‘His Majesty the King’. Punch maintains a measure of hope and autonomy in the abusive ‘The House of Desolation’ by withdrawing into a fictional environment that, rather than being cohesive or child-centred, is heterogeneous and foreign in many ways. Fulfilling the fearful expectations of educators who denounced popular literature in the 1880s, his reading is uncontrollable.

Punch is able to maintain his equilibrium by mastering the expectations of fiction so that when his mother returns it is as a fairy princess from the stories he has illicitly consumed:

> She was young, frivolously young, with delicately-flushed cheeks and eyes that shone like stars, and a voice that needed no appeal of outstretched arms to draw little ones to her heart.\(^{100}\)

The transformation of his mother is no stranger than the infant Punch’s demand that his *ayah* tell him the story ‘about the Ranee that was turned into a tiger’;\(^ {101}\) both deny that realism is the mode of empire and suggest that imaginary geographies overlay factual detail in the making of the imperial boy. Instructive texts such as Jarrold’s *Empire Readers* of the 1880s and *The Indian Empire Reader* that I referred to in the Introduction meant ‘narratives celebrating empire and techniques in teaching reading and writing gradually converged’.\(^ {102}\) Punch’s situation confirms that the imperialist

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100 *Wee Willie Winkie*, p. 285.
102 Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p. 21.
ingredients of texts both for and about children are adaptable and inclusive of contradictory elements well before Mowgli and Kim come onto the scene.

When Kipling placed the harrowing ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep’ between ‘Wee Willie Winkie’ and ‘His Majesty the King’ in the collected volume, he frustrated any attempt to read the boy as taking an obvious route from sentiment to seriousness. The lisping, tearful, badly treated misadventurers of these early stories blunder into unlikely cross-racial alliances and chance exploits that problematise the innocence expected of the child. The mimicry of Winkie, the domestic drama of Toby, the farce of Jakin and Lew and the fairytales of Punch show that the colonial narrative involves the child in what Zohreh T. Sullivan identifies as a frontier position driven by the desire ‘to be loved and to control’ that underlies the ‘familial trope’ of empire.\(^\text{103}\) I now move on to consider the dynamic between the boy as imitation adult and affecting innocent as it operates in respect of an Indian child.

**The Child of Old: ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’**

At the opening of ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’ the narrator comes across his *khitmutgar*’s son in his drawing room:

> a tiny, plump figure in a ridiculously inadequate shirt which came, perhaps, halfway down the tubby stomach. It wandered round the room, crooning to itself as it took stock of the pictures. Undoubtedly this was the “little son.”\(^\text{104}\)

The sahib surprises the boy into a fit of tears before forgiving him with the gift of the old polo ball he coveted. Muhammad Din becomes a ‘solemn’ acquaintance of the


\(^{104}\) *Plain Tales*, p. 250.
gentleman, meeting him each day in the ‘neutral ground’ of the garden where they
exchange greetings in Urdu and he is captivated by the child’s ‘mysterious errands’.

For some months the chubby little eccentricity revolved in his humble orbit among
the caster oil bushes and in the dust; always fashioning magnificent palaces from
stale flowers thrown away by the bearer, smooth water-worn pebbles, bits of
broken glass, and feathers pulled, I fancy, from my fowls — always alone, and
always crooning to himself.

The narration initially appears objective and uninvolved, but the rhythm and
evocation of archaic practices creates a self-contained and cherubic child to which the
narrator is clearly attached. The use of ‘little’, frequently used of children in need of
protection in Kipling’s stories, implies qualities including imagination, beauty and
perfection that the ‘small’ used by Imam Din, the child’s father, does not.

The perspective shifts to place the narrator closer to the child: ‘Muhammad Din
laboured for an hour at effacing every trace of the dust-bank and pottery fragments.’

The child clears away his first construction in the mistaken belief that the sahib is
angry with him, greeting the master with ‘a tearful face’ when he returns from the
office. We are not told how the sahib/narrator knows how long the child worked in his
absence or that ‘Some one had cruelly told him that the Sahib was very angry with
him for spoiling the garden’, suggesting that there is a more intimate coloniser-
colonised relationship than the story admits.

As the inheritor of a primitive civilisation whose forms he perpetuates in building dust
palaces, Muhammad Din is also an object of ethnographic fascination to the sahib; he

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105 Plain Tales, p. 251.
106 Plain Tales, p. 252.
107 Plain Tales, p. 252.
may even be equivalent to him in terms of breeding, although his nobility has no purchase in the present. The child’s own words highlight this tension as racial, political and linguistic: ‘I am not a budmash I am a man!’ As Rushdie points out, Kipling invented ‘a whole idiolect’ for his Indians; Muhammad Din is not actually speaking in English. His ‘humble orbit’ is a mythical time in comparison to what Fabian calls ‘lived time’ that corresponds to the coming and going of the white man and his writing down of his observations. The passing of ‘lived time’ is ‘a condition of the production of knowledge and of its discursive representation’, placing the child’s creations outside of discourse because they disappear without trace. The only objects left when the palaces are rubbed out are the polo ball and shell bequeathed by the sahib.

Muhammad Din has the same rule-breaking impulses as Winkie, but his story does not fit the narrative of overcoming adversity; his is the retrospective allegory of loss that counters Winkie’s anticipatory colonial comedy. The tone of ‘warmth and tenderness’ that Montefiore finds in this story of a ‘doomed small boy’ comes from the fact that he is not allowed to grow up but dies suddenly of a fever.

A week later, though I would have given much to have avoided it, I met on the road to the Mussulman burying-ground Imam Din, accompanied by one other friend, carrying in his arms, wrapped in a white cloth, all that was left of little Muhammad Din.

As Alexandra Mullen observes, the dead child is central to the Victorian dialectic between sentimentalism and realism, the essential other perhaps to Hemans’s heroic

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108 Plain Tales, p. 251.
110 Montefiore, p. 97.
111 Plain Tales, p. 253.
child. The spare narrative voice and the doctor’s comment that ‘they have no stamina these brats’ provide a bitter realism, but the freeze-frame effect on the father and son returns us to the sentimental aspect of child death, exerting a pull back towards conventional relations.

Yet the final sight of Muhammad Din does not perform a restorative function just as it does not quite fit the term ‘nostalgia’ that Robson applies to Little Nell. John Bowen reads Little Nell as a static figure that the novel itself calls ‘a kind of allegory’ set apart from surroundings that are foreign to her. Muhammad Din can be read in this manner, first appearing as an ‘it’ and always remaining a centre of innocence and endeavour apart from the world. The narrator finds in the child a reflection of his own situation as a foreigner but, as he moves back and forth between home and office, Muhammad Din circles around the place of Robson’s ‘retrospective’ child, sealed in a past that, as Bowen suggests, makes him an allegory for Adorno’s recognition of the individual as having ‘a dark and obscure fate in a commodified world.’

Daniel Karlin views this story as inspired but ‘slight’: ‘its brevity is formally apt to its account of the child’s short life.’ We may accept that the form of the story is fitted to its infant protagonist. However, Karlin denies the manner in which the Indian child

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112 Alexandra E. Mullen, ‘The dead child and the Victorian conscience: Uses of sentimentality from De Quincey to Conrad’ (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1994). The child is often lost either through death or separation in Plain Tales, for example the ‘little son’ that Dicky Hatt might have brought to India in ‘His Chance in Life’.


figures anxieties about racial and cultural decline for which Kipling’s texts offer no appropriate form. I find C.S. Lewis’s analysis of Kipling’s stories more persuasive: ‘Sometimes the story has been so compressed that in the completed version it is not quite told’. 117 ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’ is complete and yet unfinished: the dust refuses to be structured and the mourning that the narrator begins for the child is both necessary and, because of racial divisions and communication failures, impossible.

In the stories I have examined, we might be made sorrowful by the loss of a child, stifled by the Simla settings or put off by the ‘stickily sentimental’ subject matter. However, having seen the myriad ways in which they produce colonial, racial and gendered relations through the child, we may make the case that their boys are more than the uninteresting, one-dimensional forerunners of Mowgli and Kim. These boys complicate distinctions between domestic and public, Britain and India and are neither simple nor able to be read apart from imperial forms. 118

‘BECAUSE I AM A MAN, BECAUSE I AM A WOLF’: The Jungle Books

My analysis of The Jungle Books builds upon the appreciation of the child as the not-so-simple centre of a constellation of colonial (and potentially anti-colonial) narratives in Kipling’s early stories to claim that interpreting the wolf-boy Mowgli as the hybrid lead actor in an allegory of white colonial development, even a failed one, skirts the issue of the child as self or origin.

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Allen positions *The Jungle Books* as a return to ‘the shape-shifting innocence of [Kipling’s] childhood days’. The stories in these two volumes are not, however, the familiar India of an ordered though intense relationship found in his verses on childhood. Written after the birth of Kipling’s first child while he was living in Vermont, and therefore ‘the product of a multiple displacement’, these texts concern what Karlin calls ‘the theme of strangeness’ and stalk the borders between animal and human that are also British and Indian in some form. Cross-cultural in that they connect America, Britain and India, the tales are also ‘a crossing point between genres’, drawing on ‘realistic’ or zoological material as well as imperial fantasy and Indian fairy tales. Trying to decode their human-animal relations is disconcerting, particularly in the Mowgli tales where the child and the animal speak the same language and animals live by a moral code presented as more enlightened than the superstition of the human village: ‘If the Jungle is not nature in opposition to civilization, but is itself another civilization, is one a metaphor for the other?’.

Particularly when considering the collection as colonial discourse, critics tend to isolate the Mowgli stories ‘as the allegorical representation of a child’s formative experiences’ and, more recently, to extend this reading to make Mowgli an imperial boy whose narrative re-articulates and destabilises colonialism. As Karlin acknowledges, the text escapes such purposeful readings and leads me to ask what

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The non-Mowgli stories may have been given scant critical attention because, although much-reproduced in the case of ‘Rikki Tikki Tavi’, they are more obviously for children and therefore are judged as having less to tell us less about children. Allen goes as far as to say that the non-Mowgli stories are ‘trespassers’ in the text that obscure its primary achievement: ‘the eight Mowgli tales and associated verses together form a cohesive eight-chapter novel with its own unifying philosophy’. I will focus on this determination to read both the child and the history of British India as a cohesive unit and the source of a developing self that is above and beyond the animal by drawing a comparison between a non-Mowgli story that also involves a boy, ‘Toomai of the Elephants’, and ‘Mowgli the Frog’s own repertoire of tales. The linguistic and cultural play of this much-loved and adapted book is fertile ground for thinking about the ‘discovery’ of the child as the non-supplementary basis of truth.

Mowgli’s tales can be strung together to build towards his final crossing from the animal to the human world. Montefiore reads this as a coming to manhood that, in its use of a hybrid child protagonist, surpasses what she calls the uninteresting trajectories of earlier stories. Given Montefiore’s point about complexity, it might be expected that Mowgli, the half-and-half feral child who nevertheless grows up according to a well-developed civil code, will give us a more nuanced idea of imperialism. However, Montefiore classifies The Jungle Books as ‘a fantasy

125 Allen, Kipling Sahib, p. 332.
children’s book’, which leads her to read its contradictions as being about manhood but not about imperialism:

Because the magical appeal of these stories for children lies partly in the hybrid nature of the hero who can both travel between and be master of the animal and human worlds, the idea of ‘Man’ is not based anything like so strongly on notions of gender and hardly at all on race.\(^{127}\)

Here the child’s versatility functions does not let in the disruptive other as it does in Rose’s rendering of a Freudian polymorphous childhood sexuality. Rather, the hybrid child excludes the other by creating ‘magical’ boundaries around itself that protect against racial, gendered and, by implication, linguistic divisions. This insistence on development without interference acknowledges the complexity of Mowgli’s identity but ignores the divided temporality invoked by the text that, in its very form, disputes readings of the Mowgli tales as a coherent whole.

Mowgli’s introductory tale, ‘Mowgli’s Brothers’, is divided into two: the first part tells of the child’s acceptance into the wolf-pack, while the second deals with Mowgli’s expulsion following the tiger Shere Khan’s plotting and his setting out for the first time ‘to meet those mysterious things that are called men’.\(^{128}\) Between the two parts, the passing of Mowgli’s childhood is referred to:

Now you must be content to skip ten or eleven whole years, and only guess at all the wonderful life that Mowgli led among the wolves, because if it were written out it would fill ever so many books. He grew up with the cubs, though they, of course, were grown wolves almost before he was a child, and Father wolf taught him his business, and the meaning of things in the jungle, till every rustle in the grass, every breath of the warm night air, every note of the owls above his head, every scratch of a bat’s claws as it roosted for a while in a tree, and every splash of every little fish jumping in a pool, meant just as much to him as the work of his office means to a business man. (p. 43)

\(^{126}\) Montefiore, p. 80.
\(^{127}\) Montefiore, p. 77.
\(^{128}\) Jungle Books, p. 53. Further references will be indicated in the body of the text.
In a breathlessly lengthy sentence, the text refuses to show the ‘wonderful’ richness of childhood experience. It is made to seem fascinating in the same way that the ‘wilderness’ of administration is in ‘His Majesty the King’ but not, because of the number of volumes (or pigeonholes) it contains, able to be narrated. This may lead us to a suspicion that learning jungle or colonial processes is not as exciting as it might appear. As Mowgli’s subsequent lessons with Baloo and Bagheera show, jungle ways and codes are by no means easy. The hard work of Mowgli’s childhood is, like the daily lessons of the boys in *Stalky & Co.* (1899), a constant background that is interesting primarily at the points when it is interrupted.

The next tale, ‘Kaa’s Hunting’, presents us with part of the years that we missed in ‘Mowgli’s Brothers’. The tale takes place when Mowgli is seven and repeatedly referred to as a child: ‘But think how small he is’ says Bagheera in response to Baloo’s discipline (p. 56). The tale does not, however, tell of a playful or wonder-filled childhood but rather focuses on the harsh lesson Mowgli learns at the hands of the Bandar-log (Monkey people). Kaa’s quip that ‘it is no small thing that takes two such hunters [Baloo and Bagheera] — leaders in their own jungle — on the trail of the Bandar-log’ points to Mowgli’s physical appearance as belying his importance and makes clear that his imperial boy qualities exceed daily work and learning (p. 65).

Randall reads the conflict between the growth of Mowgli as an imperial boy and the sameness of the Jungle as an imperial allegory in which the child has everything to do with race and gender: ‘Mowgli’s *Bildung* is an empire-affirming allegorization of the
history of British India’. For Randall, the text is an allegory of ‘the Mutiny moment’, which dramatises the precariousness and persistence of British rule in India following 1857. This interpretation fits with Alex Tickell’s focus on the Mutiny as being transformed into ‘a terrifying sign of vulnerability […] that revealed how powerless colonial administrators were against organized resistance’ and ‘an epic political rebirth’ that proved the ‘providential entitlement’ of the British to rule India. However, Randall’s argument hinges on ‘In the Rukh’, the Mowgli story that was written first although it concerns his ‘coming of age’ and reintegration into the human community. The story has generally been left out of *The Jungle Books* as, in Karlin’s opinion, ‘a half-baked anticipation’ of Mowgli not connected closely with his incarnation as a jungle child. In order to concur with Randall it is necessary to accept this tale as showing that ‘the feral child among the wolves will ultimately pursue his human destiny in the service of the Empire’, rather than dismissing it as not fully realised or even as an unreliable paratext. This argument does for the imperial story what Montefiore’s does for manhood: it claims that this must be a text about progress because we know that is what childhood/imperialism involves.

Randall’s contention recognises the compulsion of British colonial texts to re-visit the rebellion. However, given the complexities of the memorialising processes that both Tickell and Dipesh Chakravarty examine, I wish to ask what we may lose or gain by

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129 Randall, p. 67.
132 Randall, p. 68.
133 Kipling’s only direct reference to the Mutiny is in *Kim*, as I discuss below.
placing Mowgli within a developmental trajectory that may or may not be interpreted as an allegory of colonialism in India.\textsuperscript{134} I look at how the process that Walsh calls Mowgli’s ‘self-unifying\textsuperscript{135}’ across animal and human identities works so that the borders between human and animal, British and Indian, child and adult, and even past and present, are brought into question in a fictional process ‘which is at best precarious, and never complete’\textsuperscript{136}

**MAKING THE CHILD MASTER: ‘TOOMAI OF THE ELEPHANTS’**

Before considering the patterning of thorny questions in the Mowgli stories that the child may be called upon to resolve, I want to turn to a ‘non-Mowgli’ tale from *The First Jungle Book* that is also about a child who lives in close contact with animals and can be read as an imperial allegory. Little Toomai, like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather, will become an elephant driver (*mahout*): ‘He was ten years old, the eldest son of Big Toomai, and, according to custom he would take his father’s place on Kala Nag’s neck when he grew up’ (p. 135). By jumping into the Keddah amongst the wild elephants, Little Toomai shows his extraordinary skill in handling the animals, which draws him to the attention of Peterson Sahib, ‘the man who caught all the elephants for the government of India’ (p. 137). The following evening, Little Toomai sees the fabled dance of the elephants after being challenged to do so by the Englishman. Following his experience, Little Toomai is treated like a prince.


\textsuperscript{135} Walsh, *Kipling’s Children’s Literature*, p. 55.

Although Little Toomai is Indian and the story takes place in an Indian space, he has an established authority over Kala Nag, which may be read, as the Mowgli tales are, in terms of the longevity of the colonial relationship in India:

Kala Nag would no more have dreamed of disobeying his shrill little orders than he would have dreamed of killing him on that day when Big Toomai carried the little brown baby under Kala Nag’s tusks, and told him to salute his master that was to be. (p. 135)

Little Toomai operates in alliance with both the elephants and Peterson Sahib, ultimately assuring the continuity of the colonial order. The impulse of the elephants to dance is opposed to Kala Nag’s dutiful obedience, while Little Toomai’s disobedience of his father is also put down to wild spirits. The elephants’ desire, again expressed as a paratext with a tricky relation to the main narrative, is satisfied by their dance:

I will go out until the day, until the morning break —
Out to the winds’ untainted kiss, the waters’ clean caress —
I will forget my ankle-ring and snap my picket-stake.
I will revisit my lost loves, and playmates masterless.
(p. 133)

Little Toomai’s rapport with the wild elephants leads to a warning from his father which, like the impulsive young Mowgli, he overrides in order to see the elephants dance. Little Toomai, however, can return safely to a life ratified by colonial authority, while Mowgli becomes caught up in a dance between the wolf pack, his jungle teachers and a human society foreign to him so that, despite the apparent clarity of jungle law, it becomes unclear exactly when he is transgressing. Little Toomai observes but does not take part in the dance, so that the boundaries between human and animal, group (also herd or pack) and individual that have been put under pressure by the child are never broken. Mowgli, however, enjoys hunting, drinking and bathing nightly with his jungle family while likening men to the despised Bandar-
log. Similarly, compared to Bagheera’s traumatic move from imprisonment back to his ‘people’, the elephants’ dance is a short release after which Kala Nag returns to his masters.

Both texts, therefore, deal with what Jane Hotchkiss calls ‘the double perspective of the second-generation colonizer’ but they have a different take on the ‘anxieties of identity’ that this involves. Little Toomai fulfils the role that Randall identifies for Mowgli as ‘an imperial proxy’ for, through a risky use of his cross-species sensitivity, he consolidates his superiority. And yet he is not an imperial boy in Randall and McBratney’s terms. He is not an orphan or removed from his home, nor is he accorded the long boyhood Joseph Bristow deems necessary for ‘empire boys’ or represented as liminal in his cultural or linguistic connections. I therefore go on to ask what gives Mowgli, who is fully conversant with his jungle family (whereas Kala Nag does not speak to Little Toomai), an authority that is both more wide-reaching and less stable than that of Little Toomai.

‘THOU ART A MAN-CUB’: MOWGLI THE BOY

Mowgli’s two-way communication and intimacy with various animals as well as his lack of the Indian cultural markers that Little Toomai possesses means that an allegorical interpretation in which the animals are the different peoples of India, as John McClure argues, will inevitably be more troubled than a reading of Little Toomai as re-affirming colonial order. The imperial boy is invoked not to secure the rhetoric of power through taking charge of others but in order to enter into their

137 Hotchkiss, p. 435.
138 Randall, p. 67.
139 Bristow, p. 43.
140 McClure, p. 59.
spaces, in a more sustained manner than Little Toomai does, and to explore in depth
the inconsistencies of imperial structures.

The critiques of Randall and McBratney take Mowgli’s growth from seven to ‘around
seventeen’ as a movement towards this immersed and multi-directional perspective.
Randall proposes a reformulating of history via a boy who never ‘grows up’ in the
sense of achieving ‘a stable placement within the distribution of fixed, fully formed
identities’, while McBratney says Mowgli epitomises the ‘unusual, in-between status’
of the ‘hybrid and the mixed-race creole’ who nevertheless must grow up because he
is ‘essentially a man’.141 In her incisive study, *Kipling’s Children Literature*, Walsh
focusses on the fundamental tenets that make up:

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\text{a certain kind of reading, which, whilst it tries to destabilize notions of essentiality in identity ends up precisely re-stabilising identities in the face of its stated aim: persistently clinging to the very notions of difference that are under question.}^{142}
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Her challenge, and that of this thesis, both drawing upon the constructionist
approaches of Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein, is to examine how difference happens in
*The Jungle Books*, beginning with the child.

As a baby, Mowgli is a ‘soft dimpled atom’, suggesting that, even though he is the
smallest unit of matter, he has the attributes desired in a human child (p. 38). Mother
Wolf’s valorisation of him as a ‘little naked son’ shows us that animals are imagined
to live by family ties in the way humans do (p. 53). Mowgli’s nakedness separates
him from the cubs as does the word ‘son’, but his wolf-like behaviour demonstrates

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141 Randall, p. 17; McBratney, pp. xiii – xiv and p. 34. McBratney contends that because children enjoy a ‘castelessness’ in relation to Hindu custom they do not have to settle into fixed identities until adulthood.
142 Walsh, *Kipling’s Children’s Literature*, p. 70.
belonging and emphasises the limpid movement of the text between human and animal and the difficulty of applying fixed attributes to either. If it is to be read as allegory, are the animals the Indian populace living by ancient practices that must adapt to Mowgli? Or are they Mowgli’s first teachers giving him the strength of character to beat Shere Khan and orchestrate the destruction of the village? Neither interpretation fits exactly, nor is there an obvious development from one to the other.

In ‘How Fear Came’ the narrative explicitly denies that it is about growth. Mowgli is told how his ancestor, known as ‘the Hairless One’ or ‘Fear’, was killed by ‘the First of the Tigers’ who had been accused of letting Death into the jungle, forgetting his status as ‘Master of the Jungle’ by killing a buck and then by rousing Man to kill (p. 186). Like Mowgli himself, one man was never a threat, rather the Man-Pack that Mowgli maintains his distance from is the danger that Shere Khan is accused of inciting in the tales. In this myth of origin, the jungle animals are ‘one people’ in a way that might correspond allegorically to myths of Hindustan as a once-great unity. However, what the story reveals as told by Hathi the elephant is that animal/human divisions are crossed and hierarchical relationships are broken, not only via growth as Randall and McBratney argue, but repeatedly in a wheel of history also referred to in Kim that always comes back to the initial encounter between man and nature. It is therefore sameness as much as difference or progress that enables animal and man to be read in each others’ terms and that marks Mowgli’s cooperation and confrontation with Jungle Law.

McBratney contends that Mowgli must finally give up the jungle life, and the arrangement of the tales from his initiation into the wolf pack in ‘Mowgli’s Brothers’
towards the sadness and the exhilaration of his last jungle scenes in ‘The Spring Running’ seems to support this. However, each time Mowgli’s man/wolf dilemma is asserted, it takes on a different aspect, and after he leaves the jungle for the first time the distinctions between human and animal worlds become less rather than more clear: ‘It is true that I am a man, but it is in my stomach that this night I have said that I am a wolf’ (p. 304). Mowgli’s human form seems to decide his destiny as Kaa urges ‘Go to thine own people’, but this direction is challenged in the retort: ‘Mowgli drives Mowgli’ that returns the boy to the problem of selfhood.

The debate between Mowgli and Bagheera in ‘Mowgli’s Brothers’ marks the child’s first realisation of his difference and the co-existence of the jungle and human worlds in him. Bagheera warns Mowgli of Shere Khan’s intent to kill him and of his influencing the young wolves of the pack to cast him out, for ‘In a little time thou wilt be a man’ (p. 45). Mowgli contests this fixation on individual development by insisting that the collective life of the jungle is fitted to his growth:

“And what is a man that he should not run with his brothers?” said Mowgli. “I was born in the jungle. I have obeyed the Law of the Jungle, and there is no wolf of ours from whose paws I have not pulled a thorn. Surely they are my brothers!” (p. 45)

The triad of ‘should’, ‘obeyed’ and ‘surely’ imagines the jungle as modelled on colonial forms, particularly public schools or army life. However, the question that opens the passage, as well as the value attached to freedom throughout the text, suggests that by submitting to the hierarchical order Mowgli has made himself vulnerable to being excluded from it. Rather than the collective preparing the individual for the world, there is a desire in the text to make the collective the sum of that world. This is also a feature of Kipling’s school-boy tales: in *Stalky & Co.*, 
Mcturk, Beetle and Stalky have the run of the library and the land around the school but return to their much-misled masters and their lessons with ironic affection. As Bristow describes, the public school developed mid-century as a microcosm of ‘civilised’ society: ‘to cultivate, on the one hand, the virtues of the proper gentleman (fair play, team spirit and decorum), and to embrace on the other, the values of competition, independence and a wilful strength of mind’.143 Being fitted to and fighting for ones family, house, school, nation and empire was ‘a hierarchy of interconnected loyalties’ that were models of each other and therefore not to be grown out of or, in the case of colonised subjects, grown into.144 Mowgli’s schooling takes in cultural and racial difference, making it all the more desirable to retain the ‘brotherhood’ that is so essential to ‘empire boys’.

Bagheera’s answer to Mowgli is to challenge his idea of brotherhood and to reveal the hidden scars he bears from being ‘man’s plaything’, likening his escape to Mowgli’s return to human society: ‘even as I returned to my jungle, so thou must go back to men at last— to the men who are thy brothers — if thou art not killed by the Council’ (p. 46). However, once Mowgli is expelled from the village as a sorcerer in ‘Tiger-Tiger!’, brotherhood is as discredited in the Man-Pack as it is in the jungle, for neither can accommodate Mowgli. ‘The Law of the Jungle’ verse demonstrates that there is much beyond the brotherhood ideal that Mowgli cannot know. There are ‘hundreds and hundreds’ of laws and the call to brotherhood is ‘one of the simpler rulings’: ‘For the Strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack’ (p. 189). The poem frames these ‘many and mighty’ laws as an animal body that excludes

143 Bristow, p. 58.
144 Bristow, p. 59.
Mowgli: ‘But the head and the hoof of the Law and the haunch and the hump is — Obey!’ (p. 191). Mowgli therefore painstakingly learns the law of the jungle and experiences the ways of men so that he can be what he already is: ‘Thou art of the Jungle and not of the Jungle,’ Bagheera tells him (p. 222).

To complicate matters further, as Mowgli has just defeated Shere Khan, it is clear that he does not need jungle law in order to attain mastery over man or beast. Yet Bagheera’s reference to captivity hovers over the text as it moves towards the question of whether Mowgli’s status as man is in fact his imprisonment and the jungle his freedom: *In the dawns, when thou shalt wake | To the toil that though canst not break, | Heartsick for the Jungle’s sake; | Wood and Water, Wind and Tree, | Jungle-Favour go with thee!’ (p. 344). This jungle as a natural idyll is opposed to human work and progress and yet, in offering ‘Jungle-Favour’, suggests that, if man partakes of its ‘natural’ relations, he may find fulfilment. In this way, the jungle lays out the child, the animal and the primitive as constant, circular, creative; apparently a training ground for the adult/civilised world but in fact strange to it.

‘BEYOND HIS AGE’: MOWGLI THE MAN

The debate with Bagheera in the first Mowgli story makes clear that Mowgli’s burden is living with his status as man, although he insists on his difference from the ‘Man-Pack’:

“But why— but why should they wish to kill me?” said Mowgli.
“Look at me,” said Bagheera; and Mowgli looked at him steadily between the eyes. The big panther turned his head away in half a minute.
“That is why,” he said, shifting his paw on the leaves. “Not even I can look thee between the eyes, and I was born among men, and I love thee, Little Brother.
The others hate thee because their eyes cannot meet thine; because thou art wise; because thou hast pulled out thorns from their feet – because thou art a man.”
“I did not know these things,” said Mowgli, sullenly; and he frowned under his heavy black eyebrows.

(p. 46)

Mowgli’s look is a screen between him and the animal; his strength is his lack of transparency, while his protectors operate on instinct. Bagheera identifies his own birth among men and his affection, both social conditions rather than innate characteristics, as the reason why he resists his instincts. But love and learning are no match for Mowgli’s manhood: when Bagheera threatens to strike Mowgli in ‘Letting in the Jungle’, the boy stares him down then excuses him with: ‘It is the fault of the night, and no fault of thine’ (p. 222). However, this reasoning is as opaque as Mowgli’s gaze, it does not explain his power, whether the relations figured are human/animal or British/Indian.

To define Mowgli’s position further it is necessary to think about the jungle in terms of time, both as cultural construction and as a means of achieving a ‘synchronization of global activity’ between the 1880s and the 1930s that enabled what Adam Barrows calls a ‘global conception of space’.145 This notion of time enabled or enforced via colonialism would appear to fit with the imperial boy as negotiating between the ‘telos-driven epistemologies of the West’ as they are opposed, in Barrows’ analysis, to ‘protean’, anti-colonial, and then postcolonial time(s).146 Mowgli has no beginning in the jungle; he appears with his humanity intact, and yet he is immediately accepted as a wolf; he leaves to become a man, but the text cannot imagine his departure,

145 Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire*, pp. 2-3. As Barrows discusses, the International Prime Meridian Conference of 1884 was the first legislation on world standard time that, over the next half-century, was gradually accepted across nations, becoming both symbolic of the British Empire and ‘the cosmopolitan standard for measuring the very limits of modernity’, p. 2.
146 Barrows, p. 130.
except as a wolf following ‘a new trail’ that is posited as after as well as outside of the text. Mowgli therefore exists as two species in separate times, passing through affiliations with other animal identities. Man is reserved for the finale that we never see. Messua, who plays the part of and may actually be Mowgli’s mother, expects Mowgli to still to be a young boy when he visits her in the village in ‘The Spring Running’. She alternates between calling him ‘my son’ and a ‘godling’ or ‘jungle being’ (pp. 335-7) when he comes as a man looking for answers. This desire to find Mowgli the same meshes with the daily and seasonal rhythm of the jungle and the collective life that he must give up. Mowgli remains to each of his mothers in jungle and village a child whose growth introduces not progress but discord.

The alliance of the human and wolf mothers suggests that the native village and the jungle have a common way of experiencing time, while the teleological narrative of manly growth comes from an outside or colonial model, concurring with Randall’s imperial allegory. In this respect, Mowgli anticipates ‘the fraught emergence of temporal gateways neither assimilated to standard time’s imperial grid nor entrenched in a romanticized past’ that Barrows finds in early twentieth-century Indian-English writing. However, I read Mowgli as the intersection for opposing modes of time rather than a bridge between them. A focus on Mowgli’s adolescence imposes a developmental model that may be ratified by subsequent narratives of decolonisation and national growth but is not condoned in Kipling’s text, as Barrows shows it is in anti-colonial texts of a later date.

147 I discuss this problem in relation to Untouchable in Chapter 3.
According to Walsh, ‘Mowgli functions as an original and originating point of difference and division; and through his expulsion Jungle and village strive to reconstitute their unities.’ The desire to achieve unity in Mowgli as the imperial boy is therefore already outside jungle and village, already signed up to world standard time. These desires are diverted not only by the co-existence of times, but in the way the knowledge achieved by age and education is countered by the eruption of violence in the text. Described as ‘far beyond his age’, Mowgli knows the importance of keeping his temper and does not wish to be ‘unsportsmanlike’ (p. 83). He has learnt this in the public school style tutelage of Baloo and yet his self-possessed ingenuity only earns respect when actioned in the ‘real’ world of the jungle/village border where he traps Shere Khan. Mowgli is finally made to exit his own narrative not only because of the closing down of disruption performed both in the move to expel him, but by his own violent acts, including planning the burning of the village, the killing of Shere Khan and the repeated chastisement of the wolf pack by the use of his gaze and the threat of his knife:

‘Mowgli the Frog have I been,’ said he to himself, ‘Mowgli the Wolf have I said that I am. Now Mowgli the Ape must I be before I am Mowgli the Buck. At the end I shall be Mowgli the Man. Ho!’ and he slid his thumb along the eighteen-inch blade of his knife. (pp. 310-11)

The suggestion that man is the culmination of successive identities proposes development, but the violence that this entails denies a moral animal/man hierarchy. The qualities of self-control, ingenuity and not being ‘unsportsmanlike’ celebrated in ‘Mowgli’s Brothers’ are superseded by a steely-eyed control needed to counter the recurrent resistance symbolised in Shere Khan in ‘Tiger-Tiger!’ This fixity is

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149 Randall points out that the tiger was associated with the Mughal rulers of India as well as a prized trophy for imperial hunters. He identifies the reference to Blake’s poem in the title as pointing to a ‘fearful symmetry’ between the efforts of the imperial boy as ‘alien liberator’ to produce a coherent
disguised by the text’s linguistic virtuosity: Mowgli understands jungle ‘thees’ and ‘thous’, but when asked by Gray Brother, ‘Do men trap men?’, he replies, ‘I cannot understand the talk’ (p. 213).

When Mowgli ‘knows’ his own mind violence and revenge occur, whereas when he is unsure of himself, open debate happens. However, Randall’s assertion that, by killing the tiger, Mowgli ‘restages the consolidation of empire in India’ in an ‘anxious’ yet ‘optimistic’ presentation of post-Mutiny politics can be questioned. The anxiety that the text exhibits over whether the tiger is a real or mythological animal, a flesh and blood enemy or what the hunter Buldeo calls a ‘ghost-tiger’, is reflected back on the boy as interpreted by the animals through the myth of the first man. Rather than providing consolidation and resolution, Mowgli’s changeable nature, shadowy movements and lack of self-assurance question the ability of empire to reinvent itself.

In accordance with Kaa’s view of history as the archaic repeating itself — ‘What is has been. What will be is no more than a forgotten year striking backwards’ (p. 305) — Mowgli’s actions deny development for certain groups (the villagers, the Bandar-log and the dhole). In making this distinction between those who are civilised and those who are not, the ability to ‘know’ one’s own mind through memory, unlike the Bandar-log who forget ‘what they had seen and what they had not’ (p. 59), is crucial. The lesson that Mowgli learns from Kaa and Hathi takes history out of the realm of education in which Mowgli exists as Baloo’s pupil and places it as the knowledge of


150 Randall, pp. 78-9.
inherited strength. The text presents two jungles: the wild and the rationalisable that are blurred through Mowgli. This should alert us to the possibility that the division is not exterior to Mowgli as a hybrid imperial child and able to be exploited by him as ‘the irresistible “modern” force of imperial power’. Rather, it is part of the very idea of the child, animal or the colonised subject imagined as in another time, as another self. As Lee Edelman argues of contemporary culture, the ‘inner Child’ of the normative family is arbiter, remaining ‘the horizon of every acknowledged politics.’

The horizon we see through Mowgli is most vibrantly hybrid when the ‘New Talk’ appears in ‘The Spring Running’. Walsh observes that this is a sign of sexual difference as well as the division of species: ‘Mowgli could hear them grunting and squealing and whistling according to their kind’ (p. 327). Such a bold acknowledgement of division — biological, sexual and linguistic — happens when Mowgli is about to follow his instincts and leave the jungle. However, in my reading and that of Walsh this does not, as Tess Cosslett contends, indicate a more complex, adult or human perception that can move away from the child and the animal. It could also be a denial of the need for, even an assertion of the dangers of, development in Mowgli himself or in the post-Mutiny rule of the Raj. The problems of imperial violence and postcolonial guilt inhere within him between the strong imperial man and the figure ‘like a ghost’ running through the jungle (p. 338).

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151 Randall, p. 87.
152 Lee Edelman, No Future, p. 3.
153 Whilst I have focussed largely on the child and the primitive, there is a broad range of scholarship on the animal that could be useful in analysing the figure of Mowgli. A recent example is Jacques Derrida, The Animal That Therefore I Am, ed. by Marie-Louis Mallet, trans. by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). See also John Morgenstern, ‘Children and Other Talking Animals’, The Lion and the Unicorn, 24 (2000), 110-127.
Rather than being read as separate from divisions of race, gender or sexuality as Montefiore suggests in the term ‘fantasy children’s book’ or as an imperial allegory headed facilitated by the imperial boy, *The Jungle Books* may be better approached in their own terms as part of ‘many many stories’ (p. 298) of Mowgli and of India. The narrative dismantles the difference between imperial history and fantasy, proposing that there can be no narrative of adulthood (or of colonial conquest) without the child. In ‘Tiger-Tiger!’ we are told of Mowgli returning to hunting with his brothers despite his new title ‘Master of the Jungle’. However, his return is qualified by: ‘But he was not always alone, because, years afterward, he became a man and married. But that is a story for grown-ups’ (p. 95). At the end of the collection, we find out that this tale not only excludes children but Mowgli himself, for ‘this is the last of the Mowgli stories’ (p. 342). The inference seems to be not that we should look to ‘In the Rukh’ to explain Mowgli’s growth but that we examine how, inside the ‘fence’ of fiction, ‘we endlessly rework in our attempt to build an image of our own history’. As we go on to discover in *Kim*, the fantasy of the child has more momentum than the imperial boy.

**Conclusion : ‘It is but a tale I told thee’**

In conclusion, I wish to draw together the formulations of the child discussed by considering how they contribute to the picture of Britishness in *Kim*. Allen calls Kipling’s only critically admired novel ‘the last real victory of the intuitive, Indian side of his head’, after which he wrote little that ‘really holds the imagination except in fits and starts, and absolutely nothing of worth linked to India’. This judgment on aesthetic consistency may be disputed on the basis that, of Kipling’s later works

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concerned with children, the *Just So Stories* (1902) and the Puck books have received much critical appreciation. The ‘mixy’ meetings of species, temporalities and locations in *The Just So Stories* makes layered, often ingenious, interpretation as necessary as it is in reading *Kim* and Mowgli: ‘But it isn’t a Hedgehog, and it isn’t a Tortoise. It’s a little bit of both, and I don’t know its proper name’ complains the baby jaguar confronted with an armadillo: ‘“Nonsense!” Said Mother Jaguar. “Everything has its proper name. I should call it “Armadillo” till I found out the real one. And I should leave it alone”’.

The multiple namings and cross-species interactions in the *Just So Stories* are addressed to a ‘Best Beloved’ whose inspiration was Kipling’s daughter Josephine. In focussing on an ingenious girl character ‘inventing’ the alphabet in the Taffy stories, they are not weighted by the expectations of genre and national development attached to imperial boyhood, although arguably the headstrong Taffy possesses some of the imperial boy’s best qualities. Their commingling of geographies and traditions and the opening up of intrepid adventures to girls and, arguably, to other cultures, may be viewed as destabilising the prime position of colonial masculinity.

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In acknowledging the cross-cultural inclusiveness of the *Just So Stories* and the trenchant British worldliness of the Puck books that use the child to ‘see’ a new, though ancient, Englishness, we realise that these later tales seem to have abandoned, or at least marginalised, the imperial boy. We must therefore take Allen’s point that, as a book interested in imperial continuity and in India, *Kim* is the last of its kind.

The triangulation of child, race and nation embedded in the early short fiction and *The Jungle Books* becomes in *Kim* a more confused and confusing circuit of relations. These have a diffuse but declarative ‘Britishness’ at their centre, shot through with points of contention that coalesce in the figure of the child. S.P. Mohanty argues that ‘what might be called the separate world of childhood registers and refracts crucial political anxieties of imperial Britain’. As with Mowgli’s jungle, the very notion of a ‘separate world’ whose reflective function enables empire to express itself suggests that the urge towards self-examination involves containing risks (be they Indian resistance, guilt or weakness) by focussing on the constancy, renewal or potential located in the child.

In *Kim*, imperial self-control involves adaptation, made manifest in the genre-challenging and linguistically diverse form of the novel. Randall calls *Kim* ‘the

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158 As Simon Gikandi points out, ‘Englishness’ effectively synthesizes the Scots, Welsh and Irish identities through shared imperialism: ‘empire was the cultural and political entity that sustained the core of a common British identity against the pressures of nationalism on the fringe,’ *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Cultures of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 29. As I consider in Chapter 3 in relation to the Indian novel, this process can also be viewed from the other end of empire, as it were: ‘the colonial space was to reconstitute itself in response to the imposition of Englishness; in inventing itself, the colonial space would also reinvent the structure and meaning of the core terms of Englishness, including Shakespeare and Cricket’, 158 Gikandi, p. xviii.

imaginative pairing of boyhood adventure with pacified colonial space’. However, the story with its picaresque form and visual tableaux is not an adventure romance and India appears more as heterogeneous and open than as easily held in place either by Kim’s culture-crossing or his consuming gaze. The boundaries between Kim as an Irish boy who passes as Indian while working as a spy and the passivity of the lama he follows are never enforced and are often, like those between human and animal in *The Jungle Books*, forcibly blurred:

“But thou hast a Search of thine own? The lama—very pleased that he remembered so well—sat bold upright.

“Ay,” said Kim, humouring him. The boy was entirely happy to be out chewing *pan* and seeing new people in the great good-tempered world.

“It was a bull—a Red Bull that shall come and help thee—and carry thee—whither? I have forgotten. A Red bull on a green field, was it not?”

“Nay, it will carry me nowhere,” said Kim. “It is but a tale I told thee.”

The bull refers to Kim’s father’s regiment that will later conduct him into the hands of the British authorities, dismissed in favour of the key elements of Kim’s (British) identity: naturalness (in the sense of being ‘entirely’ at home in his world) and adaptability (in responding to challenges that threaten the unity of this world).

Kim’s proficiency, following Mowgli, is in being both a colonial boy mastering his environment and a child acting as a ‘window’ onto the wonders of India. India itself is crucial to this dynamic: mysterious, primitive and addictive but containing hidden dangers, it cannot be simply seen through the child. Rather its power is shown through what the child is required to do and be in order to fulfil the imperial ideal. There is a carefully constructed balance between the constant and the growing child:

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160 Randall, p. 88.
It was equally beautiful to watch the people little clumps of red and blue and pink and white and saffron, burning aside to go to their own villages, dispersing and growing small by twos and threes across the level plain. Kim felt these things, though he could not give tongue to his feelings, and so contented himself with buying peeled sugarcane and spitting the pith generously about his path. (p. 87)

Like the Curator of the Museum (also called ‘The Wonder House’ or Ajaib-gher), Kim has the means to ‘collect’ India but, because he is figured as a child, does not know how to order what he gathers. The narration channels the field of vision through the child’s perceptions so that India appears as a colourful multiplicity, unaffected by Kim’s inability to articulate it. In both the excerpts cited, Suleri’s observation of a static colonial tableau applies: the colonial encounter ‘dispenses with chronology’ in a way that allows constant animation but creates a narrative that is ‘impelled with nowhere to go’: living in perpetuity, ‘all hours of the twenty-four are alike to Orientals’ (p. 41).

In viewing India through the child, the narration does what Kim cannot: it puts India in its place by making it analogous to the constant child, alive but going nowhere. This is what Said calls ‘the British repossessing India […] to be at home in it again, and again’. The threat or promise of manhood that drives the fates of Winkie, Toby, Punch and Mowgli and is tragically denied to the drummer boys and Muhammad Din is deflected by Kim as he lies unconscious between the ‘worldly soul’ (p. 379) of the horse-dealer and spy Mahbub Ali and the ‘child’s simplicity’ of the lama at the book’s close (p. 376). Although we may believe that he will not be able to escape the Great Game as Mowgli cannot avoid his ‘own people’, Kim’s resistance is stronger and

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162 Suleri, p. 7.
163 Suleri, p. 113.
164 Said, Culture and Imperialism, p. 194.
stranger, engaged in making British India permanent as the lama is insistent that the
boy will achieve the ‘Reward’ (p. 381) of freedom and become ‘a teacher’ (p. 377).

What, then, may we learn from Kim, a boy who asks more questions than he gives
answers? The text’s insistence on his physicality as holding in check his over-active
mind is allied with the presentism of the Buddhist search that is also a version of
Mowgli’s jungle rhythms. I read Kim’s body as analogous to the Indian landscape that
the text repeatedly rhapsodises upon: at once supple and quick moving but also
vulnerable to becoming formless, as it does when Kim is en route to school. Like the
Afghan frontier in ‘Wee Willie Winkie’, at the end of the novel the mountain borders
become ‘a hazardous and threatening environment […] an environment that needs to
be tamed, controlled, at the very least to be mapped and understood’.¹⁶⁵ This mapping
or ‘knowing’ of India and of the child needs a narrative that repeatedly halts to
consider the child and the colonised as ‘just there’ before proceeding on a growth
curve that calls on the powers of education but, as Suleri cogently argues, ultimately
places adolescence as an end rather than a beginning.

For Kim, as for Mowgli, growth marks an awareness of difference and self-
questioning: the compulsive ‘Who is Kim — Kim — Kim?’ (p. 248) and Mowgli’s
musings on his identity as man/wolf differentiates their tales from ‘Wee Willie
Winkie’ or ‘Toomai of the Elephants’ in which the child is comforted by immediate
elevation to hero status, well on his way to being ‘grown up’. Kim and Mowgli both
know too much because of their changeling status and not enough because their

rigorous education in top-down imperialism is not sufficient to their positions as part of, or playing the part of, the colonised/animal other. Post-education, Kim has increasing difficulty in maintaining the unity of his mind and body and becomes vulnerable to alienation from both his Indian and British identities.\textsuperscript{166}

At Kim’s points of crisis, the archaic and rhythmic language of the novel is crucial in maintaining narrative composure as Kim’s voice falters. Montefiore characterises the novel’s rendering of native speech, like animal speech in Mowgli’s jungle, as a ‘fluent, natural-sounding, archaic style’ that amounts to an artificial English aiming to be equivalent to Indian languages.\textsuperscript{167} However, even if we accept that all language is artifice, the use of ‘thee’ and ‘ye’, past tense forms such as ‘drave’ instead of ‘drove’, word-play, bracketed translations or emphasis in italics seems a mammoth effort to produce Montefiore’s ‘world of un-lettered, pre-industrial people’, suggesting that the impression of comprehensiveness is as much a way of denying us comprehension as of making meaning natural or obvious.\textsuperscript{168} Whereas translation occurs on the border between village and jungle in \textit{The Jungle Books} and is not a prominent issue in the early tales, in \textit{Kim} it is ubiquitous as the boy struggles to turn his own thoughts from the vernacular into English: ‘Each long, perfect day rose behind Kim for a barrier to cut him off from his race and his mother tongue. He slipped back into thinking and dreaming in the vernacular’(p. 283).

India itself is the fiction into which the reader escapes from Kim’s cultural/linguistic anxieties. Other children are called upon to resolve conflicts: in the following excerpt

\textsuperscript{166} See Suleri, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{167} Montefiore, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{168} Montefiore, p. 35.
the child appears between the narration of events during the ‘Black Year’ of 1857 by an old Indian soldier and the lama’s calm extrapolation of ‘the Middle Way’:

A naked child toddled up, stared, and, moved by some quick impulse of reverence, made a solemn little obeisance before the lama — only the child was so short and fat that it toppled over sideways, and Kim laughed at the sprawling, chubby legs. The child, scared and indignant, yelled aloud.

“Hai! Hai!” said the soldier, leaping to his feet. “What is it? What orders? I dreamed it was an alarm. Little one — little one — do not cry. Have I slept? That was discourteous indeed!”

“I fear! I am afraid!” roared the child.

“What is to fear? Two old men and a boy? How wilt thou ever make a soldier, Princeling?” (p. 77)

Firstly, the child takes Kim’s place as intermediary between the two men, allowing for a restoration of colonial ‘reality’ through an amusing appeal to shared feeling that recalls Muhammad Din as a ‘chubby little eccentricity’. Secondly, the terms ‘soldier’ and ‘Princeling’ affix to the child the badge of Indian loyalty to the British. This works to counter the soldier’s earlier recollections of ‘a madness’ that took over the army and left Delhi ‘awash with blood’ (p. 73). It also offers an alternative version of the child to that of the lama’s credulity as a childlike figure. The chapter reflects upon the efficacy of both models: when the old soldier is asked why he carries a sword when he is not allowed to use it by law he replies “‘that was a fancy of mine — an old man’s fancy’” to which the lama responds, “‘It is not a good fancy’ [. . .] ‘What profit to kill men?’” (p. 73). The soldier justifies killing in order to produce a safe world for ‘weaponless dreamers’, but his insistence that it is an old man’s game pushes the Mutiny, and, by implication, all colonial and anti-colonial violence, back into the past and beyond the fence of the novel’s India.

The irruption of the child onto the scene thus provides post-traumatic comfort for the coloniser with the old man’s self-deprecating “‘we are all babblers at our age’”
highlighting the function of his own stable if subservient identity in ring-fencing imperial fictions. This is particularly important when Kim is pushed out of the picture, as he is in the episode above, or when he loses the ability to ‘babble’ (p. 76). At such moments there is a sense that loss or denial of identity may even be productive in maintaining the colonial continuity epitomised in the old soldier:

A very few white people, but many Asiatics, can throw themselves into amazement as it were by repeating their own names over and over again to themselves, letting the mind go free upon speculation as to what is called personal identity. When one grows older, the power, usually, departs, but while it lasts it may descend upon a man at any moment.

“Who is Kim - Kim – Kim?” (p. 247-8)

The colonised without a clear sense of their place can be set upon by existential doubt ‘at any moment’ and Kim is one of the few white people with this ability to question himself and his purpose: “If I die today, who will bring the news – and to whom?” (p. 247). Importantly, Colonel Creighton is another, creating a direct lineage for Kim to follow into the Great Game and suggesting that this ability in ‘Asiatics’ is not a harmless child’s bewilderment but a weapon that leads to the ability to become the other:

Kim pretended to understand perhaps one word in three of this talk. Then the Colonel, seeing his mistake, turned to fluent and picturesque Urdu and Kim was contented. No man could be a fool who knew the language so intimately, who moved so gently and silently, and whose eyes were so different from the dull fat eyes of other sahibs.

(p. 159)

The language switch is a strategy on Creighton’s behalf that mirrors Kim’s own pretence and acknowledges that, despite speaking the vernacular out of preference, Kim shares the self-consciousness of the white colonialists and the narrator that allows him a touch of irony in his native speech. When he enters the world of espionage, his proficiency becomes an imperialist’s skill that uses the ‘madness’ of
anti-colonial resistance as allied with the existential ‘amazement’ of the East against itself.

Watching without being seen is another appropriation of qualities attached to Indians: ‘Kim laid himself down, his ear against a crack in the heat-split cedar door, and, following his instinct, stretched out to listen and watch’ (p. 205). As Elleke Boehmer suggests, such activity is constitutive of colonialism:

Indian life in Kim is as rich and varied as are the myriad spectacles on the Trunk Road. Yet British authority, of which Kim is a part, is able to embrace this vastness within the grids of its bureaucracy and intelligence networks – the structures of its gaze. 169

Like the children of the early stories, as well as Mowgli, Kim is involved in a play of mastery and masquerade, both figuring the interpretation of India and being interpreted as India. The adaptability of the text itself negotiates between the constant and the growing child enabling Kim, through his multiple positions, to retain the lama’s faith and deny his involvement in plotting the grid of colonial India: “‘It may be that the Bull knows — that he is sent to guide us both,” said the lama, hopefully as a child’ (p. 51).

Kim is an artfully constructed British boy who nevertheless, like Mowgli and the British boys who precede him, relies on his breeding. He is placed between the growing child, who is the son of a British soldier, and the constant child, whose impressions give us the ‘real’ beating heart of India. The lama takes on the part of the innocent child that is also India while Kim is busy learning the Great Game: both

worlds remain open to Kim as the ultimate imperial boy. The enclosed geography and secure colonial time of the Simla tales has given way in Mowgli and now Kim to overlaid spaces and times. Whichever world Kim chooses, the narrative does not propose that he, anymore than Mowgli on his new trail, will be able to resolve the time-space conundrum of the colonial child through a self-development that must also be national commitment. The ‘absent text’ of the child or the nation that we may wish to discover behind the political and linguistic games of British colonialism turns out only to live in and as the archaic India that it has been invented to supersede.
Chapter 2

Infancy and India in the works of Flora Annie Steel

This chapter focuses on the work of Flora Annie Steel in order to examine how the encounter with the child in nineteenth-century Raj literature is orchestrated by a woman writer negotiating ‘male’ literary forms and promoting the importance of women’s domestic and public work to the empire. Admired by Kipling, who declared ‘she is a beautiful writer and she knows’, like him, Steel is an especially revealing case study less for her typicality than for her exceptional breadth of knowledge and range of writing on India.¹ Her Tales of the Punjab (1894) influenced Kipling’s combinations of beasts and men in the Mowgli tales and he was impressed by her championing of the cause of Indian women. Steel is representative of white women in India in that her concerns centre upon women’s position between the twin tracks of marriage and maternity as they are re-routed in a colonial locale. But she is exceptional in penning colonial texts that, whilst granting India a fathomless appeal that begets British responsibility, endow the imperial woman with a complexity and self-determination that Kipling never managed. She also tackles the subject that he felt to be ‘beyond my scope’: the year 1857.²


² Kipling, Letter to R.U. Johnson, Letters, II, p. 219. Despite deferring to Steel’s greater talent for writing a ‘Mutiny novel’, Kipling had published two articles dealing with the 1857 rebellion, in 1887 and 1888, both of which anticipate Kim in which the event is a distant memory.
Through a double rendering of the child as both the British future and the Indian present (that is also Britain’s past), Steel sets out the challenges before the white colonial woman. Recognising increasingly that ‘housekeeping in India today has a political and social as well as a domestic side’, Steel re-frames an analogy that Isabella Beeton made more than thirty years previously: ‘As with the Commander of an Army, or the leader of any enterprise, so is it with the mistress of a house’. In the interests of the imperial project, Steel insists on cross-cultural communication:

An English experience of three years has taught the writers that dirt, slovenliness, and want of method are not confined to one hemisphere […]. Their advice therefore to those beginning to housekeep in India is — make the most of the patience, good temper, and old-fashioned sense of servitude, which Board Schools do not teach.

Comparing colonial practices favourably with those in Britain and preferring Indian servants to those of the British working classes, Steel makes clear that she regards ‘English girls to whom fate may assign the task of being house-mothers in our Eastern Empire’ and to whom The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook (1888) is dedicated as at the forefront of socio-political change.

Although Steel assumes ‘a certain sense of duty’ and ‘educated refinement’ in her readers, the narrative voices of her texts have a force that knocks sideways assumptions that Anglo-Indian women were inferior imitators of the inhabitants of

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3 Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner, ‘Preface to the Present Edition’ (1898), The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook, ed. by Ralph Crane and Anna Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 5. First published in 1888-9, the book proved incredibly popular, and was repeatedly re-issued and updated. It sought to demystify Anglo-India in the tradition of Mrs Beeton who in addressing the middle-class British woman ‘brought her into being as an idealized type’. See Crane and Johnston, ‘Introduction’, p. xvii. There were at least ten editions between 1888 and 1921. Steel took responsibility for the majority of the writing and had the upper hand in the enterprise as a whole, and therefore only refer to Gardiner when discussing her contributions specifically.


respectable British drawing rooms. ‘Giving the duties of mistress and servants, the
general management of the house and practical recipes for cooking in all the
branches,’ The Complete Indian Housekeeper offers advice on everything from the
type of cloths to give the sweeper to dealing with scandal amongst servants and how
to treat the bite of a mad dog. Its fundamental tenet is that ‘an Indian household
cannot more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian
Empire’. In yoking national tradition to domestic practice the text creates a
genealogy of British womanhood that can withstand the pressures of Anglo-India and
rise to the challenge of ‘domestic administration’. Presenting motherhood less as a
privilege than as a power, both physical and figural, on which the nation depends,
Steel’s manual fixes the child and childhood as small cogs in the great wheel of
imperial administration and racial growth. Trusting the British woman’s ‘common-
sense and sound judgement’ (p. 169), the text insists that ‘there is no reason at all why
the health should suffer’ (p. 170).

In this chapter I suggest that this do-it-yourself rhetoric also facilitates Steel’s re-
imagining of the Mutiny romance in On the Face of the Waters (1896). The novel
gives the imperial woman an active and complex role in events in whose grand
narratives she had hitherto always been the victim, ‘posing new, uneasy questions
about the role of European women as partners in empire.’ Foregrounding the work
of editing, arranging and promoting a book, The Complete Indian Housekeeper also

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6 ‘Preface to the First Edition’, p. 6. This kind of manual was widely sought after by men as well as
women for it was considered essential that a man living alone have a reliable female input in running
his Indian household.

7 The Complete Indian Housekeeper, p. 18. Further references will be indicated in the body of the text.

Review 83, (1886), p. 365, cited in Sen, Woman and Empire, p. 34.


10 Tickell, Terrorism and Insurgency in Indian-English Literature, p. 120.
offers a useful angle on Steel’s role as a woman writer with ambitions to achieve literary acclaim as well as to preserve Indian folk culture. In reading these diverse texts dialogically, I approach the child as the means of considering the relationship between woman and nation. The key question in my assessment of Steel’s work is how the child is made to figure the imperial nation even when protected beneath the skirts of the memsahib as the infant opposite of the imperial boy or when installed in a boarding school in England. In tandem with this concern is the question of how far Steel’s much-vaunted knowledge of India enables a female Anglo-Indian writer to engage not only with the development of an implicitly male colonial subject but also with her own and that of her own colonised opposite, the Indian woman.

Described as a ‘model memsahib’\textsuperscript{11} by her contemporary Maud Diver and as possessing breathtaking ‘bounce’ and dynamism in Violet Powell’s account of her life and work, from a biographical point of view, Steel defeated many of the expectations associated with the increasing numbers of European women in India in the late Victorian period.\textsuperscript{12} During her twenty-two years in India, she became closely involved in the lives of Indian women and children, learning local languages, acting as a doctor and campaigning for the rights of peasants and women. Steel was an Inspectress of schools in the Punjab and a member of the Provincial Education board. While her

\textsuperscript{11} Maud Diver, \textit{The Englishwoman in India} (London: William Blackwood, 1909), p. 78. Diver (1867-1945) became a popular author whose novel \textit{Captain Desmond V.C.} (1907) dealt with the lives of British women in India in the 1880s. She shared Steel’s interest in Indian women, going as far as endorsing inter-racial marriage in \textit{Lilimani} (1911) in which a high-caste Indian girl trains as a doctor and marries an Englishman.

husband had a successful career in the Indian Civil Service, Steel caused controversy by living apart from him in order to complete the terms of her public appointment.

As Allen points out, during this period when the Raj was much concerned with its public image, the memsahib evolved from what Diver calls an ‘emotional, pleasure-loving’ creature to become an active, even aggressive, ‘house-mother’ and then, in Steel’s case and a number of others, a socially active role model who reaches out to Indian women. This last stage happened predominantly after World War I, confirming that Steel was, as she herself would have it, at the forefront of her time.

A popular author who refused to be pigeonholed as a romance writer, Steel’s works span a number of genres, the majority written after she left India in 1889. Steel initiates her British readers into a trans-cultural encounter: ‘The West with its commercial theory that “time is money”, the East with its philosophical dictum that “time is naught”. Between East and West there is ‘enchainment’ and fidelity, but this is a commitment that is bounded by racial and social structures maintained by a belief that, as the result of contact between the civilised and the uncivilised, any offspring is flawed and unnatural. It is my contention that this encounter is to a great

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13 Diver, p. 78.
15 Steel’s other publications include the collections of stories From the Five Rivers (1893), The Flower of Forgiveness and Other Stories (1894), In the Permanent Way and Other Stories (1897), the novels Miss Stuart’s Legacy (1893), The Potter’s Thumb (1894) and a history of India, India Through the Ages (1909). Her published works are listed in Dictionary of British Women Writers, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 644.
16 Steel, The Garden of Fidelity, p. 220.
17 The Garden of Fidelity, p. 57. Steel’s formulations of racial difference concur with the opening of Kipling’s story ‘Beyond the Pale’ that became a well-known dictum: ‘A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the
extent made possible through the figure of the child. The Indian child and the unmentionable Eurasian child display the unfortunate consequences of racial inferiority and miscegenation, enabling the memsahib to define her purpose as both beyond their time and essential to their improvement. Conversely, the British child, the ostensible purpose of the white woman in India that is also, Steel suggests, her burden, is used to confront the challenges of continuing to ‘parent’ India.

As an Anglo-Indian wife, Steel was unable to fit a normative British parenting role, suffering the ‘dislocation of domesticity’ much lamented by colonial families while ‘the need to project an orderly female personality was a responsibility’.\(^\text{18}\) This may have some bearing on her efforts to disentangle her idea of womanhood from the moral and physical requirements of childrearing. Indrani Sen contends that Steel was ‘in her perceptions and attitudes first and foremost a memsahib and only secondarily, if at all, a “feminist”’.\(^\text{19}\) Before concentrating on the child in her writing, I wish to probe further the ways in which Steel, even if not in her own words or in the terms of contemporary feminist scholarship, \textit{was} a feminist and to add ‘writer’ to Sen’s assessment of her self-proclaimed roles. I focus on how these positions become mutually constitutive in Steel’s work through their relation to the child and to India.

\textbf{MODEL MEMSAHIB = WOMAN WRITER}

It is important to appreciate that the memsahib was a divisive figure. In Steel’s writing she is carefully constructed as a legitimate position from which to write but also as a type who, because she was often mocked and denigrated in Britain, requires

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\(^{18}\) Sen, p. 30 and p. 35. Sen cites an article in \textit{The Calcutta Review} as early as 1845 that discusses how Anglo-Indian women were closely watched by their Indian counterparts for signs of depravity.

\(^{19}\) Sen, p. 135.
Steel’s defence. Diver, whose *The Englishwoman in India* (1909) forcibly asserted the importance of women’s role in the empire, gave Steel’s energy in this direction solemn praise: ‘women like Mrs Steel […] would seem to be as rare as they are admirable.’ Diver highlights the lack of women ‘like’ Mrs Steel, indicating that her role as both the actor in and the commentator on her situation was unusual but also desirable and attainable.

On the one hand, the ‘mem’ was perceived as the unsung handmaiden to the builders of empire, forgoing home comforts for a life of hardship. On the other, she was a rootless socialite flitting from one indulgence to another. Freed from the burdens of childcare she could exercise dangerous sexual proclivities. In his memoir of a long life in India, Walter Lawrence judges that, despite ‘little faults and foibles’, the memsahib is devoted and courageous: ‘I have nothing but admiration for the Memsahib, and pride that England produces […] women still as brave and steadfast as they were in the Mutiny’. Writing in 1928, Lawrence identifies a desire for continuity and commemoration in which the empire retrospectively places its faith in its women.

As Philippa Levine shows, this attitude of benign appreciation refuses to recognise the cruel malleability that characterised memsahib’s place: ‘In British India women were

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20 Diver, p. 78.
21 This female ‘type’ appears in Kipling’s short fiction, most famously in the witty but wily Mrs Hauksbee. See, for example, ‘The Rescue of Pluffles’ (*Plain Tales*). As Sen details with reference to the popular press, ‘this construct of the colonial woman as a tragic exile coexisted with that of the idle pleasure-seeker over a fairly long period’ (p. 29).
22 Walter Roper Lawrence, *The India we Served* (London: Cassell, 1938), p. 104. Lawrence opens his memoir with a facsimile of a letter from Kipling demanding that he publish his Indian diaries. He begins with an account of his childhood and schooling as leading up to his career in the ICS (1879-1895). Lawrence rose to become Private Secretary to the Viceroy Lord Curzon, 1899-1903.
23 On the compulsive commemoration of the Mutiny, see Tickell, Chapter 3.
regarded both as a nuisance and a necessity’.24 Nancy Paxton similarly argues that such belittling constructions belie the fact that empire was an arena in which women were able to bring about change, as feminists were doing in Britain.25 The ability to find both pleasure and purpose in India became, as Lawrence describes in his search for a suitable wife, an attractive quality: ‘a wife who does not mind “roughing it”, long journeys, constant transfers; sometimes a lonely life, away from doctors, dentists and civilization; a wife who likes India, the Indians and the adventure of Indian life; a wife of noble patience and pluck’.26 When Steel arrived in India, white women were starting to show themselves able to administer medicine, supervise education and understand legal jargon — in short to take on the ‘grown-up’ role they performed in the home in the public arena. Steel refuted the nuisance label by framing her public work as an extension of her domestic duties and considered both as labour of the mind and as suitable subjects for writing. As Jenny Sharpe puts it, ‘Flora Annie Steel, perhaps more than anyone else, embodies the memsahib in all her contradictions’.27

Lawrence’s valorising of women’s courage under threat is indebted to the huge popularity of the self-sacrificing female of Mutiny romance in the 1890s, perhaps with an added nostalgic edge because he writes after women’s suffrage has been achieved. Pitched towards a mature adult readership rather than the youthful audience of generic adventure fiction, the Mutiny romance contained more intricate love-plots...

26 Lawrence, pp. 84-5.
27 Sharpe, Allegories of Empire, p. 93.
and a deeper interest in its subjects than adventure fiction for younger readers.  

This genre reliant on male passion and violence held out against the upsurge of the New Woman while also enabling women, including married ones, to have some agency in imperial heroics. It also participated in what Alex Tickell calls:

> a melancholic colonial culture that at once sought an affirming collective identity in the experience of resurgence and reconquest, but was also marked by a new awareness of its own insecurity, and its ability to transform into a terrorizing extra-judicial sovereign power.

Through her resentfully independent and often melancholic heroine Kate in *On the Face of the Waters*, as well in contributions to public debates, Steel aired her uncompromising views on the imperial remit of women as essential actors in this ‘new’ imperialism. Her combative approach can be read as stepping inline with the diverse figure of the New Woman whose heyday was the 1880s and 90s, even as it takes a positive stance on empire. Steel became president of the Women Writer’s Suffrage League in 1913 and her late nineteenth-century writings anticipate this position in presenting the Mutiny-era colonial woman as a figure of ‘protofeminist’ resistance and reform.

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29 Paxton, p. 130. The term ‘New Woman’ is thought to have been coined by Sarah Grand in an article in 1894 and referred to a vocal generation of women determined to enter higher education and professional employment. See Gillian Kersley, *Darling Madame: Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend* (London: Virago, 1983) and Lucy Bland, ‘Sexual Politics of the 1890s’, in *Equal or Different: Women’s Politics 1800 – 1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 141-164 (pp. 143-6).

30 Tickell, p. 123.

31 Although the terms ‘feminist’ and ‘feminism’ only arrived in Britain in 1895, I follow Bland in using them to refer to ‘thoughts, actions and persons that challenged the existing power of men over women and its consequent inequalities.’ As Bland clarifies, ‘corresponding contemporary terms included, “the women’s movement,” a “worker for the cause,” a “woman emancipator”, ‘Sexual Politics’, p. 142. Feminist activity was not focussed solely on suffrage but on changes to law, education and professional restrictions as well as the imperative for women to represent themselves in writing in novels and journals.
Steel’s work also benefits from being read in the company of writing by Indian writers who have been called New Women. The work of Krupabai Satthianadhan, focusses on women’s desire for independence and education in a Christian framework through which ‘simplicity, truthfulness, piety, and the habit of self-reliance were inculcated’, is comparable to that of Steel. A medical student and teacher, Satthianadhan wrote novels, *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) and *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1894), that have become known as the first examples of Indian New Woman novels in English. Although, due to her ill health and death at the age of thirty-two, her corpus is smaller than Steel’s, it provides an instance of cross-cultural agreement: ‘the liberal spirit’, brought by British rule, is, according to the character Saguna, ‘the spirit which gives to a woman equal privileges with man, and credits her with noble and disinterested actions’. Satthianadhan’s work also provides examples of the ways in which resistance happens in multiple ways enabling a woman and/or a colonised subject to be, as Anindita Ghosh asserts, ‘both resisting agent and collaborator’.

The focus on tradition, hierarchy and domestic management in Steel’s work does not fit the image of woman as in the ‘modern vanguard’. However, despite their commitment to change, New Women were by and large keen to rethink rather than reject the institution of marriage. Lucy Bland asserts that feminists sought to control ‘bestial’ male sexuality rather than to promote it through free unions: ‘The “marriage

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33 Satthianadhan, *Saguna*, p. 149.


35 Ledger, p. 5.
debate” and the “new woman” fiction shifted the social purity focus from prostitution and into the heart of the marital home’.\(^{36}\) Popular discussion was sparked by Mona Caird’s 1888 article that pronounced marriage a ‘vexatious failure’.\(^{37}\) In the same year, the *Daily Telegraph* asked the question ‘Is Marriage a failure?’ and received over 27,000 responses.\(^{38}\) Steel’s contribution to the topic explicitly connects marriage to the empire; in *The Lady’s Realm* in 1897 she strongly disagrees with Marie Corelli’s contention that marriage should be based on love, describing it as ‘a duty of the race’, a view she maintains in her autobiography.\(^ {39}\)

Love was commonly associated with childhood and marriage with adult responsibility. In a letter to his fiancée, Edward Dennison Ross indicates how this distinction works when colonial employment requires separation: ‘I feel as if we were two children […]. Love is so simple and so beautiful, and marriage seems so very complicated at a distance’.\(^{40}\) Ross, like Steel, identifies love with a shared childhood and marriage, with its considerations of money, property and extended family, with adulthood and the duty to contribute to a positive image of Britishness and of empire. This model also works to separate marriage from inter-racial relationships. In Kipling’s ‘Lisbeth’ (*Plain Tales*), a young tribal girl falls for an older white man who abandons her. In ‘Beyond the Pale’ inter-racial love also comes to physical and psychological grief. In *On the Face of the Waters*, the hero, Jim Douglas, also moves

\(^{36}\) Bland, p. 145.  
\(^{37}\) Caird’s ‘Marriage’ was published in the *Westminster Review*. Bland describes Caird as in the process of becoming a New Woman novelist, a journalist and a radical liberal feminist influenced by J.S. Mill, Herbert Spencer and Darwin.  
\(^{40}\) Letter from Edward Denison Ross to Dora, 6 March 1904, Ross Collection, III, fol.10. Ross was in India as president of a Calcutta Madrasah. He was an Orientalist and linguist and first director of the School of Oriental and African Studies (1916 – 1937).
away from his Indian lover to marry Kate, whose son Freddy is protected from inter-racial contact by remaining at boarding school.

The idea that affection between Britons and Indians may be grown out of is one that Steel also promotes in relation to children who, although they may take their first lessons from their ayah, must gradually be separated from her influence. In voicing the tension between women’s desire for self-determination and marriage as a national institution, Steel shows that it is the imperial imperative, rather than any difference of opinion on women’s abilities, that distinguishes her position from Caird and other radical feminists. Caird demolishes the biological basis of gendered roles by satirically putting the man in the woman’s shoes: ‘To every true man, the cares of fatherhood and home are sacred and all-sufficing. He realise, as he looks around at his little ones, that they are his crown and recompense’. Steel, in contrast, uses the tactic of putting both male and female work in the hands of women, using an occasionally ironic superior tone as appropriate to the mistress in The Complete Indian Housekeeper. According to Steel, women may have other occupations outside the home, but they must also demand respect for the work they do within it, motivated as they are by duty rather than self-concern.

Restoring women to colonial history entails recognising that feminism was not just focussed on female freedom but was often invested in imperialist discourses

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associated with patriarchy. Feminists promoted ‘purposed maternity’ as sparing women the exhaustion and anxiety of repeated pregnancies. This happens in parallel with increasing scrutiny of both mothers’ health and child development. As E.M. Collingham details, ‘throughout the nineteenth-century the medical orthodoxy stated that the heat of the Indian climate over-stimulated the organs of the body resulting in sluggishness and congestion’. In order to counter these subtle changes as well as the myriad diseases the British suffered in India, ‘a closed and regimented body’ replaced ‘the flamboyant, effeminate’ figure of the nabob. This discipline was felt more by women whose cleanliness, modesty and privacy were monitored by male commentators.

In order to maintain ‘levelness’ between mental and physical processes, Gordon Stables’ The Wife’s Guide to Health and Happiness (1894) states that, ‘The greatest mistake in life that women make and it is this that will lead to the decline and fall of this great empire, as surely as that of Rome, is the neglect of corporeal health’. The reference to Rome makes clear that it is not the health of individual women that is at stake (for this is constantly improving) but the future of the empire that is being figured biologically: as Clement Dukes confirms, ‘vigorous bodies’ produce ‘vigorous brains’ and British men are therefore more able to adapt to altered conditions than

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44 Collingham, Imperial Bodies, p. 2.
45 Collingham, p. 3.
women. Taking advantage of the contradiction this implies in which women are both
guardians of the race and the weak inferiors to men, feminists were able to justify
having fewer children by drawing on eugenic discourses promoting the primacy of the
white races over the black.\(^{48}\) Olive Schreiner, a radical feminist thinker, ingeniously
represented this standpoint in ‘The Woman Question’ (1899), that later formed the
first part of Woman and Labour (1911).\(^{49}\)

Schreiner observes that industrial and technological innovations in Western societies
have meant that a smaller, skilled workforce is needed and it is therefore desirable
that fewer children are born and that they are educated outside the home. The
reduction in women’s maternal function that this brings about means that the
bourgeois, ‘civilised’ woman has become a ‘sex-parasite’ lacking in useful social
labour and therefore subject to degeneration and able to produce only weak offspring,
if she produces children at all. To counter this situation, Schreiner suggests allowing
woman ‘compensatory fields of action’, education and training so that she may be a
better mother to the race: ‘not for herself alone, but for the entire race, has woman
sought her new path.’\(^{50}\) Here Schreiner turns the tables on critics who claimed that the
New Woman would produce ‘stunted and hydrocephalic children’ leading to ‘the
ultimate extinction of the race’ in a way comparable to Steel’s insistence on public

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\(^{48}\) Nancy Stepan identifies the pessimism of the fin-de-siècle period, growing unemployment, political
radicalism and military struggles in the Boer War as catalysts for the popular appeal of eugenics. See
The Importance of Race, pp. 117-118.

\(^{49}\) ‘The Woman Question’ was first published in two parts in The Cosmopolitan (New York), 1899. It is

\(^{50}\) Schreiner, ‘The Woman Question’ in Olive Schreiner Reader, ed. by Barash, pp. 84-5.
work and private life being of equal value as the means to working out the causes of ‘woman’s disabilities’. 51

Whilst Bland contends that after the turn of the century the ‘feminist “edge”’ to these ideas ‘tended to disappear beneath a morass of jingoistic and racist rhetoric’, the writings of Schreiner and Steel indicate that, across the political spectrum, there was a more complex cross-fertilization of feminist and imperial ideas. Women were using imperial, racial and evolutionary discourses as a lever for their cause before popular imperialism and mass media take-up of eugenics reached its peak. Diver’s insistence on recognising Steel’s talents in order to rebuff charges of female inferiority therefore chimes with the calls of feminist writers that women must evolve in order to reproduce a strong race. Unabashed by Darwin’s assertion that women were of ‘the lower races’, 52 New Woman writers proposed themselves as examples of a ‘higher type’ who, rather than being of the past, were the essential link to the future: ‘As mothers of the human race, the evolutionary development— bodily and intellectual — of women was, for Schreiner, crucial’. 53

Reading Steel’s stiffly starched brand of conservative feminism in counterpoint to Schreiner’s radicalism and amidst a broader women’s movement reveals common patterns in thinking about womanhood and about empire. Whilst Schreiner’s image as a feminist has, Ledger argues, sometimes concealed her eugenicist interests and imperialist rhetoric, Steel’s status as a romance writer happy ‘to feed the myth of

British heroism’ has meant that her feminist credentials have not always been considered when imperialism and patriarchy are made synonymous.\textsuperscript{54} Only by acknowledging that women writers expressed complicated responses to questions involving the rights of women and the rightness of empire and, in doing so, placed the challenge of mothering a nation or a race as a pressing scientific and public concern, can we discuss the colonial or the colonised child, or indeed the way that our own postcolonial sensibilities set the child apart from global (sexual) politics.

**THE (DIS)APPEARANCE OF THE CHILD**

Steel’s work is a fascinating instance of how the child under the bright light of scientific scrutiny, a figure of popular literature and a defining factor in the debate on marriage and women’s education ‘seems, paradoxically, to disappear’.\textsuperscript{55} As Shuttleworth cogently observes, ‘the child becomes an iteration of parental or species history rather than an entity in its own right’; it becomes a metaphor for evolution. This occurrence is compounded in the colonies where parents, educators and medical practitioners operate at a distance, while narratives of adventure require that even the child reader at ‘home’ be sent out into the unknown.

In *The Complete Indian Housekeeper* Steel refers to childrearing as ‘controversial waters’ and, in all her texts, navigates around questions of how children should be nurtured to consider how women should negotiate contradictory figurations of the child (p. 94). The child — as proverbially disobedient infant, lost babe, backward servant or distant youth — is always a way of addressing the woman’s place in


colonial history. Steel’s texts confirm Jacqueline Rose’s suggestion that the child, as the simple other (judged good or bad) to the complex adult, is used ‘to buttress different arguments and positions in the establishment of our relationship to changing cultural forms’.  

Steel’s approach to the child, and to culture more broadly, is valuable because it connects the metropole to the colony by considering the woman apart from the wife and mother. Indeed, as Castañeda suggests, following Cora Kaplan, the female child specifically was likened in ‘protofeminist’ Victorian writing to racial or hybrid others so that ‘in laying claim to normative adult status, the middle class, white woman writer had to insist upon her difference from the normative adult’s others’.  

This may go some way to explaining why Steel’s texts minimise anxieties over the threat of the Indian environment to children’s health and modulate the rhetoric that requires women to protect the nation via motherhood, while still placing emphasis on the health and education of children collectively as a concern of the colonial state.

Writing about her separation from her own child in The Garden of Fidelity (1929), Steel advocates an active public role for women as having both a curative function when families are divided and as essential to the smooth running of the Raj. Steel’s baby daughter ‘provided the first link of my subsequent enchainment to the interests of the village women’, which continued long after she was sent home to England to

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56 Rose, The Case of Peter Pan, p. 142.
live with relatives. Steel credits herself with being able to provide an antidote both to the ennui experienced by Anglo-Indian wives and the loss or separation from children in the form of hard work: ‘Hundreds of Indian wives have felt the désœuvrement which must come with the loss of one’s children. Perhaps I was more reasonable than most and deliberately sought a way out’. The child here is equivalent to and replaced by public work, whereas domestic management (especially in India where servants are cheap and plentiful) cannot provide similar satisfaction: for the memsahib ‘life holds higher duties’ (p. 11). Steel’s oeuvre presents the child as both an enabler of this role and an interference that becomes increasingly awkward when coupled with the racial analogy of Indian subjects as children.

The focus of scholars either on Steel’s presentation of white women (largely positive) or Indians (largely negative) fails to address the complexity of these subjects in relation to the often contradictory perspectives of memsahib, mother and writer at a time when the British presence in India was noisily consolidating its strength and questioning its own developmental trajectory. It is my contention that calibrating how, where and why the child is important, both in relation to Steel’s presentation of women and of Indians, can offer a fresh angle on the woman writer of this period and, in doing so, connect her with the work of male writers that make-up the bulk of the

58 The Garden of Fidelity, p. 57.
60 Sen’s discussion of Steel focuses largely on her sympathetic relations with Indian women while Parry discusses her ‘sense of race’ that allows her to ‘fashion vivid expositions’ on the inferior and alien nature of Indians, Delusions and Discoveries, p. 104.
canon of Raj literature, thus providing a more comprehensive view of how colonial relations were figured through the child.61

I look first at the child amongst the minutiae of everyday life in The Complete Indian Housekeeper and begin to consider how evolutionary and degenerationist discourses find their way into Steel’s texts via child. The Indian servant is represented as primitive, despite being subjected to paradigms of child development, while the British child is either figured as an innocent, mischievous infant or as part of a threatened imperial future. I go on to examine Tales of the Punjab (1894) that offers, via the woman author’s collection and translation, a kind of inter-cultural memory of the British-Indian relationship. Problems of origin and racial difference arise through the text’s reliance upon the native child as a channel for the pre-industrial Indian past. Lastly, I track the child through the disasters and heroic displays of the Indian Mutiny in On the Face of the Waters as it revisits the origin of an unforgiving late nineteenth-century imperialism. In response to a hardening of racial divisions, which, Metcalf asserts, ‘evoked a cleansing sense of heroism and self-assertion’, the novel draws out the implications of a continued intimacy with India.62 Following Kate’s route through fear and disguise towards self-definition, the novel has a keen concern with authenticity and fairness, placing the British woman at the centre of the struggle to move beyond the trauma of the Mutiny by writing ‘new’ imperial fictions that tell both the Indian and the British sides of the story.63

61 See B.J. Moore-Gilbert, Kipling and Orientalism.
62 Metcalf, Ideologies of the Raj, p. 45. Metcalf sees this as the primary focus of On the Face of the Waters, despite the ‘resourcefulness’ of Steel’s women characters (pp. 163–4).
63 Steel’s novel was followed by others interested in getting inside the minds of Indian rebels, including Edmund Candler’s Siri Ram-Revolutionist (1912) that, Stephen Morton says, ‘reveal the violent foundations that underpin the liberal rhetoric of the civilising mission in British India’. See ‘Terrorism, Literature and Sedition’, p. 65.
I aim to demonstrate that, despite the ostensible difference of scope and purpose in these texts, the means by which they write the cultural and social dynamics of Britishness, as well as the claim of the writer to know India, depend upon the child. Intimate life was a crucial arena for constructing and controlling, rather than merely reflecting, the ambiguities of British-Indian relations. It was perceived to be threatened not only by Indian resistance but by what John Marriott terms a ‘wildness’. The opposite of civilisation, this degenerative influence lay with the savage, the poor and the young, being ‘used variously to denote a stage in human development, a moral condition and a category in cultural anthropology’.

The recurrence of dirt in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper* demonstrates Marriot’s point: ‘Dirt, illimitable, inconceivable dirt must be expected, until a generation of mistresses has rooted out the habits of immemorial years’ (p. 86). The endless and unimaginable nature of this dirt amidst which the memsahib, taking Steel’s advice, can live ‘usefully and happily’ (p. 171), has the same blanketing effect as the mystical but fascinated perspective on India that suffuses *The Garden of Fidelity*. It is the vast ‘immutability’ of India, ‘multitudinous as the sands of the sea’, to which the author and the memsahib must try to be equal and which hides any rational relation between British colonial policy and the ‘wildness’ or madness associated with Indian demands for greater political control. India’s people must be uplifted because they are subject to ‘superstitious beliefs which a European child might scorn’, and, like their dirt, they are unpredictable and huge in number so that, following the Mutiny and with anti-
colonial activity increasingly subject to legislation, there is in state and household an ‘absolute necessity of keeping up prestige’ (p. 163).

Steel’s texts allow this various and unruly concept of India to recur through the child, making it clear that mastering India-as-child as well as the British child in India is a struggle for the colonial woman equal to the efforts of Kipling’s colonial administrators. Steel’s declaration that ‘I must make use of the magnetic power which, Heaven knows why, I have always had with Indians’ pinpoints the two primary features of her memsahib: the demand of ‘must’ suggests the responsibility to effect change while ‘magnetic’ implies that her status is both natural and endowed by a higher power appealed to in ‘Heaven knows’. The mysteriousness of this power, central also to many male accounts of India, denies the possibility of critical analysis to both ‘the dark continent’ of woman and to the colonised land that is so often read as feminine. For Lawrence, the success of British rule is also represented as a mystery: ‘I had the illusion, wherever I was, that I was infallible in my dealings with Indians […] It was not the prestige of the Raj, but it was the illusion that is in the very air of India’. Steel draws on this airborne authority to give the memsahib a personal and public destiny; the stubborn self assertion of the woman author claiming to be more than a ‘female scribbler’, reorders the colonial text.

HOUSEKEEPING: THE INDIAN SERVANT AS CHILD

67 The Garden of Fidelity, p. 207.
68 See Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 128-145. This sense of being almost overwhelmed by India is frequently expressed in Anglo-Indian texts from the hallucinatory happenings in Kipling’s ‘native’ tales to Trevelyan’s The Competition Wallah.
69 Lawrence, The India We Served, p. 42.
70 Leighton, Victorian Women Poets, p. 3. Leighton traces a ‘creative but suffering femininity’ covertly enthusiastic for learning but always on the brink of self-effacement.
Steel and Gardiner’s manual advocates order and high-handed discipline, making explicit the problematic correlation between the native and the child: ‘The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness’ (p. 12). The ability to communicate effectively with servants is key to the memsahib’s success. However, as Allen notes, ‘the single most useful piece of advice in the book —that the memsahib should learn Hindustani — was the one most frequently ignored’. The pragmatism of The Complete Indian Housekeeper’s recommendations recognises such failures in its readers and allows for moments of irony and humour alongside uncompromising views on dirt, disorder and climate: ‘As to clothing, a woman who wishes to live up to the climate must dress down to it’ (p. 201).

In the domestic setting, the position of the native as child in relation to the memsahib as mother is one of forced acquiescence and suspension in time. Only when encountered as a collective threat in On the Face of the Waters are Indians able to ruffle the memsahib’s feathers. The colonised are deemed subject to delay, arrested at a base point of inferiority against which the suppleness of the memsahib/writer’s role can be tested. The problem that Steel finds in the colonial version of the instructional text is that the correlation between effective leader and willing followers is broken by the Indians’ ‘savage’ nature. While servants, black or white, were often compared to children, the working classes were usually characterised as ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ only when represented as a mass rather than, as is the case with Indian servants, as individuals. As Torgovnik puts it, ‘These Others [the working class, Jews, the Irish, ...

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71 Allen, Raj, p. 81.
72 See Marriott, The Other Empire on how the post-Enlightenment ‘doctrine of progressivism’ allowed for continued exploitation of the ‘uncivilised’ as J.S. Mill had defined them, p. 6.
U.S. blacks] are processed, like primitives, through a variety of tropes which see them as a threatening horde, a faceless mass, promiscuous, breeding, inferior — at the farthest edge, exterminable’.  

In Anglo-India, this troping of servants as disposable competes with a desire to tame them and treat them as part of a growing imperial family; as Annette Beveridge writes of the bearer for whom the Beveridges provided medical and financial assistance, ‘when servants are faithful it is right to help them in every way’. Beveridge records that Hurry the bearer was the first to teach her daughter, Letty, her letters in Hindi and to say ‘Papa’ and ‘Mama’, and Steel and Kipling both set store by their own loyal servants. The fidelity of servants is tested by their devotion to British children and, if they are loyal, their treatment is designed to accord with a childlike status. By providing a familial analogy in which servants can be nurtured, Steel aims to reassure the ‘young housekeepers in India’, to assuage their despair at ‘seeing that all things are wrong, all things slovenly, yet feeling paralysed by sheer inexperience in the attempt to find a remedy’ (p. 6). The ‘slovenly’ Indian servant (both Hindu and Muslim), as ‘a child in everything save name’, is to be afforded ‘a little reasonable human sympathy’ for he is ‘naturally obedient’ (p. 16). In this case Steel locates the inferiority of India not in its simplicity and lack of learning but in a failure of pedagogy. Although focussed on uneducated servants and women rather than educated Indians, Steel’s approach allows for the possibility that Lawrence’s ‘excellent Indians of great experience’ can be produced even though they may be the

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73 Torgovnik, *Gone Primitive*, p. 18.
74 Letter to Henry Beveridge, 18 January 1886, London, British Library Oriental and India Office Collection, MS Eur. C 176. The bearer was the head servant, roughly equivalent to a butler.
75 Letter to Henry Beveridge, 18 January 1886.
exception to the rule. However, the term ‘obedience’ undermines this possibility in connecting Indians with animals who, when trained, appear ‘naturally’ to respond to their masters.

With irony, Steel connects the didactic role of the memsahib to debates on effective colonial administration:

A good mistress in India will try to set a good example to her servants in routine, method, and tidiness. Half-an-hour after breakfast should be sufficient for the whole arrangements of the day; but that half-hour should be given as punctually as possible. An untidy mistress invariably has untidy, a weak one, idle servants. It should never be forgotten that — though it is true in both hemispheres that if you want a thing done you should do it yourself — still, having to do it is a distinct confession of failure in your original intention. Anxious housewives are too apt to accept defeat in this way; the result being that the lives of educated women are wasted in doing the work of lazy servants.’ (p. 15)

The forethought required in ‘the formation of a home — that unit of civilisation where father and children, master and servant, employer and employed can learn their several duties’ (p. 16) is what distinguishes the memsahib from her servant charges. A woman’s private and public functions, the family and the law, are perfectly compatible, although ‘educated women’ may wish to stretch their talents between the two. This Enlightenment model of civilisation and its extension from the home to India as a whole in Steel’s text requires that ‘as little as possible’ should be modified from its origins in England.

The refusal to alter patriarchal structures is notably opposite to the necessity for the memsahib to adapt herself and therefore brings to the fore the way in which threats to empire, whether biological (degeneration and miscegenation), psychological (mental well being) or political (liberalism and/or anti-colonial resistance) became ‘women’s

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76 Lawrence, p. 94.
issues’. Through approaching the Indian servant as the child portion of the ‘companiable association’ of family life, the new memsahib, in her frozen apprehension of the wrongness of India, becomes mistress of the household in a manner that separates her from child/native/animal others and mirrors her husband’s role as master of empire. 77

The demand for young housekeepers set adrift in India to take on this challenge underscores inexperience as a prime complaint in male accounts of work in India. Lawrence, having ‘reached Lahore without a friend and without a blanket’, 78 collects as much knowledge of India as he can: ‘No one taught me my work […] I had been thrown on my own resources, had no English-speaking clerks, and so was forced to learn the Lingua Franca of India’. 79 Lawrence, like Steel, places emphasis on self-mastery and endurance, insisting that it is ‘a fateful mistake to be satirical or superior’ in front of Indians. 80 Steel also reserves ‘autocratic high-handedness’ (p. 79) for only the most desperate of Indian delusions, regarding a balance of praise and blame and the acknowledgement of shared hardships as important: ‘In cooking, as in other things, the charity born of sympathy covers a multitude of sins’ (p. 80). Steel and Lawrence model their texts on a rigorous pedagogy that combines the self-help ethos of Smiles with a robust public-school-style attitude that encourages men and women to step up to ‘the greatest and noblest field of British endeavour’. 81 Both propose a British future in which India can possibly be put right.

77 Crane and Johnstone. ‘Introduction’, p. xv.
78 Lawrence, p. 13.
79 Lawrence, p. 33.
80 Lawrence, p. 33.
81 Lawrence, p. 275.
Mapping this pedagogical practice onto the mistress-servant relationship is, however, troubled by communication in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper*. The impression that the memsahib’s aim is to teach and improve native servants is undermined as the text laments the impossibility of the endeavour in social evolutionary terms: ‘a few generations of training shall have started the Indian servant on a new inheritance of habit’ (p. 12). Spoken authority is deemed more effective than written instruction, limiting the text’s own status as a valuable tool to a British readership. Recipes for the use of servants ‘can be had in tract form, translated into Hindoo, so that they can be given to the servants, but this is never so efficacious as verbal order, quiet, authoritative, unyielding, yet kindly’ (p. 66). Servants are known to respond to tone, timbre and rhythm as much as to content and to be practised listeners: ‘Ear-wigging, it must be remembered, is supposed by the Oriental to be all-powerful’ (p. 66). A conversation is made a privilege that utilises the native’s natural propensity for spying.

This sardonic take on ‘ear-wigging’ both highlights the way that servants or children may clandestinely gain power and contrasts with the way in which Kipling’s Kim gleans his most important information by listening in. The insistence on orality is also a way, as it is in *Kim*, of limiting the scope of native knowledge by allowing it in certain situations, but proscribing it in others. Were the memsahib to give the instructional text to her servant, it would, like the papers that Kim passes secretly from one hand to another, be beyond her control and become ineffective or unpredictable in its use.
Colonial subjects were believed incapable of enjoying or receiving instruction from literature ‘because they lacked the prior mental and moral cultivation required’. When Steel claims that pamphlets in Urdu and Hindi would aid the memsahib’s task, she skips over this contradiction by suggesting a deferred effect. Servants who cannot read or do not obey must be told and cajoled ‘until they are educated into some sense of duty’ (p. 13). While the text insists that, through balanced instruction, the servant can become ‘like a reasonable human being’, its stratified modes of exchange indicate that this correlation between the Indian servant and the British child cannot be maintained. Even the power of the memsahib’s voice is only momentary, as the native ability to improve is constantly deferred. Against ‘the dirty habits which are ingrained in the native cook […] a practical illustration […] may do some good’ (pp. 78-79). Oral instruction is superseded by demonstration so that the servant, like the trained animal, becomes an imitator of his mistress who must ‘insist on everything being done every day in the same style’ (p. 81).

By positing the ability to receive instruction as prior to ‘real’ learning, Steel places the Indian servant as an awkward moment in the momentum of colonial temporality. The text fixates on the servant being from another time but, as Torgovnik says of the primitive, the very focus on these figures indicates their force in the present and their connection to discourses of education and culture that feared children as unmanageable. The servants’ irredeemable backwardness masks the perception that the moral aspirations of liberalism that go back to eighteenth-century faith in progress are a political danger; eventually, Indian improvement means self-rule. The Complete Indian Housekeeper therefore holds horizons of possibility alongside each other; the

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82 Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest, p. 5.
servant can masquerade as the learning child but this simulation takes place in a context where ‘the usual complaint of a want of hold over servants must remain true’ (p. 13).

Jane Rendall reads domestic guides as part of the circulation of shared ideas of home and gender, which do not necessarily have a direct link to actual practice, but legitimise the ‘cult’ of home-making. Home-life is a prominent ‘focus of anxiety and surveillance’ bolstered by its own prescriptive literature. 83 Matthew Sweet agrees that didactic texts with their figural connections to racial and primitive discourses are a ‘problematic source’ for assessing actual practice: ‘if these rules needed to be urged or restated, it suggests that they were not universally obeyed’. 84 Sweet asserts that, when examined historically, such texts offer not simply a guide to inexperienced housekeepers, but a narrative of reassurance that attempts to contain pressured gender and racial hierarchies. Whilst contemporary appetites for the delicious details of the past may be fed by such texts, as Kate Flint suggests, the point apart from their facticity or otherwise is that women attempted self-definition in this way because the instructional text allowed them self-articulation within an accepted genre, positing women’s writing as relevant, useful and to be continued. 85

The notion of women allowing their wisdom to be overheard or to seep, like Steel and Gardiner’s own experiences, between the lines of their texts suggests that pedagogical

models and genres are prone to disruptions that complicate the native-child analogy. The divisive area of ‘the management of children’ (p. 94) extends to the ostensibly clear-cut mistress-servant relationship so that: ‘the knowledge really required by a mistress is of that half-practical, half-theoretical and wholly didactic description, which will enable her to find reasonable fault with her servant’ (p. 220). This all-encompassing effort confronts the ‘conceptual category’ of the native as part of an unstable knowledge about India that addresses its opacity and illogicality and is born of reduced contact between rulers and ruled following increasingly top-down administrative policies in the later nineteenth century.\(^86\) These issues solidify in an Indian servant’s failure to make potted sheep’s head:

The offender was told to boil an unskinned head for twelve hours. He came next day with a new light on his face. ‘Mem Sahib,’ he said, ‘do they by any chance make gelatine of skins, for, as the Lord sees me, I can hardly cut that jelly with a knife!’ Here was a case of sheer ignorance of facts well known to an English child; and it must never be forgotten that this is not the exception, but the rule. An Indian cook does not understand why eggs will not rise if whipped slowly, or why syrup will never crystallise unless stirred. He often stands confounded before his own failures, unable to tell where he has gone wrong, or how; and if his mistress is a practical cook, he will give a smile of wonder and relief when she points out what he must have done to have caused that specific result. (p. 80)

The passage is testimony not to the power of education, but to the importance of racial difference: the cook’s habitual nature, unable to relate to empirical experience or logic, is the opposite of the woman’s development from insecure housekeeper to ‘model memsahib’. Despite the humanistic ideals of the ‘civilising mission’, filling up the ‘conceptual category’ of native as lack with a presumed knowledge of the child obviates rather than removes the need for colonial control by coming up against the wall of racial difference. It is only possible to find ‘reasonable fault’ with servants whose stage of development has been identified via the analogy with the child. If the servant’s habitual, primitive nature refuses this analogy, then binding the Indian

\(^86\) Viswanathan, *Masks*, p. 11.
servant to the British child becomes a way of confronting division, both resisting and possessing the ‘wildness’ that threatens British colonial life.

**HOUSEKEEPING: THE BRITISH CHILD**

Treated matter-of-factly, the British child in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper* is made to seem a manageable and comparatively minor part of the domestic merry-go-round. Such an approach was commonplace in advice aimed at mothers that extolled the necessity of women maintaining their own social lives and not molly-coddling their children, as exemplified by Marian Harland’s popular *Common Sense in the Nursery* (1885). This said, the use of a familial model to justify racial and political hierarchy did require the careful monitoring of development in British children, particularly in the ‘absolutely new conditions of Anglo-India’ (p. 6).

The chapter ‘Hints on the Management of Young Children’ reluctantly addresses the needs of children, beginning with an effective disclaimer:

> One of the authors, [Gardiner] having had much experience in the bringing up of a large family in India, thinks that this book would be incomplete without a few hints on the management of children during infancy and teething. (p. 160)

The chapter limits its scope to the physical particularities of infants, the well being of older children being the concern of schools or foster families back in Britain. The young child in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper*, in contrast to the angelic child in *On the Face of the Waters*, is lovable but impetuous and unruly. This child shares in part the recalcitrant nature of the Indian servant and thus supports the connection between the two: ‘One thing is certain: Indian children are proverbially captious, disobedient, and easily thrown out of gear’ (p. 94). This summation occurs not in the chapter on children but in relation to ayahs in ‘The Duties of Servants’, where the care
received is ‘singularly kind, injudicious, patient, and thoughtless’ (p. 92). The proverbial nature of this information on children distinguishes it from the biologically evidenced certainty with which we are told of the characteristics of Indians. No reference is made to the inherent characteristics of children; emphasis is thrown onto their care in which the same strategies used in housekeeping are appropriate: ‘When a mother’s careful, loving eye is over her nursery, not fidgeting and worrying, but with common-sense and sound judgement, the little ones should rarely require a doctor among them’ (p. 169).

Under the calm eye of the mother children benefit from doing things properly:

The more frequent employment of English nurses is no doubt improving the regime of Indian nurseries; but even now it is no unusual thing to see an English child eating his dinner off the floor, with his hands full of toys, while a posse of devoted attendants distract his attention, and the ayah feeds him with spoonfuls of pish-pash. Appetite is no doubt variable in Anglo-Indian children, but it is possible that a little more pomp and circumstance, and a wholesome conviction that food is not forthcoming except at mealtimes, would induce Sonny or Missy Baba to treat dinner with graver circumspection. Where, save in India, do we find sturdy little tots of four and five still taking their bottles and refusing to go to sleep without a lullaby? (pp. 94-5)

Treating private behaviour as public show, requiring a dependable timetable and a desire to be self-reliant are key requirements of Anglo-Indian rule mapped onto the scene of the overindulged ‘Baba’. The persistent babying of ‘sturdy little tots’ proves the loyalty of servants valued by Steel and also provides, as it did for Kipling, a romantic realm of autonomy and satisfaction, drawing upon myths of the indulgences

87 Christina Hardyment discusses how the eugenics movement, urban poor health and rising infant mortality led to a professionalisation of childcare in the late nineteenth century during which official health visitors were introduced and trained nurses employed by well-off parents. See ‘Science and Sensibility’, in Dream Babies: Childcare advice from John Locke to Gina Ford (1983; London: Frances Lincoln, 2007), pp. 85-148.

88 Crane and Johnstone define pish-pash as ‘a soup or stew containing rice and small pieces of meat’. The text tacitly accepts that eating local dishes is often a favourable option, including simple recipes such as ‘Pilau’ and ‘Dâl’, despite the assertion that Indian food is ‘inordinately greasy and sweet’ (p. 305).
of the Orient, that may be returned to when the dutiful life of the coloniser becomes a grind.

As well as instilling recognisable order in her children, the mother, according to Steel, should be able to successfully adapt her family to India through her knowledge of everyday (female) experience and a ‘natural’ relation to her child. Contrary to widely circulated doctors’ advice the child should sleep with the mother at night:

Nature shows that the little life needs warmth and cherishing, and the mother’s mind is at rest with her little one close to her. Smartly-trimmed bassinettes, no doubt, look very pretty, and the doctors urge the healthiness and advisability of a child sleeping alone, &c. &c.; but those who follow him, instead of common sense, are up and down half the night, neither mother nor children refreshed by sleep, both chilled, the one from getting up, the other from being taken up. What about a hen and her chickens? Where do they sleep? (p. 161)

In this respect, public appearance is less important than private well being and animal-like behaviour is viewed not as primitive or past but as part of a biological harmony that obliquely reflects the intimacy between the ayah and her charges. While the doctor ‘looks on the patient merely in a scientific light and little common, everyday experiences are not in his Materia Medica’ (p. 161), it is these small aspects of private life that the text values.

Medical writers, including Stables and Fayrer, tended to see a woman’s body as important only in the bearing of children, to the extent that, if she does not breastfeed, she is ‘only half a mother’. Steel, however, allows for variations in practice, presenting the influence of native wet-nurses as benign rather than contaminating, as was generally believed. Inline with evolutionary discourse in which the British child

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89 Stables, p. 233.
inherits virtues of race and character and also exhibiting faith in empirical scientific methods of the type used by the Child Study movement, Steel portrays the advice of educated men as overblown: ‘Much fuss is, as a rule, made about the unhealthiness of India, but, as a matter of fact, if due attention is paid to the novel conditions of life […] there is no reason at all why the health should suffer’ (p. 170).

Rather than anxiously collecting data on the child, Steel defers the problem of Anglo-Indian children being ‘easily thrown out of gear’ to a time when the British institution will be responsible for ensuring they run smoothly. The analogy to the bike (more likely than the car that was only invented in 1886) transforms the child from a chick that needs ‘cherishing’ to a mode of transport whose mechanisms need attention. Where a child would be expected to ride a pony in India, in Britain he would most likely ride a bike. This suggests not only that different climates and cultures led to particular figurations of childhood, but that the mother (and to some extent the child) can distinguish between them in defiance of the denial, both in Sully’s Studies of Childhood and across the medical establishment, of mothers’ objectivity. In Steel’s view, a child should not be expected to be ‘in gear’ in India just as an Indian cook is not assumed able to make jelly without his mistress at his side.

Whilst refusing to place blame upon ‘the mother, the ayah, or the climate’ (p. 94), The Complete Indian Housekeeper emphasises that the knowledge and management of children and of colonised subjects must be negotiated between experts and amateurs. Contributing to the debate on children’s physical welfare that paralleled those on child psychology, W.B. Cheadle laments that ‘the mistaken canons of wise matrons and doctors of olden days […] confuse the parent’s mind, which is destitute of the
accurate data necessary to test their value’. Cheadle suggests that ‘very definite rules’ must be drawn from physiology before being sensitively adapted to individual cases. Steel’s worry is how to adapt such rules for disciplined and temperate living to India, distinguishing between children and servants. While ‘dosing a child perpetually is a bad custom’ (p. 165), in the case of servants the threat of a dose of castor oil serves ‘as an ultimatum in all obstinate cases, on the ground that there must be some physical cause for inability to learn or to remember’ (p. 13). Here, Claudia Castañeda and Carolyn Steedman’s insistence on the child’s body as a discursive figure is relevant. When it comes to the servant, the ‘physical’ cause is racial characteristics, whose meaning is culturally produced, while, in the case of the British child, obstinacy is put down to a faulty mechanism that may easily be mended by leaving India, a body made from analogies to industrial production.

The ridicule that Steel’s dosing with castor oil attracts from other servants produces a kind of self-regulation that adheres to her approach of balanced rewards and punishments. To exacerbate the humiliation of the receivers, castor oil is also recommended for use around the legs of a table to keep ants away (p. 70). The basis of such discipline in scientific discourse (on the repelling of ants) means that the shuttling of servants between child and animal status — emotionally, physically and morally — allows Steel to seemingly extrapolate her methods from reason, whilst still relying upon ‘common-sense’. Steel notes in the latest edition of the text that her remarks of ten years ago are still valid, but ‘the Indian mistress now has to guard against the possibility of impertinence. It should never be overlooked for an instant’

(p. 13). Impertinence (as distinct from obstinacy) requires a level of understanding denied to the native as ‘conceptual category’ and therefore whispers of political resistance. Once the servants become rebellious, there is something ill-fitting in comparing a native to a British child (unless perhaps the child is female), and it is this uneasiness that Steel conceals in insisting on physical cures for what are cultural troubles.

The minimal attention that *The Complete Indian Housekeeper* gives to mother-child relations, along with the reliance on ‘common-sense’ makes the child’s body a flexible indicator of the health of imperial Britain and also papers over the trauma of familial separation. A similar move occurs in Sara Jeanette Duncan’s story ‘A Mother in India’ (1903) when separation produces a gap between mother and child that is deliberately maintained. The narrator is a mother who, on travelling to England to see her child, records: ‘I simply sat observing my alien possession’.\(^91\) She returns, with relief, to ‘my own people […] acute, alert, with the marks of travail on them […] my own ruling, administering, soldiering little lot’.\(^92\) To this narrator, the child is part of the ‘particular trifles’ of England that freeze the woman’s body and dampen her mind so that she longs to escape back to the cut-and-dried work of the empire. Anglo-India is in need of attention, while the ‘alien’ child has the otherness of a new and unknown colony.


\(^{92}\) Duncan, ‘A Mother in India’, pp. 83-84.
Both in Duncan’s text and across Steel’s oeuvre, the British child may be freed from her or his connection with the colonised native only through entering the process of rational and physical gear-changing that takes place apart from the mother. From this perspective, attempts ‘to keep Britain alive in the midst of India’\(^93\) must maintain the ‘dominance without hegemony’ that Guha identifies: pomp and circumstance tempered by kindly instruction are facilitated by the ‘model memsahib’.

**THE CHILD STORY-TELLER**

In the Preface to *Wide-Awake Stories* (1884), Steel proposes a receptive relationship between the British colonial woman and Indian folklore:

> They [the authors] would like to claim credit for the genuineness of their collection, as it has been mostly procured at first-hand from the lips of purely village children, who have never been inside a school, and they trust that the literary form in which the stories now appear will not induce their readers to suppose them to have been “doctored”.\(^{94}\)

A special sensitivity is required in procuring these tales: the Indian child as untouched humanity, unprompted in his choice of tale, exists outside of the debates on education and improvement that Viswanathan details. Like Steel and Beveridge’s faithful servants, the existence of this child validates the Raj as another form of traditional feudalism meshed with already existing class and caste divisions in order to appear natural. Steel describes cautiously showing her interest in a village by sitting under a tree near where the magistrate conducts his business. She allies herself with a (male) colonial official but uses ‘a little patient talk’\(^{95}\) to the village women to elicit the material she requires: ‘at last, after many persuasions, some child begins a story,


\(^95\) *Wide-Awake Stories*, p. vi.
others correct the details, emulation conquers shyness, and finally the story-teller is brought to the front with acclamations.\textsuperscript{96}

The story is composed from ‘many variants’ over time by the collector who waits to alight on the authentic tale, or its parts, when they surface.\textsuperscript{97} The intentional intervention implied by ‘doctoring’ is distinguished from the analogy of putting together a ‘puzzle’ for the ‘untravelled’ reader.\textsuperscript{98} The woman writer, precisely because she is a memsahib with knowledge of native ways and language, is able to unravel tales from a ‘disconnected jumble’ of sentences to become literary gems.\textsuperscript{99} Her work is framed as preservation in which the text is not given an ‘Eastern flavour’ of ‘flowery dignity’, but retains its naturalness.\textsuperscript{100} Steel distances her stories from the fantastical diversions of late nineteenth-century adventure and romance by insisting on her responsible mediation of them. She wishes the text’s freedom from Western influence to distinguish it from similar collections such as Mary Frere’s \textit{Old Deccan Days} (1868), a book of South Indian folktales written as though told by an ayah to her charge from a Christian perspective.\textsuperscript{101} The tales are offered to scholars as

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Tales of the Punjab} (London: Macmillan, 1894), p. vii. \textit{Wide-Awake Stories} was re-published under this new title with illustrations by John Lockwood Kipling. The material is substantially the same, but in the first publication ‘some child’ is ‘some boy’ and the storyteller \textit{par excellence} is inevitably a boy, whereas in \textit{Tales of the Punjab} the story-teller is ‘generally a boy’.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Wide-Awake Stories}, p. vii.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Tales of the Punjab}, p. vii. This reference to the reader as unfamiliar with India and needing the ‘puzzle’ explained was added in the later publication, presumably referring to the ‘home’ readership.

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Wide-Awake Stories}, p. vii.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Tales of the Punjab}, p. v. This additional defence of the tales’ naturalness may have been added with reference to a British public used to stories of the exotic East.

ethnographically accurate in the Preface and to children as a magical gift given at ‘story-telling time’ in the Introduction, ‘To the Little Reader’. 102

The text draws upon the two strands of children’s literature that E. M. Field identifies in *The Child and His Book* as emerging during this period, those of inventive nonsense and useful information. By the 1880s, these were supplanting evangelical instructional tales. Nandini Bhattacharya points out that, in the early nineteenth century, children’s literature was already considered useful, being in many cases the only source of information about India, so tales like Mary Sherwood’s *Little Henry and his Bearer* (1814) were considered sources of fact as well as moral instruction. 103 Field’s interest in ‘the fashionable realism of our fiction’ was part of a desire in this period to establish the author’s credibility as possessing what Rose calls ‘a knowledge of the true nature of the child’. 104 Elements of fantasy or nursery story can be included as long as this hold on the child and, in Steel’s case, on India can be claimed.

The intersection between fantasy and historical detail characteristic of children’s fiction of this period is not allowed to happen in *Wide Awake Stories*. Rather, a doubling of perspective is created between the Introduction and the Preface. The Introduction has the ‘childish voice telling some old tale, old yet ever new’ to its ‘little audience’ 105 on ‘the limitless plain, vast and unbroken as the heaven above’, 106

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102 *Wide-Awake Stories*, p. 2. Allen discusses how *Tales of the Punjab* was influenced by the Buddhist *Jatakas*. Kipling also looked to both in composing *Kim*. See *Kipling Sahib*, p. 324. Victor Fussboll’s *Folktales of India: the Pali Jataka* was published in 1894.


104 Field, *The Child and His Book*, p. 258; Rose, *Peter Pan*, p. 82.

105 *Wide-Awake Stories*, p. 4.

although the Preface has already drawn attention to the (adult) work of collecting and re-forming the tales. The telling of the tales only after sunset and in an alternative landscape that can barely be geographically defined makes the cultural position of their tellers as invisible as Steel wishes her translation to be to her child audience. The assumption that the child is natural (and naturally unruly) but requires careful cultivation provides Steel’s collector both with responsibility and with a kind of sixth sense in which she is able to detect what is authentic, as the keeper of the ‘Wonder House’ in *Kim* does with regard to Indian objects.¹⁰⁷

The child teller, who, as we shall see, is similar to the child figure in Anand’s autobiographical *Seven Summers*, ties the stories to the landscape and to a narrative of universal humanity in which the written text of the schoolroom (denied to these Indian children) is traced back to its oral roots. A cultural infancy figured by the child is accessed through a collective remembering that relies upon the child as the avatar for India-as-primitive and upon the mediation of the woman writer. Re-telling folktales provides the imperial writer with a basis for presenting India, like the child, as a cultural resource that is both immediate and lasting.

In *Wide-Awake Stories*, taking possession of an infancy that is ‘other’ means that the child must be, to use Rose’s formulation, posited as without contradiction. Yet the very fact that the storyteller is Indian and his words are translated, annotated and commented on shows that this innocence relies on being blind to constructions of racial difference. The appeal to the child reader as a way of encouraging ‘innocent’

¹⁰⁷ Such a claim is made ironically by the narrator in Kipling’s *Just So Stories*; they must be told ‘just so’.
reading is a clear case of what Paul Gilroy calls ‘double vision’ that ignores the fact that value is attached to children according to their race.\textsuperscript{108} As a figure of inter-racial myth, the boy storyteller appears to have the freedom to live according to the natural paradigms described by Rousseau. However, there is a difference between simplicity and a ‘disconnected jumble’ of words that must be unpicked. For Rousseau, the creative development of man through experiential education must also involve acting to ‘denature’ man in order to make him a citizen. The native child may, like Rousseau’s primitive man, have a natural potential for knowledge, but he is at one further remove from the language of citizenship. The words of this child must be made intelligible, ‘denatured’ in order to exist on the page, and in this process they cease to belong to the child who is defined, like Steel’s idea of the Indian servant and Spivak’s theory of the subaltern, by lack. It is this process that Indian writers challenged in claiming a right to English and to the novel and that led Anand to define his work against an insistence upon Indian culture as ineffably different.

The capturing of the child between origin and change, constancy and growth is unavoidable because it is essential to the production of meaning. According to Giorgio Agamben:

\begin{quote}
The ineffable, the unsaid, are in fact categories which belong exclusively to human language; far from indicating a limit of language, they express its invincible power of presupposition, the unsayable being precisely what language must presuppose in order to signify.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{108} Paul Gilroy, \textit{The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). The child in Steel’s text is also valued because of his gender: the importance attached to male public authority in both Britain and India is meshed with the European image of the curious and inventive child as a boy who, as Carol Mayor puts it, is ‘betwixt and between’ childish and adult worlds. See Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J.M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust and D.W. Winnicott (Duke University Press, 2007), p. 5.

The child / primitive, as the inexpressible beginning of the human, is implied by reference to and in contrast with adulthood. This mode of thinking, in which the child is the other to the human subject, myth the opposite of fiction and black the other to white exists, as I argue throughout this thesis, alongside a social and intellectual faith in childhood as culminating in adult consciousness. Here lies the difference between Steel’s child storyteller, interchangeable with his fellows for whom and with whom he speaks, and her child reader as an individual intellect learning to become a citizen. The disjunction between the Preface and the Introduction in *Wide-Awake Stories* suggests that projects of learning and improvement reliant upon this ‘double vision’ may open our eyes to discontinuities that, because they claim to be traceable to human origins, require a renewed appeal to the child. It is this stretching of the child between origins and progress that I examine further in Steel’s Mutiny novel.

**ON THE FACE OF THE WATERS: MUTINY HISTORY AND THE BRITISH FAMILY**

Overall, Steel’s fiction owes less to fantastical or grotesque images of India than the work of other Anglo-Indian women, including Diver and Field, while retaining something of the exaggerated attraction and repulsion towards the country that Parry identifies as characteristic of the ‘dislocating experience’ of colonial women.¹¹⁰ Steel demonstrates a seriousness about history and politics that many women in India may have possessed, but which rarely made its way into fiction. As Flint argues in *The Woman Reader*, in women’s sensation fiction tensions are typically built up between the maintenance of external proprieties and sympathy for the ambitions of transgressive heroines. In *On the Face of the Waters*, Kate Erlton does not wildly transgress, but rather sets herself apart from her husband’s disgraceful behaviour in

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¹¹⁰ Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, p. 36.
gambling and taking a mistress. Her position adds weight to the text’s focus on how private life and ambitions are made meaningful as public events and functions to allow a ‘female’ mode of writing purchase in the ‘male’ arena of historical realism.

Annette Beveridge’s letters are also alert to history; reading Froude’s *History of England* enables her to see ‘the investiture of the Indian enterprise’¹¹¹ and of Darwin’s work she writes: ‘it is not information I want to get; it is discipline and strength to serve as our arm against vexation and cares’.¹¹² This need to understand history and science expands women’s arena of interest beyond the domestic, making Steel’s scrupulously researched novel a particularly important text to analyse in relation to the child. In my reading, the novel’s marginalisation of the British boy, despite a pervasive concern for male heroism, coupled with a reliance upon the angelic child of romance and waif literature creates a space for women to enter as actors in and commentators on empire.

Steel’s novel reworks popular literary formulations of empire in a manner that introduces New Woman-era concerns into what Tickell calls ‘a romance sub-genre’ that ‘anticipated a mature male and female readership’.¹¹³ Mutiny fiction developed out of first-hand soldiers’ tales and accounts of Anglo-Indian daily life, such as H.S. Cunningham’s *The Chronicles of Dustypore: A Chronicle of Modern Anglo-Indian Life* (1875) in which a ‘simple, childish and innocent’ British girl falls in love with a soldier.¹¹⁴ In contrast to folktales that require collection and translation, Mutiny tales,

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¹¹¹ Letter to Henry Beveridge, 5th May 1888, MS EUR C176.
¹¹² Letter to Henry Beveridge, 12 September, 1882 in *India Called Them*, ed. by Beveridge, p. 224.
¹¹³ Tickell, p. 120.
whether first-hand or retold as fiction, exhibit their rawness in their recurring need to narrate what happened.\textsuperscript{115} However, they share the ethnographer’s insistence that authenticity is to be found in simplicity and directness, not in texts ‘doctored’ for aesthetic purposes. They wish to give, as the narrator of George Manville Fenn’s \textit{Begumbagh} (1879) says, ‘a full and true account of it all’.\textsuperscript{116}

\textit{Bebumbagh} is framed by a fumbling statement from an old soldier of why, in order to gain ‘fair’ public attention, he must relate his sufferings in a ‘simple unadorned style’ backed up by the evidence of his battle wounds.\textsuperscript{117} The reluctance to tell belies the fact that, from early accounts of British bloodshed typified by Mowbray Thompson’s \textit{Cawnpore} (1859), Mutiny tales proliferated and became intertwined with other popular genres. By the time Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India in 1858, ‘Mutiny fiction was well on its way to becoming an accepted literary sub-genre.’\textsuperscript{118} As Saros Cowasjee outlines, early Mutiny novels were mostly penned by eyewitnesses, whilst later ones placed emphasis on having studied the facts; in both cases ‘the resultant portraits were gory and sensational’.\textsuperscript{119} Mutiny novels, apart from the notable exception of Philip Meadows Taylor’s \textit{Seeta} (1872), focus on British heroism confronting Indian treachery and barbarism; as Brantlinger asserts, ‘no episode in British imperial history raised public excitement to a higher pitch than the Indian Mutiny of 1857’.\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{115} See Tickell, Ch. 3 and Gautam Chakravarty, \textit{The Indian Mutiny}, p. 113.  
\textsuperscript{117} Fenn, p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{119} Cowasjee, ‘Introduction’, p. xxvii.  
\textsuperscript{120} Brantlinger, \textit{Rule of Darkness}, p. 199.
For Fenn and Steel, this excitement is the frothing over of an ongoing reaction to trauma that Tickell describes as:

> a melancholic colonial culture that at once sought an affirming collective identity in the experience of insurgency and reconquest, but was also marked by a new awareness of its own insecurity, and its ability to transform into a terrorizing extra-judicial sovereign power.\(^{121}\)

In Field’s *Bryda*, the Mutiny is likened to ‘a volcano’,\(^ {122}\) while G.O. Trevelyan calls it ‘an Eastern tempest […] the madness of superstition in all its horror’.\(^ {123}\) This use of natural events as analogies for political ones closes down debate on the extent to which violent reprisals are justified. In this context, any attempt at understanding by the British is an admirable one and the Mutiny can be continually, obsessively, addressed with the stated aim of preventing a reoccurrence, becoming in the process an emblem of British imperial history.

Steel’s concern to give a balanced account of the insurgency dovetails with her focus on temperate living in *The Complete Indian Housekeeper*, even though both are surrounded by wide margins of strangeness. The novel is divided into five books with Book II showing Delhi from the perspectives of Palace, City, Ridge, Village, and Residency, thus producing a mapping of the city animated by the chronological divisions of Book III into Night, Dawn, Daylight, Noon, Sunset and Dusk. These structural conceits mean that the novel’s much-vaunted historical accuracy stays at the fore, whilst the intricate plot winds along.

\(^{121}\) Tickell, *Terrorism*, p. 123.
\(^{123}\) Trevelyan, *The Competition Wallah*, p. 51.
The representation of Kate draws on this urge to map the colonised land, having features in common with women’s travel writing on India going back to the eighteenth century. In this genre, the emphasis is on close contact with the colonies. As Isobel Savory writes in 1900, its authors are ‘women, in short, who will enjoy a little discomfort for the sake of experience’. As spectator, the woman may efface her ‘implication in the specificity of colonial power’, she collects Indian scenes. Female travellers veer between wonder and disgust, just as Kate recoils from ‘what she did not understand and therefore did not like.’ But this position is less successful for Kate and gives way to a more complicated experience as she becomes painfully aware of her position, regretting her more extreme reactions even as she endorses racial hierarchies. Hidden in an ashram imagining that the Swami must be ‘a monstrosity’ and ‘drearily’ giving in to her fate, Kate is immersed in the strangeness of India: ‘even this uncertainty about all things, save that she sat and watched the squirrels and the birds, had ceased to disturb her peace’ (pp. 332-3).

Kate’s journey through despair and disguise ultimately leads to a return to Britain and also stands in interesting relation to ‘women’s novels’ of the period. Sarah Bilston argues that these texts have much in common with New Women’s writing and can facilitate an ‘active, stimulating and unorthodox transition to womanhood’. In books such as Bithia Croker’s *Proper Pride* (1882), India is at once an escape and a

125 Ghose, p. 9.
128 Bilston, p. 321.
liberation, but ultimately a false hope. Kate has in common with these heroines her unhappy marriage, the struggle to realise her desires and her pessimism about the possibility to doing so. But she does not have the drive or the opportunities of these later women to usefully employ her time.\textsuperscript{129} Kate is trapped in a domesticity she both desires and despises, obviating the need for the kind of manual Steel was later to write. Steel’s novel therefore works to stabilise the late nineteenth-century present in the face of insurrection and immorality in order that India can become a liberating prospect for British women. On this basis, Alison Sainsbury’s conclusion that the fixing of the domestic as a microcosm of empire is the main function of ‘women’s novels’ remains apt.\textsuperscript{130}

Whilst Kate cannot be said to have a feminist agenda and is often in a state of frustrated passivity, some of the qualities of male imperial character, such as courage and endurance, are extended to her. Jim Douglas (when they first meet, he has taken the name James Greyman and this is how Kate knows him for most of the novel) is instrumental in protecting Kate from harm, but the depictions of heroics are restrained. The text nods towards tales of military heroism but does not provide the canvas required for the imperial adventures that writers such as G.H. Henty produced.\textsuperscript{131} Steel’s adventure hero is on a shorter rein, coming up against the complications and compromises of imperial administration at every turn and restrained by the pull towards a normative British family life.

\textsuperscript{129} Common occupations by the 1880s were nursing, missionary work and education; Annette Beveridge initially went to India to set up a girls’ school.


\textsuperscript{131} Tickell discusses the ‘protective and possessive code’ of chivalry and the requirement of Anglo-Indian women to be prepared to be killed by their male relatives or to kill themselves to protect their honour (p. 122). Henty’s novel of Mutiny chivalry is \textit{Rujub the Juggler} (1893).
Kate survives through the agency of Douglas who, since leaving the British army in disgrace, has been living with an Indian mistress, and by her own ingenuity. During the uprising, Alice Gissing, the cynical and lively lover of Kate’s husband, is killed by rebels, while Major Erlton dies in the struggle to regain Delhi, leaving Kate and Jim (whose Indian mistress, Zora, has died) to become romantic survivors. While signalling towards explanations for the Mutiny that include religious sensitivity and heavy-handed British dealings with Indian rulers, the novel ultimately relies upon indecipherable causes of change in an India recognisable throughout Steel’s work by passivity and mystery: ‘It was the stream of Life, mysterious absolutely’. Indians become either devilish rebels or children, expressing simple feelings, such as those that Zora has for Jim. Kate struggles to make sense of India, her own position and the ‘dream’ of the rebellion: ‘A new world, or a great gulf?’ she gnomically wonders.

THE ANGELIC CHILD

By Kate’s side for much of the novel is Sonny Seymour, a neighbour’s young child who is painted black, drugged and smuggled through the city before finally being returned to the British army base by Alice’s faithful ayah. Sonny, ‘the plaything of a parcel of subalterns’, is noticed by the legendary General Nicholson as a ‘fine little fellow!’, positioning the child as victim, amusing toy and future comrade\(^\text{133}\) (p. 308). It is Sonny who effects brief moments of inter-racial connection in the text. The ayah keeps Sonny ‘safer with me speaking our language’ (p. 289) and Tiddu, a servant who Jim describes as ‘this old scoundrel with his thousand faces’, steals him out of the city at night. Tiddu feels that ‘The child is as his own child’, although he hesitates to take

\(^{132}\) The Garden of Fidelity, p. 34.
\(^{133}\) General John Nicholson was a Mutiny hero about whom the popular song ‘the Ballad of John Nicholson’ was written. See Powell, p. 55.
responsibility for Kate, ‘the mem’ (p. 298). The child thus unifies the British enterprise across genders and above an awed colonised population. I now go on to examine how Sonny’s body and speech figure these affective connections.

The child’s body is usually either held or gazed at by the British adults in the novel. Here Jim Douglas watches Kate cradling Sonny after she has given him opium before he is smuggled away:

And as she sang and Sonny’s eyelids drooped, the man watched them both with tender awe in his heart; and the other woman, crouching in the corner, watched all three with hungry, passionate eyes. Here, in this group of man, woman and child, without a personal claim on each other, was something new, half-incomprehensible, wholly sweet. (p. 300)

Here the nativity-like image of the British family rises from the destruction signified in an explosion that takes place just prior to this scene. The ties of race mean Jim feels more for this ‘strange child’ than he did for his own baby with ‘dear little Zora’ (p. 173). As Gautam Chakravarty points out in The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination, leaving his life with Zora is the first stage in Jim’s move from consorting with natives to becoming a prime mover in the surveillance of Indian insurgency. The powerless Sonny and Zora thus become gateways to the machinations of colonial politics. They are also momentary affective interruptions that include an imperative to return renewed to worldly struggle, as Kipling’s Kim does after he has travelled with the lama. The ‘other woman’ in the passage is Tara, who works for Jim and whose passion for him signifies both the devotion of servants and, in opposition to Zora’s meekness, the threatening appetite associated with Indian rebels and native sexuality that eventually consumes not the British family, but Tara herself as she commits sati.
While Zora provides momentary satisfaction for Jim, Sonny provides the couple with a grasp at the future: ‘It sent a thrill through the man as he recognized that in giving him the child she had given him more than kisses’ (p. 239). The child heals the gendered rifts that the novel dramatizes: ‘Delhi had been lost to save women: the trouble had begun to please them,’ thinks Jim before vowing to ‘save Kate or — kill somebody. That was the whole duty of man’ (p. 326). Isobel Savory brilliantly sums up this gender divide: ‘Englishmen are supposed to possess an insatiable desire for slaying something; a healthily minded woman has invariably a craving to do something’.

The need to protect the helpless British child through action, to defeat the Indian insurgents who are ‘really children – simple, ignorant, obstinate’ (p. 225), involves both the aggression of the British man and the activity of the woman. It also makes vital the interdependence between the constant, ideal child that needs protection and the perpetually savage racial other that is also called ‘child’.

Like his body, Sonny’s speech in the novel is stylised and unchanging:

‘O Miffis Erlton! What a boo’ful new polly’, came a silvery lisp. She turned with a radiant smile to greet her next door neighbour’s little boy, a child of about three years old, who, pathetically enough, was a great solace to her child-bereft life […] Kate, feeling light-hearted, caught the little white-clad golden-curlèd figure in her arms and ran out with it into the garden smothering the laughing face with kisses as she ran. (p. 31)

The narrative perspective here is unclear: ‘a silvery lisp’ suggests third person narration, while ‘pathetically enough’ could be a judgement attached to the narrator or to Kate. Similarly, the use of ‘child-bereft’ and the focus on Sonny’s cherubic beauty

and Kate’s ‘smothering’ suggest a longing that is Kate’s but is not spoken by her. Sonny’s language creates a separate infant space that Kate takes possession of when she enters the garden and that, although anachronistic in an ‘historical’ novel, is crucial to her survival. The Appendix confirms that Sonny leaves India after the Mutiny ‘unscathed’, despite being ‘in the thick of it’ (p. 391). In narrating the child as sharing the simplicity and strangeness of India, the novel articulates both the ideals and the terrors of the colonial experience. Kate’s desperation to see ‘a square inch or so of milk and roses’ that is the ‘real’ Sonny’s skin beneath his black painted disguise evokes, according to his ambiguous figuration, a fear that both he and India could be lost (p. 289).

In response to Sonny’s ‘silvery’ speech, Kate takes on a ‘radiant’ position in control of the feminised child. Her ‘solace’ in the cupid figure is at once an admission of her ‘pathetic’ status as a disillusioned wife and mother who enjoys her moment in/as the sun and an instance of childhood being a conscribed space of reflection. As Thomas Docherty explains, in being seen as occupying a separate spatial position, the child poses a problem when written: ‘the infant is intimate with truth or proximate to it in her or his very linguistic innocence (for she or he experiences purely, in a form not shaped by the ideological figurations and disfigurings or commodities of language)’. In Steel’s case, as well as the distance of the written self from the writing self, there is a distance of the colonial self from what might be termed the

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135 Sonny’s survival distinguishes him from many earlier stories of the saving power of childhood innocence, notably Sherwood’s Little Henry and his Bearer (1814). While Henry dies at the point of converting his bearer to Christianity, the later date of Steel’s text and its secular milieu mean that the child survives but becomes a focal point for the fears and fantasies of colonialism.

‘natural’ or ‘at home’ self. The incompleteness of Sonny’s speech gestures towards a perfection beyond language and to Indian and, more broadly, primitive or unmediated experience: ‘the naivety of which functions in fiction to reveal the truth even while it itself cannot know the truth’.137

In becoming a vessel for the understanding of others Sonny has something in common with the child in Victorian waif literature.138 He serves to legitimize the perspective of the memsahib by being, as he sings, ‘far —farze — away’ from her world so that his marginality and connection with Indian languages becomes a condition of her authority (p. 300). As Stepan discusses in The Idea of Race in Science, language for the savage (in phylogenic terms, the ‘child’ of humanity) was considered as developed in advance of understanding rather than emerging from a need to communicate; it therefore pointed to its user’s inferior position. If we apply this logic to Sonny, his lisp suggests a relation of experience to language in which the child is effectively trapped as a constant child, a sign of what was before. This reading fits with Powell’s description of the late-Victorian convention of lisping child-speech as ‘exaggerated artlessness’ that is far from the mimetically rendered speech used by writers such as Yonge or Ewing.139 Sonny’s speech shows that the cross-cultural intimacy formed around the child’s safety is a way of legitimising racial difference through a phylogenic structure of language as moving from simple to complicated, child to adult, Hindustani to English.

137 Docherty, p. 115.
139 Powell, p. 99.
‘THAT OTHER CHILD OVER ACROSS THE SEAS’

Sonny, as the novel’s perpetual infant, has a counterpart in Kate’s son Freddie who appears only in a photograph as ‘that other child over across the seas’ (p. 289). Kate admits that Sonny is a substitute for Freddie, who we first hear of just prior to the encounter in the garden. His absence represents the threat of moral and physical decline. Finding that Jim, whom she had heard was an ‘adventurer’ (p. 30), is actually a ‘gentleman’, Kate pleads with him not to uncover her husband’s cheating at horse racing on the grounds of collective moral hope for which Freddie is the focus:

‘You said just now that I couldn’t keep up the fiction; but need it be a fiction always? What do we know? God gives a man a chance sometimes. He gives the whole world a chance sometimes of atoning for many sins. A Spirit moves on the face of the Waters of life bringing something to cleanse and heal. It may be moving now. Give my husband his chance.’ (p. 28)

This passage re-works a saying that Steel records in The Garden of Fidelity. While working in villages in the Punjab she received this answer to any question about the causes of the Mutiny: ‘God knows! He sent a Breath into the World’.140 In the ‘Author’s Note’ to the novel, she insists that ‘from this to a Spirit moving On the Face of the Waters is not far.’141 However, her alteration does add the movement or reflection in the water, suggesting that the writer or historian may discern the mysterious event, even as it comes through the dissemblance and disguise associated with the Oriental.

The Spirit is associated not with destruction, but with healing, and heralds Kate’s hope for moral change. But Jim’s native knowledge predicts political and racial conflict, giving substance to Kate’s fears: “It may come too soon for some of us, god

140 The Garden of Fidelity, p. 228.
141 Preface to On the Face of the Waters, p. 9.
knows [...]. So let him have his chance that is coming. Let us all have it, you and I into the bargain”” (p. 29). The oblique reference to the future rebellion fills Kate’s ‘fictional’ English life with foreboding: ‘in that room, gay with English flowers, and peaceful utterly in its air of security, a terror seized on her, body and soul’ (p. 29). Through Jim’s insight, Kate is made to recognise her own status as a battleground: it is the ‘fiction’ of Kate’s life as wife and mother in the ‘reality’ of the imperial enterprise that must be renewed by the test of courage that the novel describes.

In trying to escape from captivity, Kate relies on the Indian Newâsi’s pity: ‘Those three months behind the veil had made Kate realise the emotionality of the East; its instinctive sympathy with the dramatic element in life’ (p. 312). Kate chances her life not on British knowledge but on Indian sympathy: ‘“I am a Christian — but a woman like yourself— a mother. For the sake of yours — or the sake of your sons, if you are a mother too — for the sake of what you love best — save me”’ (p. 313). Kate offers herself first as a woman, then as a mother and finally as simply something to be loved, a version of Newâsi’s own self that is beyond Kate’s ken. The contradiction of the Indian woman as both inscrutable and childlike produces a strange hiatus in which the motherhood denied to Kate is offered as an approximation of cross-cultural love.

Kate’s increasingly intimate relations with India and its women indicates that at the base of her need for salvation is not native disaffection, but the corruption of the British male character that was a concern of New Woman fiction. Kate wishes to protect Major Erlton’s reputation not out of love, but for the sake of Freddie. Jim questions her hope:
‘Even if concealment succeeds all along the line, will it prevent the boy from following in his father’s steps if he has inherited his father’s nature as well as his face? Wouldn’t it be a deterrent in that case to know early in life that such instincts can’t be indulged with impunity in the society of gentlemen? You will never have the courage to keep the boy out of your life altogether as you are doing now. Sooner or later you will bring him back, he will bring himself back, and then, on the threshold of life, he will have an example of successful dishonesty put before him.’ (p. 28)

As with Kate’s dialogue with Newâsi, the face is assumed to conceal emotions and instincts that the colonial gaze, or in this case the adult one, can only guess at. Eventually, the ‘true’ nature of the child and the Indian will reveal itself unless, Jim suggests, it is checked by education or socialisation. Just as Newâsi makes a crucial decision on Kate’s future in not giving her up to the rebels, so her son Freddie will, ‘on the threshold of life’, need to resist his father’s dishonest nature.

The novel’s discourse of hereditary traits draws on degenerationist thought that looked back to a Lamarckian theory of hereditarianism but had concerns about British racial and social survival at their centre. The reference to hereditarianism positions the narrative historically, as does Jim Douglas’s physical prowess in comparison to Indians. In the ‘new racial science’ of polygenicism in the 1850s, of which Robert Knox’s The Races of Men (1850) was the most extreme example in Britain, there could be no healthy Anglo-Saxon civilization abroad, for each race must pursue its destiny in its own environment. Jim’s worries about Freddie’s character therefore point to the problem that, when the child and the native are connected, ideas of growth, development and evolution that rely upon racial or national distinctions are called into question. Freddie does not return to India in the novel, but through his

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142 Lamarck is known for his theory of ‘soft inheritance’ in which acquired characteristics can be passed on. See Stepan, p. 13. Francis Galton, pioneer of eugenics, argued in Hereditary Genius (1869) that individual and racial mental variation was due to the inheritance of mental ability.
father’s heroism and Kate’s return home, he is given a reprieve, if not redemption, from his bloody imperial inheritance: the threat of disorder and degeneration must be pushed back by the assertion of a rational, moral historical narrative.

‘EVERY FEELING IS HISTORICAL’

*On the Face of the Waters* falls into what Gautam Chakravarty identifies as the later more reflective period of Mutiny fiction in which ‘the engagement with expatriate society moves in tandem with representations of the world of insurgency and rebel consciousness *from the inside*’.\(^{143}\) The novel adapts a recognisable form so that the life and politics of rebel Delhi is represented as well as the British campaign. The route ‘from martyrdom to a proactive martial heroism’\(^{144}\) opens via the British family as a means of narrating imperial relations. Through histories of heroism, the colonial project must engineer either a safe return to Anglo-Indian spaces or ‘a return to England and […] a resumption of love, marriage and domesticity, all temporarily suspended or endangered by the matter of history’.\(^{145}\) In the case of Steel’s novel, the ingenuity of the woman author (who is also the memsahib and mother) places the child as the fulcrum between these two responses as well as the iteration of a desire to move outside of colonial history altogether. Because of the child’s figural connection with the native, this has implications for the India that the novel aims to understand and whose growth will spell the end of the colonial text and the child it imagines.

In the ‘Author’s Note’, Steel refers to the inspiration for Kate: ‘an Englishwoman was concealed in Delhi, in the house of an Afghan, and succeeded in escaping to the Ridge just before the siege. I have imagined another, that is all’ (p. 9). Steel claims that she is so tied to archives and eyewitness accounts that all the words her ‘actors’ say are

\(^{143}\) Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny*, pp. 111-12.
\(^{144}\) Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny*, p. 112.
genuine. However, in her determination to tell both sides of the conflict and to allow space for the woman’s perspective, history gives way to an amalgam of myth, religion and sexual instinct that amounts to a forgetting of historical accuracy. This is particularly in evidence in the Appendices that consist of a fictional report from a district Magistrate after the Mutiny and a letter to Kate from her friend Charles Morecombe informing us that she has returned to Scotland to marry Jim following her ‘marvellous escape’ (p. 390). The magistrate’s report lists the practical consequences of the uprising across administrative areas, including Criminal Justice, Opium, Education and the Post-Office before confirming that:

Matters therefore resumed their normal aspect, but I believe that there is more shame, sorrow, and regret in the hearts of many than we shall probably ever have full cognizance of, and that it will take years for the one race to regain its confidence, the other its self-respect. (p. 386)

A factually detailed account sits cheek by jowl with a moral stance that produces the cause of the event as a mystery: the rebels ‘literally melted away’, showing that ‘the struggle to subvert British rule had ignominiously failed’ (p. 386). Morecombe’s letter similarly recounts the aftermath of the Mutiny: ‘it is all over except the shouting; except the honours and hanging’ (p. 390). Despite criticism of the British administration for its high-handed treatment of loyal Indians and refusing to ‘forget a single detail’, the letter leaves no room for rational, or indeed political, Indian resistance (p. 389). Like Tara’s love for Jim, the Indian side of the story will inevitably go unacknowledged: ‘I asked a native yesterday if he could explain it, but he only shook his head and said the Lord had sent a “breath into the land”’ (p. 391). The framing of this fateful perspective by historical documents places it at one remove from the author’s struggle ‘to write at once a story and a history’ in which ‘I
have not allowed fiction to interfere with fact in the slightest degree.’\textsuperscript{146} In a footnote to the Appendices that neatly seals the historical claims of the Preface and recalls the collector of tales, Steel writes: ‘I am responsible for nothing — but —very occasionally — the wording’ (p. 385).

Steel’s disavowal of authorship amounts to an authority that combines the sentimental conventions of women’s writing with the fantasies of adventure and the grandeur of historiography in the search for a ‘real’ British India:

> In treatment it is highly sensational and soul-stirring!! But curiously enough it never once goes beyond the reality. Every date, every event, every feeling is historical. Only in describing these I have tried to personify these at it were.\textsuperscript{147}

As Mary Hammond maintains with reference to Steel’s publisher William Heinemann, popular writers in this period often found that overlapping realism and romance gratified ‘the economic purposes and artistic pretensions of a popular, entrepreneurial publisher in the emerging literary mode of production’.\textsuperscript{148} Steel’s mixing of the ‘masculine’ mode of realism with the ‘feminine’ one of romance was therefore strategic in exploiting the linking of popularity and Philistinism with femininity and was in sympathy with a literary marketplace in which realist New Woman novels were gaining a foothold.

\textsuperscript{146} Preface to \textit{On the Face of the Waters}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{148} in \textit{The Garden of Fidelity} Steel asserts that the balanced presentation of the novel enabled one traumatised Mutiny survivor ‘finally to forgive India’ (p. 86).
In addition to gaining her literary capital, Steel’s insistence on her text as ‘historical’ highlights that the events she deals with are already narrated in the archive, therefore she can claim not to alter their essence but rather their function. Where Steel differentiates fiction from history is in the production of an emotional reaction, a ‘soul-stirring’ that is deeper than the moral lesson of history and that can even mitigate against it. As Barthes writes: ‘Narrative does not show, does not imitate…[its] function is not to ‘represent’, it is to constitute a spectacle’. In the case of the Mutiny, the telling as spectacle draws attention to the event as a rupture in colonial history and therefore justifies its repeated telling in an effort to become historical. Gautam Chakravarty reads the event as an allegorisation of the need to know and to be in control, placing emphasis on the undercover production of knowledge that Jim Douglas and others perform. However, I would suggest that the reawakening of feeling that Jim experiences in meeting Kate and Sonny and that drives the narrative towards domestic harmony is equally important. It restores historical unity via the transparent ‘reality’ associated with the child, therefore allowing us also to analyse how Indians are treated not only as terrifying rebels engaged in seditious activity but as inferior because of their childlike status in the charmed circle of the imperial family.

The refusal to present Indians as in historical time is troubled by its reliance on the British Sonny, who has more in common with colonised ‘timelessness’ than with the

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150 Brantlinger credits Steel with offering ‘a deeper critical perspective’ than previous Mutiny fiction but admits that she virtually exonerates British brutality through her portrayal of Indians as children. See Rule of Darkness, p. 218.
securing of an imperial future. Like the superstitious sayings that Steel reformulates, Indians have a shadowy relation to history that involves the recurrence of portents and symbols that become sanitised in Sonny’s angelic form. This doubling of the other reveals the vulnerability of the constant child to falling outside colonial ethical codes, requiring the narrative to bring the protective influence of the memsahib into play.

According to Jenny Sharpe, this incursion of the memsahib occurs at the expense of the Indian woman and the child, the figures to whom the white woman is in many ways closest. They become her enemies, for while sati is the erasure of the self by death, the child is the pull of life that, in requiring the woman’s attention, is also an erasure of self. In this way, ‘the past is made to accommodate the “New Woman” of the post-Mutiny era’. When Kate is being taken from her hiding place in the ashram to the protection of her husband and his regiment Captain Morecombe asks if she feels all right:

‘I feel as if I had just been born,’ she said slowly. In truth, she was wondering if that spinning of the Great Wheel towards Life again brought with it this forlornness, this familiarity. (p. 344)

Kate’s momentary freedom from responsibility is connected with her appreciation of India and its cyclical time, often referred to in Kim, that functions to renew the weary actors in Western history. She wonders: ‘Could this be real? – could it be the same world?’ (p. 344). This Eastern energy needs to be appreciated as part of, or at least adjacent to, Sharpe’s assessment that ‘the feminist plotting of On the Face of the

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151 For Robert Knox and for Gobineau in his Essay on the Inequality of Races (1853-5), history exists only through the activity of the white race.
152 Sharpe, Allegories, p. 86. See also Barbara Caine, English Feminism 1780-1980 (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 82.
Waters lies in its undoing of the domestic ideal that confines women to the protected space of the home’, linking it with a conservative feminist strain of thought that came to be known as ‘woman’s mission’. It is exactly this that Steel and Gardiner do to formidable effect in The Complete Indian Housekeeper, and when Kate tries to enact this role, she creates a kind of anticipatory feminism driven as much by a need to understand India as to gain her own independence. By building a morally upright home and honing her motherly instincts, Kate proves herself a stalwart imperial actor. However, the overall drive of the narrative is more than this; it is to restore, or renew, colonial equilibrium, to turn trauma into history via the demands of the memsahib.

Seeing her text as a mediator across racial and gendered lines, Steel is able to promote her ‘epic’ as a momentous swathe of historiography that pushes all subsequent events before it. By including Indians in the appreciation of the child, the text invokes an ideal of shared feeling that isolates the ‘unreasonable’ behaviour of the rebels: after all ‘children are the greatest gift of all’ (p. 102):

\[\text{It was a pretty sight, indeed, this game between the woman and the child. The gardener paused in his watering, the tailor at his work; and even the native orderly going his rounds with the brigade order-book grinned broadly, so adding one to the kindly dark faces watching the chasing of Sonny. (p. 31)}\]

‘Indeed’ corroborates ‘pretty’, placing the narrator as both the arbiter of taste and as giving licence to the watching Indians who remain static around the activity of their mistress. Religious, class and caste distinctions disappear as ‘the chasing’ of the child occurs. However, any affective connection between British and Indian is as limited in its expression as it is in its application to history. Sonny’s speech, like the gaze of the servants, is glaringly at odds with a text that wants to be recognised as a complex

\[\text{153 Sharpe, Allegories, p. 97.}\]
account, ‘absolutely accurate and detached’,
progressive in its understanding of
colonial relations and written by a woman who wishes to be taken seriously. While
Sonny lisps in English, his speech in Hindustani is, the narrator tells us, flawless:
‘with the quaint precision with which all English children speak Hindustani — “Ai!
Bij Rao! Tu kyön aie?” (Oh, Bij Rao, why are you here?)’ (p. 103).

Sonny, as the constant child, conceals divisions in language and, in doing so, pushes
aside late nineteenth-century anxieties about colonial control. Through Sonny, the text
marginalises mid-century Indian resistance, both the political acts of the rebels and
the sexual submission and fury associated with Zora and Tara respectively, but in its
concern with the history of insurgency, it also draws attention to the unresolved fears
of the Raj. Meanwhile, Freddie, the growing child, holds at bay worries about
degeneration and breeding by remaining in England. Between these two poles of
infancy, Kate returns home pregnant. Sonny is no longer part of the memsahib’s
narrative, nor does he suffer a life of exile; he is already at home in the India for
which he was created.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that in Steel’s writing the child as lost, disguised, or requiring
translation is analogous to the colonial subject, making room for and yet protected by
the determined production of the memsahib/woman author. Holding before her the
growing child as the future of an empire, threatened as he is by the physical and
imagined proximity of fleshly, dirty and rebellious native life, she relies upon the

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154 Letter to Mr Colles.
155 It was a commonplace that Anglo-Indian children were more familiar with Hindustani than English; Emma Roberts observes, ‘few can speak a word of English’ while mothers learn the native language from their children. See Sketches and Characteristics of Hindostan, with Sketches of Anglo-Indian Society (London: WH Allen, 1835), cited in Memsahibs Abroad, ed. by Ghose, p. 232.
constant child to frame her efforts as instinctive and natural, to provide what Chris Jenks calls ‘a clarity of vision’.  

While the development of the white child is endorsed at a distance as essential to the survival of the empire, it is the development of the Indian population, childlike in some aspects and animal-like in others, that gives Steel immediate cause for concern. In On the Face of the Waters and The Complete Indian Housekeeper the avoidance of childhood, the motion to both assert its existence and enforce its absence, appears as important as the appeal to the child’s perpetual innocence in launching the towering figure of memsahib whose career Steel narrates in The Garden of Fidelity. Whilst the separation of women from children can be viewed as damaging to the empire, Steel’s fictional/historical ‘Epic of the Race’ and her provision of a manual for its (female) future shows that this precarious Anglo-Indian life allows the woman writer to find purchase for her ambitions.  

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156 Jenks, Childhood, p. 65.
157 The Garden of Fidelity, p. 226.
Chapter 3

The Anti-Colonial Child: Mulk Raj Anand’s Early Writing

Mulk Raj Anand’s first novel, *Untouchable* (1935), follows a typical day in the life of a sweeper boy that becomes life changing. Bakha’s distress at the caste discrimination he suffers is eclipsed by a revelatory moment in which he meets both Gandhi and ‘the machine which clears dung without anyone having to handle it —the flush system’ for the first time.¹ The concluding debate in the novel, between Gandhian nationalism, industrial modernity and Marxist politics, prefigures postcolonial conversations on transnational or cosmopolitan connections as limited by, or even avoiding, economic inequalities. As the novelist Zulfikar Ghose defiantly responds when asked to evaluate his ‘multicultural’ status: ‘I despise ideas. Ideas have never helped mankind. Only things help. Things like penicillin and flushing toilets’.² This chapter takes this debate back to the Indian-English novel of the 1930s to think about the tenacious position of a writer interested in ‘things’, in the material, imaginative, primitive, ritualistic and abject forms that they take, and his reliance upon the idea of the child to portray them in words.³

In the preface that proved to be *Untouchable*’s ‘passport’ to publication after persistent rejection, E.M. Forster makes two important claims. Firstly, with reference to the books’ ‘dirty’ subject matter, he writes: ‘Avoiding rhetoric and circumlocution,

² *Interviews with Writers of the Postcolonial World*, ed. by Jussawalla and Dasenbrock, p. 193.
³ I use the term ‘Indian-English’ as it was preferred by Anand over ‘Indo-Anglian’ or the unwieldy ‘Indian Literature in English. See ‘Pigeon Indian’.
it has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it’.  

Secondly, such an honest presentation of untouchable lives ‘could only have been written by an Indian, and an Indian observing from the outside’.  

Forster’s second claim makes space for Anand in a literary climate in which Indian authors struggled to get published, although they were active at what Sara Blair calls the ‘command centre’ of British imperialism in London.  

Tagore’s declining reputation meant he was known as an idealist maker of love songs ill suited to what Amit Chaudhuri terms a ‘war-weary’ Europe ‘in the era later labelled “high” modernism’.  

Indian-English writers had to build a new reputation for their literature as they engaged in a globally aware nationalism. As I discussed in the Introduction, the nationalist imagination was constantly evolving, often by marrying mythological or religious ideas with political ambition, and these inflections did owe something to Tagore’s critique of the West: ‘The truth is that the spirit of conflict and conquest is at the origin and in the centre of the Western nationalism; its basis is not social cooperation’.  

To achieve what must, therefore, be a postcolonial vision of cooperation rather than one of imitation, Anand elicits Forster’s help.

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4 E.M. Forster, Preface to Untouchable, p. v. This preface has remained with the novel from its first publication by Wishart books in 1935. Only in the 1970 Bodley Head edition does the ‘Afterword’ by Saros Cowasjee give an account of how the novel was rejected by nineteen publishers, revised between 1928 and 1932 and finally accepted on the condition that Forster provide the preface. The term ‘passport’ is from a letter from Edgell Rickward, editor of Wishart books, a small socialist publisher who finally agreed to produce a small print run with Forster onboard. See Saros Cowasjee, ‘Mulk Raj Anand: The Early Struggles of a Novelist’, The Journal of Commonwealth Literature 7: 49 (1972), pp. 49-56 (p. 55).

5 Untouchable, p. 6.


7 Amit Chaudhuri, ‘Foreward’, The Essential Tagore, ed. by Alam and Chaudhuri, pp. 1-33 (p. 14). Chaudhuri finds a number of reasons for Tagore’s declining popularity, including the proliferation of unsatisfactory translations of his work and his image as ‘a mystic and an Oriental’ (p. 19).

8 Rabindranath Tagore, ‘Nationalism in the West’, in Nationalism (1917), repr. in The Essential Tagore, ed. by Alam and Chakravarty, pp. 170-182 (p. 170). Tagore’s novel The Home and the World (1916) is a tragic indictment of the brutality and parochialism that he came to associate with nationalism in India as opposed to the spiritual humanism he espoused.
Forster’s first statement turns on its head the concern that Bonamy Dobrée had, along with London’s nervous publishers, over the book’s prospects. Dobrée writes to Anand: ‘It does smell rather strong. Couldn’t you give a sense of utter beastliness of the job without going into so much physical detail?’ Recalling a certain Colonel’s reaction to his own A Passage to India (1924), Forster provides a rejoinder:

On the front page he had written ‘burn when done’, and lower down: ‘Has a dirty mind, see page 215.’ I turned to page 215 with pardonable haste. There I found the words: ‘The sweepers of Chandrapor had just struck, and half the commodes remained desolate in consequence.’

A humorous anecdote facilitates a serious connection between the Indian ‘refreshingly frank’ attitude to excretion and the ‘clear observation’ that the novel as a whole offers. It is the willingness to deal with physicality that makes the text, for Forster, indescribably ‘clean’.

Forster’s commitment to Anand as possessing the same unprejudiced eye, if not the naiveté, of his boy-hero Bakha and as having, like the journalistic Kipling, a birds-eye view of India as well as an insider’s experience, has led to a critical response to the novel dominated by appreciations of Anand as a ‘social realist’ representing ‘the real India of the majority of Indians’ and as a nationalist novelist producing ‘powerful

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9 Dobrée was a University lecturer and a Kipling scholar associated with the Bloomsbury group in the 1920s.
10 Letter to Anand, 12th June 1934, cited in Cowasjee, p. 54.
social tragedy’. Untouchable and Coolie were reviewed by publications including the TLS and the London Mercury, in which Forster’s cleansing efforts proved successful: ‘The novel affords a rare example of the manner in which material that lends itself to propaganda can be so treated as to produce the pure effect of art’. But, as Amardeep Singh perceives, there is an uncomfortable imbalance when a colonial author needs to be ‘lifted up’ in order to be considered a worthy contributor to Britain’s cosmopolitan modernity. Whilst Forster’s focus on simplicity and objectivity made Bakha’s story palatable, the caricature of Anand as an oppositional colonial socialist rather than the writer of the world that he aspired to be has rendered him inconspicuous in evaluations of English literature. This problem is paralleled by what Susheila Nasta calls ‘narrow critical reading’ that uses social and critical protest to define its scope. Despite attributing to Indian writers of this period ‘cultural schizophrenia’ and recognising the ‘ambiguous inheritance’ provided by modernism given the ‘Marxist tone of the 1930s and 1940s’, Leela Gandhi restricts her appreciation of Coolie to noting it as ‘an important social chronicle’, making no mention of its distinctive style as negotiating between disparate influences. Meanwhile, P.P. Mehta values Anand’s ‘photographic accuracy’ and Priya Joshi his ‘photographic fidelity’.

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20 Alterno identifies a similar simplifying of Raja Rao’s work, making the case that his novels dramatise the challenges of representing both colonial and postcolonial subjectivities, p. 47.
21 Joshi, In Another Country, p. 211.
Anand has been criticised both for being didactic and for being experimental, a contradiction which, Ben Conisbee Baer shows, has led to charges of ‘bad’ writing.\(^{22}\) My analysis contributes to recent debates that contest these assessments by examining the uneasy relationship in Anand’s novels between a realist skewering of material concerns and a promotion of emancipation through ‘new’ and transnational forms. These forms are directly influenced by European modernism and make vital use of the idea of the child to figure the colonised self and what Tagore called the ‘No-Nation’.\(^{23}\) My focus on Anand as a modernist after the canonisation of modernism is in dialogue with a broadening scholarship on what Benita Parry terms ‘peripheral modernisms’\(^ {24}\) that begins from the sense that, as Lazarus phrases it: ‘at least some modernist work […] says ‘no’; refuses integration, resolution, consolation, comfort; protests and criticises’ and does so across discontinuous time-frames and locations.\(^ {25}\) Using close readings of Anand’s biographical novel *Seven Summers* (1951) and his account of his literary apprenticeship in *Conversations in Bloomsbury* (1981), I propose an understanding of Anand that brings together social realism and modernism looking towards what Martin Puchner describes as ‘literature that maintains a crucial relation to the world […]: a worldly literature’.\(^ {26}\) As Jessica Berman says, Anand’s novels are an early example of ‘the multidirectional flow of literature and culture’ which, as the


\(^{23}\) Tagore, ‘Nationalism in the West’, p. 170.


emergence and institutionalisation of postcolonial studies demonstrates, happens faster and through more complex channels than ever before.\textsuperscript{27}

Anand received his education in cantonment schools because his father was a non-commissioned officer in the British Indian Army, which meant that intercultural debates were a feature of his upbringing. Born in Peshawar in 1905 to a coppersmith family, Anand became politically active whilst a student at the University of the Punjab, Amritsar and was beaten and briefly imprisoned for his part in the non-cooperation movement. In 1924, partly as a safety measure against further trouble and with the assistance of the freedom campaigner Annie Besant, he left for London to study philosophy at University College London, where he also began to carve out his career as a writer and critic. He combined a tense but productive association with the Bloomsbury group with a growing interest in Gandhian nationalism, particularly after 1927, when he was inspired by Gandhi’s magazine \textit{Young India}, to travel back to India to show the Mahatma his first novel.\textsuperscript{28}

Anand remained in London until after the war, publishing first short notes in T.S. Eliot’s \textit{Criterion}, a cook book, monographs on art and poetry in John Murray’s ‘Wisdom of the East’ series and short stories. The presumption that educated Indians were welcome to bring the East into London’s drawing rooms but were less appreciated when they addressed politics or social issues makes it unsurprising that

than the publishing world was hesitant to touch *Untouchable*. Anand asserts: ‘though I valued the contacts with the eminences of the Bloomsbury Group, I was nervous and on edge about the undeclared ban on political talk’. This discomfort and Anand’s concern with ‘the human condition in its lower depths’ led him to associate his writing with Gorky’s stories of ‘low life’ in the tradition of Wells and Dickens’ *Hard Times*, despite taking stylistic lessons from Joyce. It was certainly a factor in Anand becoming a founder member of the All-India Progressive Writers Association (the PWA), whose aim was to achieve ‘our liberation and those of other oppressed peoples, whoever they were, wherever they were and of whatever shape, size and colour’. As Priyamvada Gopal describes, the inaugural manifesto penned by Anand in 1935 evinces a committed Socialism and is ‘optimistic in its epochal vision but emphatic about the self-critique and work that postcolonial reconstruction (as opposed to rebirth) will take’. This dynamic process involves binding a resistance to colonialism to what Aijaz Ahmad calls ‘an even more comprehensive critique of ourselves: our class structures, our familial ideologies, our management of our bodies and sexualities, our idealisms, our silences’.

To this end, during World War II, Anand produced the *Voice* programme along with George Orwell, a poetry magazine aiming to be ‘outside the propaganda machine’, as well as commissioning the *Meet My Friend* series that promoted intercultural communication.

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By the 1930s, Indian-English writing had gone from being ‘broadly conciliatory’ to explicitly revolutionary and was imagining itself as part of a transnational motion towards a Socialist humanism. An Indian political landscape marked by conflict and a fermenting sense of post-War disappointment facilitated a significant move to the Left with growing Socialist activity and labour and peasant struggles being held in check by the Right in Congress and a collection of princely states holding thrones by the goodwill of the British crown. The Government of India Act (1935), the last British Constitution of India, was announced while Gandhi’s satyagraha campaign was in abeyance. The culmination of tortuous negotiations over eight years, the Act resulted in Indians having very little constitutional power and the ‘Federation of India’ it inaugurated never fully came into existence.

The slow pace of promised reforms was one of the factors that galvanised Anand, as a writer who, according to Mehta, ‘brought everything new to the Indo-Anglian novel’, not only to represent the poor, but to challenge all marks of difference, be they those of caste, class or colonialism. To do so, Anand both set himself up as an ‘anti-hero’ to the big names of British literature and created novelistic ‘anti-heroes’ able to enter each arena of discrimination. He does this as the Indian-English novel is coming into what we might term its ‘adolescence’ in which it was expected to expand and clarify

[34] Tickell, Terrorism and Insurgency, p. 143. Tickell cites Sarath Kumar Ghosh’s The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna (1909) and S.M. Mitra’s Hindupore: a Peep Behind the Indian Unrest (1909) as examples of works by migrant Indian authors that rely on romance traditions of ‘secret Indian brotherhoods, charismatic Rajahs and terrorist plots’ but were not keen to appear obviously political (p. 170).
[37] Mehta, p. 139.
its political relevance.\textsuperscript{38} As Meenakshi Mukherjee shows in \textit{The Twice Born Fiction}, the use of historical romance associated with Bankimchandra Chatterjee and ‘the awakening of Indian nationalism’ made way for an increasingly strident nationalist focus so that the fictional scene ‘could now be shifted to the contemporary battles and agitations’.\textsuperscript{39}

Alex Tickell describes this novel as having ‘a concern with the colonised subject as a political entity refashioned through a combination of classic liberal theory allied with “progressive” social evolutionism, and a Hindu-nationalist emphasis on the spiritually perfected being’.\textsuperscript{40} Anand’s novels participate in this formation of the subject as both a growing individual and an avatar of the nation through an idiosyncratic technique, both mimetic and modernist, in which Munoo in \textit{Coolie} (1936) is the centre of an epic tale of economic struggle and the story of Bakha the sweeper dramatises the effort to transform the subaltern into what Forster calls ‘a real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian’.\textsuperscript{41} Both are part of what has become known as the ‘political novel’,\textsuperscript{42} interested in refreshing realism through harnessing ‘the heroic potential of political activism’ as well as being inspired by Gandhian activism.\textsuperscript{43} Whilst this novel is ambitious in its aspirations, it is also arrested in this pose of protest until an independent India is in sight.

\textsuperscript{38} In \textit{Changing India}, Rao and Singh identify three phases in the relationship of India to Britain, the first being capitulation and imitation, the second resistance and the third, to which the Indian-English novel belongs, bringing ‘a more corrective perspective and understanding’ (p. 9).
\textsuperscript{39} Mukherjee, \textit{The Twice Born Fiction}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{40} Tickell, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{41} Forster, ‘Preface’, p. vii.
\textsuperscript{42} See \textit{A History of Indian Literature in English}, ed. by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, p. 13.
There is a contrasting sense of arrest, or at least of unrest, in British writing of the 1930s and 40s. Kristin Bluemel argues that, because of its desire for art to be engaged with politics, this ‘intermodernist’ writing has proved incompatible with the tenets of modernist literature and criticism.\(^{44}\) Although Malcolm Bradbury remarks that it is surprising how ‘variously un-Marxist’\(^{45}\) much ‘Thirties writing’ is, he identifies, amidst the ‘air of secrecy, self-concealment, wanderlust, exile, existential crisis, seediness, inauthenticity and betrayal’, a desire for ‘commitment’ that fits with Anand’s envisioning of a better world.\(^{46}\)

While *Untouchable* is one of a sub-genre of novels inspired by Gandhi in the 1920s and 1930s, epitomised by Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938), *Coolie* falls into those that engage with ‘a new awareness of Indian nationalist self-determination as a process of liberating violence (or at least its possibility).’\(^{47}\) Where we might expect such a narrative to draw on the Marxist-influenced realism that animated the PWA, it also extends its concern with oppression into a complex social-psychological mode presented through modernist play with language and a focus on interiority also found in *Untouchable*. While *Coolie* is focalised through Munoo’s experience and utilises recognisable social realist tropes of the urban landscape, conflict and bodily pain, the language of the novel circles around these ‘realities’, dramatising the difficulties of making Munoo present in his own narrative. When ‘loneliness mingled with the

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\(^{46}\) Bradbury, p. 213.

\(^{47}\) Tickell, p. 143.
thought of worklessness, foodlessness, aimlessness, hung over his being’, he distracts himself by watching people passing by ‘till it seemed to him there was nothing but legs, legs, legs everywhere’. The combination of the disenfranchised child configured through social realism with the presentation of impressionistic, fractured subjectivities is the feature of Anand’s novels that I wish to examine.

Untouchable uses shock-tactics to breach the sad division between Fielding and Aziz at the end of Forster’s A Passage to India. Anand’s novel approaches qualities associated with the child — play, innocence and simplicity — through the squalor of the slum in a manner that Dobrée and others found distasteful. Moreover, it refuses to raise the child out of his horrible situation as had been expected in nineteenth-century novels of child poverty, including Dickens’ Oliver Twist. However, as Forster recognised, it is precisely the promise that India is more accessible and admissible because it comes to us through the idea of the child that enables him to champion Untouchable as a new inflection in a genre in which, as Ian Watt argues, ‘differences in narrative method are differences of emphasis rather than of kind.’ In the following passage, the potentiality of the child as a figure for the Indian nation and a recognisable novelistic protagonist is clear:

Bakha was a child of modern India. The clear-cut styles of European dress had impressed his naïve mind. This stark simplicity had furrowed his old Indian consciousness and cut deep new lines where all the considerations which made India evolve a skirty costume as best fitted for the human body, lay dormant.

‘Naïve’ performs multiple functions: Bakha may be naïve because he is a child in the sense that, although eighteen, he is uneducated. Or it could be because he is Indian

50 Untouchable, p. 10
and an untouchable so that, while the nobility of his body says, ‘Here is a man,’ the ‘sub-human status to which he was condemned’ means he remains a child.\textsuperscript{51}

Alternatively, it may be because he is a colonial subject, so that according to Fanon’s conception of national growth, he is not yet ‘conscious’:

Individual experience, because it is national and because it is a link in the chain of national existence, ceases to be individual, limited and shrunken and is enabled to open out into the truth of the nation and of the world. […] In the same way that during the period of armed struggle each fighter held the fortune of the nation in his hand, so during the period of national construction each citizen ought to continue in his real, everyday activity to associate himself with the whole of the nation, to incarnate the continuous dialectical truth of the nation and to will the triumph of man in his completeness here and now.\textsuperscript{52}

Fanon erases the division between individual and collective experience and, importantly, between the past, the present and the future. Whilst the nation comes to being through the period of violence (in which Bakha is narrated) it continues a constant coming-into-being. This concept of the nation is not the ordered, progressive one sought in the colonial texts I have looked at, but one that is conflicted and insecure, always needing new forms.

As Forster’s Preface recognises, Anand’s writings present the puzzle of what kind of development is necessary or possible for a free Indian future. \textit{Untouchable} expresses Fanon’s claim that, in fighting for emancipation, ‘No one has clean hands; there are no innocents and no onlookers’.\textsuperscript{53} It is my contention that this articulation of struggle happens through a composite notion of the child formulated in an idiosyncratic idiom that corresponds, though not always neatly, to the division of Anand’s own position in Bloomsbury and, it could be argued, to India’s contemporary bifurcated

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Untouchable}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{52} Fanon, \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, pp. 161-162.
\textsuperscript{53} Fanon, p. 161.
representation as a world power and the site of insurmountable social inequalities. This chapter will demonstrate that the insistence on presenting Bakha in *Untouchable* and Munoo in *Coolie* as ‘boys’ although, like Kim, they are in their teenage years is crucial in determining the relation of these novels to anti-colonial activism as well as to the critical acclaim they have since received and their decisive influence on Indian-English writing and the postcolonial novel more broadly.

I begin my close reading with Anand’s autobiographical novel, *Seven Summers*, begun in the 1920s, but published in 1951. I explore how the double-sided child figure in this text is ostensibly in the tradition of the Romantic child but is made to learn the lessons required by the rational adult narrator, who both sees the potential for development and the way it is constrained by colonial structures. With reference to *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, I link this philosophical stand-off over the child with Anand’s avowed modernist influences, Joyce and Lawrence, and discuss how, even as the text immerses itself in the impressions of the child, it proves them to be inadequate to the task of formulating an ‘Indian Expressionism’ able to unite political commitment with the European *Bildungsroman*.

I then move to consider Anand’s re-creation of his own history in *Conversations in Bloomsbury*. A tense meeting between metropolitan modernism and the shifting clay of Anand’s formative literary and political opinions makes Bloomsbury a ‘generative site’ to which he always attached importance.54 The author of an Indian novel made possible through colonial education but at odds with its inheritance takes on the pose

54 Blair, p. 834.
of a child in relation to an elite literary culture and in doing so critiques both its insularity and his own tottering efforts towards ‘a new humanism’. Always precariously balanced, the colonial writer in London risks slipping from his connective position as Eastern sage/Western radical into the circumscribed place of a primitive object, therefore requiring the pose of the child to defend his authenticity and his literary ambition.

In considering Untouchable, I discuss the subaltern subject whose limited consciousness and bodily beauty are traced in the ‘conflict-torn rhythms’ of the ‘hero-anti-hero’ through ‘his emergence into the dim awareness of his own identity’. I explore how the text’s insistence on naiveté coupled with an insistent focus on the materiality of squalid subaltern living is calculated to inspire reform:

I would rescue from the obscure slums of the British cantonement, a man of real flesh and blood, form inside knowledge of the small hutments where I had lived and played with untouchable children and not a silhouette or profile drawn from above.

The text’s gestures towards a revolutionary or even utopic future are complicated by its foregrounding of the problems of linguistic and cultural translation, as well as Bakha’s cross-dressing mimicry of the British Tommies. The tension between these hybrid operations and an intimate encounter with Ghandian politics places the child in this novel as a connecting figure between the three choices offered at its close.

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56 Roots, p. 21.
57 Roots, p. 22.
Finally, I want to think past *Untouchable* to the unremitting struggle that drives Munoo’s peripatetic journey in *Coolie*. Reading *Coolie* after *Untouchable* brings before us the stubborn challenges of national development imagined through the child. Colonialism is realised as preparing the ground for capitalism and for neo-colonialism in which the middle class takes on the mantle of the coloniser.\(^{58}\) In this situation, I discuss how Anand works at a modernist method that is defamiliarising, uneven, even involuntary in its engagements with European texts of colonial disillusion, such as Woolf’s *The Waves*, and yet wishing to be considered, in the most serious sense, worldly.

Anand identified himself and Raja Rao as being constrained by their times:

> Perhaps the atmosphere of an epoch constrains creative artists to confront their own time. Literature is mostly contemporary and universal merely out of its intensity, if it achieves that intensity.\(^{59}\)

It is the constriction of Indian writing at this point that provides its creative impetus rather than the expansive move towards a national, or indeed postcolonial, literature. The question, as Rao phrased it, remains, ‘Will a Coolie ever read *Coolie*?’, emphasising that the Indian-English novel has received most of its plaudits on an international stage.\(^{60}\) Anand was well aware of this postcolonial problem before it happened. But the spectrum of possibilities offered by a ‘new’ Indian writing competing for a place in the Western canon is only one part of Anand’s vision; as epitomised by Bakha watching Gandhi from the high branch of a tree, the rest depends upon what happens on the ground.

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\(^{58}\) Fanon, p. 122. See also Dipesh Chakravarty, p. 30.

\(^{59}\) *Roots*, p. 18.

THE CHILD AND THE WRITER: SEVEN SUMMERS

Constructions of childhood are a key element in the intimate relation between Anand’s life and work that was endorsed by the author in highlighting his ‘real life’ inspirations and re-visiting the scene of Untouchable’s composition and tortuous publishing history in ‘The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie’.

Anand dissected his writing practice in numerous essays, in which he depicted himself as a craftsman who, like a potter, created ‘the flow of form’ from ‘kinetic energies’ so that it was impossible to ‘eliminate the human element of the creative process from the phenomena of the work’. Craftsmanship was a popular modernist trope, which Ann Ardis identifies as uniting socialist and Arts and Crafts movements with modern avant-gardists in the promotion of cultural renewal: ‘craftsmanship, understood not narrowly as a matter of formal technique but as a vehicle of cultural uplift’. For Anand, the work of the artist in creating something new from his materials comes to mean that it is a continuation or transformation of day-to-day living and therefore never fully finished.

Anand’s refusal of formalism, which he discusses in Conversations as denying craftsmanship, was a vindication of the value of folk art and an acknowledgement of the unpredictable elements that make up a text, particularly one attempting, as Michael Thorpe puts it, ‘to hit on a convincing speech or thought pattern for his

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62 Conversations, p. 118.
63 Ann L. Ardis, Modernism and Cultural Conflict 1880 – 1922 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 163. See also Ezra Pound, ‘The Serious Artist’ (1913), which connects the technical and aesthetic sides of craftsmanship. This emphasis replaced ‘the Romantic view of poetry as the product of lyrical inspiration (the expression of the poet’s nature’). See Peter Nicholls, Modernisms: A Literary Guide (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 19.
illiterate protagonists’. Anand’s novels rework characterisation and language so that certain figures, including Bakha, reappear in a number of texts, crossing and re-crossing between genres and between languages. Here, Bakha meets a Salvation Army Colonel:

‘Oh, shed Thy light in the heart of this boy.’

Bakha was baffled and bored. He had followed the sahib because the sahib wore trousers. Trousers had been the dream of his life the kindly interest which the trousered man had shown him when he was downcast had made Bakha conjure up pictures of himself wearing the sahib’s clothes, talking the sahib’s language […] He did not know who Yessuh Missih was.

The shift from the English of the Colonel to Bakha’s own thought-world and the mis-rendering of ‘Jesus the Messiah’ produces a mixed idiom, whose political inferences are anything but programmatic. Attention to both social transformation and artistic innovation is required for a radical coming-into-being: for Anand, this begins with the artist himself.

Cowasjee takes the liberty of describing the child Anand as ‘a precocious and sensitive boy, lonely and observant, always questioning and putting every experience to the test’.Probably basing his characterisation on Seven Summers, the first volume in Anand’s autobiographical trilogy, Cowasjee conjures the child Anand according to the Romantic idea of the artist for whom precocity means being at the forefront of

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65 Untouchable, p. 128.
66 Bakha appears as a sympathetic untouchable in Seven Summers and is mentioned in ‘Why I Write’ and ‘The Story of My Experiment’ as a source of both discomfort and inspiration. It was an article by Gandhi about an untouchable boy named Uka that made up Anand’s mind to travel to India to seek the Mahatma’s advice.
67 Cowasjee, p. 50.
social transformation. This energetic figure, possessing something of Rousseau’s instinctive ‘Natural Man’ that Anand refers to in *Roots and Flowers*, nevertheless remains within a liberal-progressive narrative of childhood on which the notion of precocity depends. He is able to make ‘deductions’ that lead to the belief ‘that no individual could live with dignity under colonial rule’. This child of reason remains entirely accessible to the reader, suggesting that his ‘natural’ and spontaneous appeal actually confirms his conformity. However, as an Indian, he is also a version of the primitive India that Steel believed should be told ‘not now’, demonstrating why, beginning in the Victorian period, ‘Precocity, for many, became less a state to be celebrated than feared.’

A paradoxical construction of the child as both precocious and primitive, sensuous and reasonable, is revealed in *Seven Summers* as the narrator recalls his loneliness after the death of his younger brother:

In the light of those days I am now inclined to think that childhood is not altogether the happy, golden time sentimentalists make it out to be as a compensation for the rigours of the grown-up world, but that it is characterised by long patches of loneliness when children are condemned, for good or ill, to the prisons of their own sensibilities, exiled from the adult world and left to their own devices. […] It is true that the lonely child develops an almost convalescent sensitiveness under these circumstances and creates fantasies for his own delectations, but the burden of the early effort, though profitable in the long run, is heavy to bear when the tender soul has constantly to jump from the dreamy existence of the garden bower to the world of reality which is made up of the parental routine of meals and siestas.

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68 Following *Seven Summers*, Anand published *Morning Face* (1968) and *Confession of a Lover* (1972).
69 See *Roots*, p. 21.
70 Cowasjee, p. 50.
71 Shuttleworth explores how ‘the idea of the precocious child became central to educational and psychological debates about normality’, p. 142.
This passage initially proposes a rupture with the past that is associated with the Romantic view of childhood. The child, left to his own devices, is not a free being, but an outcast plagued by self-indulgent fantasies. However, the text undercuts its claim to the ‘reality’ of childhood by reverting to the very idealism it criticises: the child, faced with ‘long patches of loneliness’, becomes a ‘tender soul’ living in a ‘garden bower’, which can only owe its existence to the childhood idylls so prominent in nineteenth-century images of childhood.73 Introducing the importance of memory (‘I am now inclined to think’), the text dramatises how the sovereign child inhabiting a separate world is produced in retrospect so that ‘the burden of this early effort’ of imagination that is essential in the growth of an artist becomes a way of keeping this child alive in the adult world. In its circularity, the extract brings us back to what the previous paragraph calls ‘the vacua of the endless time before me and of the vast empty open space’ and to the need to fill it with the resourcefulness and ‘vitality’ offered by the child.74

For Anand’s nineteenth-century precursors, and for Gandhi, as I discuss below, the innocent child was also the seed of morality. Ruskin promoted ‘public education’ as ushering in social change in a world driven by the ‘insanity of avarice’ and saw ‘childish illerateness’ as the best place to begin cultivating moral and artistic mastery.75 Gandhi admired Ruskin’s critique of political economy, Unto this Last (1862), translating it into Gujarati and extolling it as a primary inspiration in his

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73 Kincaid refers to ‘the unfettered child’ and gives examples that include Kim walking with the lama and Alice down the rabbit hole. See Child-Loving, p. 209.
74 Seven Summers, p. 28.
75 John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies: two lectures delivered at Manchester in 1864 (London: Smith, Elder, 1865), p. 103.
resistance to what Anand calls ‘bourgeois, mechanical culture’. 76 For Ruskin, the older the individual or the nation, the more effort must be put into reform: ‘Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns’ he urged his audience in 1864, as Gandhi would later appeal to the Indian populace to purify themselves in preparation for growth.77

Dobrée identified Anand’s autobiography with ‘some kind of neo-narrative’, comparable to Joyce’s unpublished Stephen Hero because: ‘Romanticism is bound to be the urge behind the new novel’ rather than the ‘day-dreaming’ that mimics Ulysses.78 It is true that there is much in Seven Summers and the other novels I discuss that celebrates the child as the ‘sublime object’:79 the ‘elemental natural energy’ of the Wordsworthian child was a way of placing truth and power in the safekeeping of a protected source of the imagination. However, the Romantic association of the child also with loss and wretchedness meant, Judith Plotz argues, that the satisfaction of adult yearnings was never achieved. Concomitantly, actual children, especially the poor or uneducated, were regarded as not children at all, while those labelled precocious were pushed outside the realm of the ‘true’ child. Of Charles Lamb’s obsession with the child despite his support of child labour Plotz says: ‘Lamb pulls childishness out of history even as he leaves the children there’ .80 Whilst Plotz treats this problem in relation to authors’ psychological characteristics, Lesnik-Oberstein and Rose discuss the intercession between the determined construction of the ‘real’

76 Roots, p. 12. The essays that make up Unto This Last were first published in Cornhill magazine in 1860.
77 Ruskin, p. 65. Rituals of purification and preparation were also part of sacrifice in Hindu nationalist discourse. V.D. Sarvarkar writes: ‘As long as there remains the least trace of love of faith in the hearts of our heroes, so long, the sword of Hindustan shall be sharp, and one day shall flash even at the gates of London’, See The Indian War of Independence (National Rising of 1857)(1908; Bombay: Hind Prakashan, 1947), cited in Tickell, p. 135.
78 Conversations, p. 154.
80 Plotz, p. 106.
child and the impossibility of the actual child. I argue that it is in attempting to resolve
the problem of segregating the ‘true’ child from the wretchedness of the actual child
that Anand’s politically impatient project turns to a suturing of Romantic and
modernist modes.

While Anand particularly admired the opening of *A Portrait of the Artist*, writing, ‘In
the very first word, he shows what a child feels’, he does not acknowledge the
uncertainty of perspective in this well-known modernist opening:

> Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming
down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road
met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo…
> His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a
glass, he had a hairy face.\(^{81}\)

Whilst in this excerpt the point of view and rhythm shifts and the linguistic register is
in flux, in *Seven Summers*, as well as *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, the narration gets close
to the child by being focalised through his restricted perspective:

> The blood of little Munoo ran to the tune of all this lavish beauty. And he would
rather have had all the machines come here than tear himself away from the sandy
margins of the still back-waters where he played. But —
> ‘Munoo ohe Munooa oh Mundu,’ came his aunt’s voice again.
The face of his aunt, with its hard jaw, its bright red-cornered eyes, its sharp nose
and thin lips, all in a malevolent framework of dark hair, flashed across his mind.\(^{82}\)

Munoo is conflicted, his mind and body are always on the move, but the narration
describes him from the outside. Later in the novel this strategy founders when
Munoo’s disturbed mental states and physical disintegration mean that he is no
longer, as he is here, in harmony with his environment. As I go on to show, what is
innovative in Anand’s use of Romantic forms is not to be found in its language or in

\(^{82}\) *Coolie*, p. 4.
the attempt to immerse us in transient perspectives, but in its response, through the later incursion of a modernist method, to the ‘broken world’ that Munoo must face when he is told he will leave his rural home and go to work in the city.

Anand connects his ‘mixing of discordant elements’ to the ‘spontaneous flow’ of ‘primitive emotions’ 83 he finds in the work of D.H. Lawrence, who wrote: ‘there is in the nature of the infant something entirely new, underived, underivable, something which is ... causeless’. 84 Carol Sklenicka traces the antecedents to this idea, examining the affective portraits of Dickens, Eliot and Charlotte Brontë to conclude that Lawrence creates a form and style ‘for expressing “unrecognized” feeling’ that does not conform either to the Romantic notion of the child as naturally innocent or to the Freudian focus on potential neuroses. 85

It is fair to say of Anand that he also utilises the Romantic child to express the desire for new human relations and a Freudian-inflected notion of divided or hidden psychological dynamics to alter the idea of the child to his anti-colonial purpose. However, his texts are very different from Lawrence’s in adhering to a developmental trajectory which, while at times foundering and fragmenting, holds in place a humanist, revolutionary view of modernity, stubbornly asserting: ‘there are post-Tagoreans in India.’ 86 As Dipesh Chakravarty suggests, although Tagore was accused of aestheticising the ‘salaried labor’ and ‘rickety institutions of civic life’ in urban

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83 Conversations, p. 153.
86 A statement reportedly made by Huxley to D.H. Lawrence. See Conversations, p. 17.
India, his ‘idealist romanticism’ remained indispensable to the literary strategies of writers in Bengal and I would add, also in London.\textsuperscript{87} Mehta cogently expresses this tension in Anand’s aesthetic project: he had ‘one side facing into Premchand’s world, the other side facing into Tagore’s.’\textsuperscript{88}

*Seven Summers* collapses its own body/soul dualism and use of linear time through a repetition of ‘in those days’ that associates memory with myth: ‘in those days the earth and the sky grew bigger, and heavy shadows descended on my eyelids, and my eyes were consumed by dreads and fantasies.’\textsuperscript{89} Here Anand’s child functions as both Ruskin’s seed, ‘my little world’ in need of fertile soil, and the plant whose mutability represents the experience of ‘the ever-changing life of the road’.\textsuperscript{90} Like Gandhi, this child has ‘common sense and the *Gita*’, determined to create:

> A kind of bridge trying to span, symbolically, the two worlds of the Ganga and the Thames through the novel. […] having to transcreate certain human beings into the as yet small third world of international men.\textsuperscript{91}

Anand’s ‘body and soul drama’ excises spiritual dimensions for an explicitly material purpose, markedly like Fanon’s later imagining of the nation: “Destination Man.”\textsuperscript{92}

Finally, it is the use value of Anand’s literary craftsmanship that will determine the worth of the Romantic child.

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\textsuperscript{87} Chakravarty, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{88} Mehta, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{89} *Seven Summers*, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{90} *Seven Summers*, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{91} *Roots*, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{92} ‘Why’, p. 16.
Cowasjee portrays Anand as using the modern individual, a figure that David Lodge identifies as defining the realist novel, to usher in ‘the drama of revolt from which emerges the new society’. However, I believe the relation of the Western models of childhood that animate the European Bildungsroman to anti-colonial writing is more contentious in Anand’s writing, as the notions of subjectivity and freedom are in Fanon’s work. India as perpetually fascinating and inspiring, sharing some of the qualities of the Romantic child, but excluded from the culture of its inception, is not easily able to capitulate to expectations of timely growth.

Anand’s suggestion in An Apology for Heroism (1946) that art of or through the self is a ‘distortion’ of history intimates that there is a fraught inheritance to be worked out through the child. The necessity of art to reveal the social and political ‘pressure points’ that prevent the self from being recognised poses a challenge to Anand’s globally aware humanism. The child figure is double-sided for such a writer because, as I discuss below, Bildung narratives traditionally demonstrate the centrality of familial, bourgeois relations and re-integrate the individual into society. Terry Eagleton describes the problem: ‘the impasse of any transformative politics is that it can unravel what Marx and Stephen Dedalus call the nightmare of history only with the poor, contaminated instruments which the history has handed it’. The demand that a repressed subject should be ‘intuitively present to itself’ and should be able to form alternative alliances is, for Eagleton, the ironic result of colonial or class

94 Apology, p. 38.
95 This is Priyamvada Gopal’s term.
97 Eagleton, ‘Nationalism’, p. 29.
oppression. Anand’s formulations of interiority as/in the child must therefore be recognised as coming from the acute angle of a colonial education that likened Indians to children and marginalised their cultural heritage so that it is already a compromised or hybrid child that stands prior to the bewildering melee of experiences that makes the ‘hero-anti-hero’.

Anand seeks a technique that will not lead to the derogatory label of ‘Tagorian sing-song rubbish’ received by his early story ‘The Lost Child’. He attempts to provide a synthesis in which art is not just ‘reportage about social conditions’, but is more worldly than ‘the phantasmagoria of ones’ psychological states, particularly the subconscious, dream, or clinical experiences’. The distinction Anand makes is not a straightforward one between realism and modernism or political engagement and privileged separation. The practice that he later called ‘Indian Expressionism’ combines learning from experience with experimentation in the unpredictable facilities of Indian-English. As Berman contends, ‘experimental prose’ has often been distinguished from ‘engaged writing’ and modernism from politically concerned ‘Thirties literature’ so that Anand’s work, in spanning these divisions and bringing modernism into conversation with nationalist narratives, presents a challenge to boxed-in critical assumptions. To listen to the often rebarbative dialogue between British and Indian literature and to appreciate the importance it attaches to the child, it is necessary to go to one of its original habitats in Bloomsbury.

99 Apology, p. 75
BREAKING INTO BLOOMSBURY

Bloomsbury the geographical place, rather than the artistic coterie, was cultured, cosmopolitan and attracted marginal aspirants in politics and literature. Its position as a site of ‘cultural contest and contestation’ makes it a prime example for writing as a local phenomenon able to become what Blair calls ‘a space in which diasporic, exile and colonial figures, like Anand, could create themselves as players on a local yet transnational cultural field’.\(^{100}\) While Anand saw himself as a ‘gauche’ incomer when he arrived in London, his early development as a writer was propelled by contact with ‘more socially-committed figures’, including Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Naomi Mitchinson and Stevie Smith.\(^{101}\) Although, even in his BBC scripts that were supposed to calm Indian resistance during the war, Anand trenchantly criticised the underhanded and ruthless colonial machine that appears in his First World War novel, \textit{Across the Black Waters} (1940), he oft-times found artistic connections, or at least refreshing criticism, in the society of Bloomsbury.\(^{102}\)

In \textit{Conversations}, based on diaries of his time in London in the mid-1920s, Anand portrays himself as the unknowing alien: ‘“I have not read \textit{Ulysses},” I ventured gauchely’, as well as the bearer of foreign knowledge able to compare Joyce’s \textit{Portrait} with Mohammad Iqbal’s \textit{Secrets of the Self} (published in Persian 1915).\(^ {103}\) In

\(^{100}\) Blair, p. 833. Anna Snaith expands recent work on modernism and empire to consider women’s writing from India, Africa and the Caribbean in relation to London. See \textit{Colonial London: Nation, Gender, Empire 1890-1945} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

\(^{101}\) Nasta, ‘Between Bloomsbury’, p. 11.

\(^{102}\) The novel was the second part of a trilogy including \textit{The Village} (1939) and \textit{The Sword and the Sickle} (1942). Bluemel takes the view that the heroes of Anand’s later novels are more ‘resistant’ and more ‘resilient’ than Bakha and Munoo and notes that they increasingly look to higher caste and class sectors for their characters, (n. p. 191).

\(^{103}\) \textit{Conversations}, p. 6. The text is clearly a fictional autobiography. It is unclear exactly when the encounters described happened or, in certain instances, whether Anand was in fact present. See Bluemel, n. p. 189.
these autobiographical vignettes, Anand claims to show ‘the actual realities of my experiences’, tracing his trajectory through well-known Bloomsbury spaces: the Woolfs’ drawing room, ‘the B.M.’ (British Museum), Tavistock place, the office of The Criterion and so forth. While in Seven Summers, the confessional mode is characterised by a ‘child-like quality’ appreciated by Virginia Woolf in likening the novel to Kim, in Conversations, the narration cannily utilises Bloomsbury as ‘an object of appropriation, of love and theft’.

The Preface depicts Anand’s work as confrontational and progressive, in contrast to British writing that regarded itself as ‘above the battle’, interested in personal relationships rather than politics. This stance is somewhat at odds with the Romantic experiential method Anand owns in the text itself, as well as with his literary education. Unexpected friction occurs when Anand denies Woolf’s suggested connection with Kipling, insisting upon his youthful literary ‘bad taste’ that included George W.M. Reynolds, Marie Corelli and Rider Haggard. Virginia Woolf claims to know nothing of these ‘lowbrow’ authors, while Leonard Woolf dismisses them as ‘read by bored Englishmen in the tropics. Hardly ever mentioned here’. This reaction enacts a disorientating denial of colonialism by stepping aside from popular British culture. Anand’s confession and the Woolfs’ refusal to accept it highlight the colonial hegemony that imagined itself through Kipling’s India. As Viswanathan shows and Anand’s literary antecedents demonstrate, its reach could not be simply resisted even when its forms were deemed unsuitable:

104 Conversations, p. 5.
105 Conversations, p. 104.
106 Blair, p. 834.
107 Conversations, p. 10.
108 Conversations, p. 105.
The modest square house we lived in, in the cantonment barracks, seemed not to resemble anything in London, as I imagined that city to be. And the English language seemed a completely unsuitable medium to interpret my mother’s village Punjabi wit, wisdom and folly.\footnote{‘Why’, p. 11.}

Anand’s repeated reference to himself as ‘gauche’ is, therefore, comparable to Stephen’s intellectual posturing in \textit{A Portrait of the Artist}, being a pose that is not entirely inhabited by the protagonist.

Anand looks for a romanticism that is ‘utterly human’, but it is the connection that his ‘gaucheness’ makes with the child and therefore with cultural forms deemed simple or primitive that makes his position a complex one.\footnote{Conversations, p. 153.} Simon Gikandi describes the primitive as ‘a set of ethnographic and psychological constructs’ put together to form an ‘other’ that can produce ‘unmediated experience’.\footnote{Simon Gikandi, ‘Africa and the Epiphany of Modernism’, in \textit{Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity}, ed. by Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 31-50 (p. 31).} Like Torgovnik, Gikandi argues that the separation of primitive art objects from their physical and cultural production, as evidenced in Anand’s stamping ground of ‘the B.M’, led to a neo-colonial process in which radical artworks became institutionalised as of monumental importance to the capitalist West, while the encounter with the other that had inspired them was cut short. Gikandi remains attached to an unproblematised idea of ‘real experience’ and refuses to consider the possibility that primitive objects might be altered by their inclusion in new artistic contexts. However, his placing of modernism as the ‘epiphany’ of a modernity in which barbarism is made the condition of possibility for high culture, illuminates Anand’s position as a colonial writer.
encountering a plethora of assumptions about spiritual, sexual and social practices in India cut loose from their historical moorings.¹¹²

When T.S. Eliot wonders whether ‘the problem of the individual for the subject races may be different’,¹¹³ we are alerted to the danger of claiming this ‘primitive’ consciousness. For Anand, this would be to give up his carefully won position as intermediary between the Eastern sage and the Western radical. While India is already considered ‘known’ by British intellectuals, Anand cannot, like Kipling, be at once inside and outside it. To play the child is therefore safer than playing the primitive for, as we see in Seven Summers, the child appears through memory and disappears with development, whereas the primitive, if we follow modernism into the museum, indefinitely persists. While Anand tries ‘not to appear too knowing’,¹¹⁴ his presentation of himself as ignorant is also disingenuous because, he repeatedly notes, this literary circle (with the exception of Leonard Woolf and Forster) only know India through the ‘elastic’¹¹⁵ prose of Kipling. In his child’s pose, therefore, Anand conceals his desire to expose to the metropolitan centre through his writing exactly what its commodities and comforts rely upon.

Anand’s use of the childlike makes the very idea of the Indian writer compelling. In Race and the Modernist Imagination, Urmila Seshagiri mounts a counter-argument to Gikandi’s by proposing that the idea of race in modernism contributed to an aesthetic

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¹¹² Gikandi, ‘Africa’, p. 33. Indian culture had been recognised and studied as part of Orientalist enterprises and was therefore not so easily ‘invented’ as African culture as being ‘primitive’. However, as my analysis of Steel explored, there were discourses that presented India as both fearsome and fascinating.

¹¹³ Conversations, p. 170.

¹¹⁴ Conversations, p.108.

of difference that was celebratory rather than merely exploitative. Anand’s ambiguous relationship to Bloomsbury could also be read as part of this effect. As a voluntary exile, he is at once like the mobile émigrés that Eagleton has identified as at the forefront of modernism and brings another perspective to the notion of estrangement as ‘a normal condition’.116

Anand finds a complex companionship with ‘pioneers of freedom and intimacy’.117 There emerges between Forster, Leonard Woolf and Anand a ‘natural’ pedagogy of ‘humanness’ that values equality. Although Woolf’s words put India in the child’s place — ‘the Indians are sometimes demanding, then abject. And they all long for re-immersion in the Ganges’ — the idea of India as a site of potential is shared by the speakers.118 Forster politely brushes away Anand’s question on Aziz and Fielding in A Passage to India: ‘Do you think they will come together when India becomes free?’119 But Anand reintroduces this concern in the list of past and present selves that ends the essay, including ‘a child, asking questions’, ‘would-be revolutionalist’, ‘a noble savage’ and ‘anti-bourgeois murderous egoist’. In contemplating ‘my various selves, flying off in different directions’120 and confronting his own position through the idea of the child, Anand suggests that art is, as Blair puts it, ‘a resource for global praxis’,121 that addresses the question Forster will not: ‘I felt I must know whether

117 Conversations, p. 77.
118 Conversations, p. 78.
119 Conversations, p. 72.
120 Conversations, p. 31.
121 Blair, p. 815.
politics was admissible in a novel.’ In looking for an answer Anand begins to formulate the idiosyncratic writerly method of Untouchable and Coolie.

OTHER REAL WORLDS: UNTOUCHABLE

Anand’s novels require that we multiply what is meant by modernism. It is ‘a local phenomenon’ with global reach, as Blair describes, but it is also defamiliarising, politically expedient and made from the inadequacy of language to experience and the inequality of culture to culture. Inspired by Ulysses, the story of Bakha the sweeper’s impossible ambitions takes place through a day in which he is dismissed by higher caste characters, sworn at and attacked for accidentally touching and polluting a man in the street, driven from a temple, berated for carrying an injured child home and, finally, in deep despair, is inspired by Gandhi. Along ‘a jagged course of ups and downs’, which include the restorative moments of a hockey match and a country walk, the repercussions of the ‘touching’ are intricately spun out.

The narration shifts between immersion in Bakha’s consciousness and an externalised perspective that remorselessly details his miserable life. Whilst the novel ostensibly presents a realist canvas on which the relation of the individual to society is drawn, it also breaks off frequently to explore subjectivity through Bakha’s associative thoughts and reveries, reconstructing rather than deconstructing the subaltern self in crisis. The complexity of perspective becomes apparent in the opening scene:

The outcastes’ colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and of the cantonment, but outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-

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122 Conversations, p. 71.
123 In order to make this point I don’t think it is necessary to go as far as Blair does and suggest that Anand’s texts are ‘nascently postcolonial’ (p. 835).
workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes from Hindu society. A brook ran near the lane, once with crystal-clear water, now soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcases left to dry on its banks, the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up to be made into fuel cakes, and the biting, choking, pungent fumes that oozed from its sides. The absence of a drainage system had, through the rains of various seasons, made of the quarter a marsh which gave off the most offensive stink. And altogether the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it, made it an ‘uncongenial’ place to live in.

At least so thought Bakha, a young man of eighteen, strong and able-bodied, the son of Lakha, a Jemadar of all the sweepers in the town and the cantonment, and officially in charge of the three rows of public latrines which lined the extremest end of the colony, by the brook-side. But then he had been working in the barracks of a British regiment for some years on a sort of probation with a remote uncle and had been caught by the glamour of the ‘white mans’ life. The Tommies had treated him as a human being and he had learnt to think of himself as superior to his fellow-outcastes. [...]

Bakha thought of the uncongeniality of his home as he lay half awake in the morning of an autumn day, covered by a worn-out, greasy blanket, on a faded blue carpet which was spread on the floor in the corner of the twelve feet by five, dank, dingy, one-roomed mud-house.\(^\text{125}\)

The local precision of the geography set out here initially has a Hardyesque quality in which Bakha might be expected to appear consonant with his surroundings, despite being at odds with his destiny. However, the list of occupations that precedes the hero’s entrance indicates that, rather than following the nineteenth-century trend of being named after a person or place, the book is representing a group, a collective consciousness in relation to which Bakha is both a representative and an exception. The focus on the sensual, particularly smell, anticipates the arrival of the hero. The choice of the word ‘oozed’, more visceral than ‘clustered’ or ‘heaped’, is the first suggestion of an unwilling immersion in ordure exacerbated with ‘offensive’, and ‘squalor’. The ordered list of waste products and the stability of ‘ramparts’ is undone by a narrative accumulation of disgust that pitches into an encounter with the abject.

Julia Kristeva construes the abject as situated at the fragile boundary between the self

\(^{125}\text{Untouchable, pp. 9-10.}\)
and the world, which meet in bodily processes. The revulsion towards the ‘marsh’ is belatedly attached to the protagonist in ‘so thought Bakha’, placing the abject between the narrator and Bakha, who is introduced by a set of quotation marks in ‘uncongenial’, at which point it is too late for the reader to avoid sharing his perspective.

The following paragraph uses ‘at least’ to claim that the narrator is providing a bare objectivity such as the title promises. However, Bakha, whose physical fitness and ‘natural’, ‘flowing’ body contrasts with the decaying landscape, will give us a human, partial, but authentic view that unites mind and body and eliminates the apprehension of the abject. The difficulty with this reading is that Bakha, as a subaltern, must first be designated as human, as able to imagine another plot for his story. For Eagleton, this is an ironic effect of repressive conditions that ‘make it necessary for the subject to express itself freely’ but also ‘tend to render it partially opaque to itself’. In Bakha’s case, only when he has been established as at war with his origins, having learnt to think of himself a separate individual on a humanist or nationalist plane, can ‘uncongenial’ be directly attributed to him.

Bakha’s association with the ‘glamour’ of the coloniser creates dissatisfaction so that, being ‘half awake’, he can see the wrongness of his situation. This wrongness is detectable in the writing itself as the impossible description of the slum’s relation to

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127 Ranajit Guha defines ‘subaltern’ as ‘a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way’. See ‘Preface’, *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. vii.
128 Eagleton, ‘Nationalism’, p. 29.
the cantonment and the town draws attention to what Baer reads as the novel’s way of allegorising the falsified order of colonial relations. In this case, the Raj looms even where it should not be physically possible. The construction of the child is of course subject to what Mehta terms ‘the involved pattern of Indian life’ in the novel, but it also functions to circumvent, or at least hold at bay, its contradictions so that the text can attempt to write ‘the sordid and colourful lives of the millions of Asia.’

The child is the ready means for bringing to light the ‘phantoms’ of subalternity:

But how pleasant men find it to look at the world with the open, hopeful, astonished eyes of the child! The vagaries of Bakha’s naïve tastes can be both explained and excused. He didn’t like his home, his street, his town, because he had been to work at the Tommie’s barracks, and obtained glimpses of another world, strange and beautiful; he had grown out of his native shoes into the ammunition boots he had secured as a gift. And with this and other strange and exotic items of dress he had built up a new world, which was commendable, if for nothing else, because it represented a change from the old ossified order and the stagnating conventions of the life to which he was born. He was a pioneer in his own way, although he had never heard of that word, and was completely unconscious that it could be applied to him.

Bakha’s status as ‘pioneer’ is not merited by his creation of a hybrid identity, but by his existence in the text at all. His lack of awareness means that he cannot interpret his own actions and therefore cannot be considered complicit with colonialism. However, this defence can only be mounted by a fully conscious and critical narrator whose distance from Bakha announces the tension that drives the passage. In taking on the clean-cut silhouette of the British military, Bakha is able to be individualised even in his subalternity. The child in this case offers a means of articulating the awkwardness of alterity, which, as I explore in the next section, is paralleled not only

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129 Mehta, p. 146. As Baer notes, it was a historical irony that the Raj helped to loosen the hold of caste in Indian society.
131 ‘My Experiments’, p. 15.
132 Untouchable, p. 78.
133 Rose refers to the child as ‘something of a pioneer’ in restoring to us ‘primitive or lost states’ in Peter Pan (p. 9), as does Lesnik-Oberstein in Children’s Literature (p. 18).
in the narration, but in the language of the novel in which English, like the image of the child, can never be entirely innocent.

It is not Bakha as a copycat figure that is most prominent in the novel, but rather his discomfort as a child in a man’s body. His physical effort ‘seemed to flow like constant water from a natural spring’\textsuperscript{134} and his ‘fine physique’ appears to give ‘a wholeness to his body, so that you could turn round and say: “Here is a man.”’\textsuperscript{135} Bakha’s exhibits the beauty of the primitive object that Gikandi identifies. However, like the primitive object, Bakha cannot offer an alternative future. Bakha’s subaltern situation exposes the unfairness of Indian custom and colonial rule as well as the inadequacy of the novel form as it ‘writes back’ to the exemplary modernism of Bloomsbury by drawing on the two complimentary ideas of the child that I have utilised in this thesis.

The constant child is valued as a transparent window on a narrative that shows things ‘as they are’: his perception is pristine. And yet he can slip into the wretchedness of the Romantic child, as Plotz defines it. He may, however, be rescued by the capacity for survival possessed by the growing child who learns through experience. In this, Bakha possesses something of the ‘spirit’ that defined the imperial boys Anand read about in Haggard. Bakha is required to use this energy to become ‘an-other’ child: the child of Mother India, the ‘harijan’, or ‘child of god’, that Gandhi defended almost to the death. This is the child of \textit{Anandamath} that also has antecedents in the stalwart but

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Untouchable}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Untouchable}, p. 20.
ultimately crushed peasants of Premchand’s novels; he is not an imperial boy but freedom fighter, bound to his lot because India is bound to hers.

REMEMBERING GANDHI

As an untouchable (or Dalit), Bakha is a figure with few rights who cannot easily be incorporated into the nation.\textsuperscript{136} Gandhi distrusted the term ‘nation’, preferring Swaraj, and more specifically, Hind Swaraj: mere political Swaraj would be ‘English rule without the Englishmen.’\textsuperscript{137} Gandhi imagined independent India as a land and way of life vitally different from Britain, rather than in imitation of her. His focus on rights and improvements for harijans (‘children of God’, his term for untouchables) after his imprisonment in 1932 was a way of capitulating to ruthless British repression of the Civil Disobedience movement and, Sarkar argues, ‘a bid to establish hegemony over potentially radical pressures from below’.\textsuperscript{138} Gandhi disagreed with MacDonald’s Communal Award of August 1932 that initiated separate electorates for untouchables. He began a ‘fast unto death’ and secured an agreement between caste Hindu and untouchable leaders (Poona Pact) by which the Award was modified to give untouchables greater representation within the Hindu joint electorate. Gandhi’s campaign, which focussed largely on specific reforms, such as the opening of wells, roads, and particularly temples to untouchables, did not include any economic demands. In Untouchable, the well and the temple are two primary sites of conflict.

\textsuperscript{136} The term Dalit has been interchangeably used with Scheduled Castes since Independence. These terms include all historically discriminated lowest castes of India such as Shudras and Untouchables.


\textsuperscript{138} Sarkar, p. 328. Fearing a turn towards violence Gandhi suspended his Civil Disobedience campaign in 1922 and, in the same year, he was arrested. Subsequently he worked to heal rifts in the Congress until his return to the fore in 1928, with a demand that India be granted dominion status.
and marginalisation for Bakha and his family although, in the final debate, modernisation and industrialisation are given equal importance, making it a ‘Gandhi-novel’ that critiques Ghandian politics.\(^{139}\)

Gandhi’s approach was considered ineffective by B.R. Ambedkar and other Dalit activists who demanded separate representation and the destruction of the caste system as a whole, which Gandhi refused to consider.\(^{140}\) As Sarkar points out, such radicalism among Dalits led to a connection with Leftist trends as the Communist party secured its base in India, although prominent members, such as Subhas Chandra Bose, were criticised for not paying enough attention to caste relations. There is evidence both in *Untouchable* and *Coolie* of Anand’s investment in Socialism as the pathway to the ‘new humanism’ and, as such, his philosophy diverges from Gandhi’s.\(^{141}\) Reading Anand’s literary essays alongside his novels shows that this proved to be a creative tension rather than a problem in his work as he operates ‘in the time-bound contemporary world’ but is driven by Gandhi’s proposition that experience is ‘some part of the totality of life’.\(^{142}\) As Kuruvilla Pandikuttu proposes, Gandhi, through insisting that ‘my message is my life’, produced the only convincing vision of a unified India and one that inspired Indian-English writing figure the character of the nation: ‘He, and he alone, was responsible for the transformation of

\(^{139}\) See Tickell, p. 218.

\(^{140}\) Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was the leader of the Mahars of Maharashtra who returned to India after being educated in Britain and the U.S. to organise campaigns of untouchable resistance with ‘a modernist spirit of political consciousness’. See Wolpert, p. 324.

\(^{141}\) Nehru espoused a Marxist socialism in his *Autobiography* (1934-5) and made clear his ideological differences with Gandhi in *Whither India?*, which argued for combining nationalist campaigns with social and economic reforms. As Kuruvilla Pandikuttu says: ‘It was Nehru’s vision, not Gandhi’s, that was eventually preferred by the Indian State’. See *Gandhi: The Meaning of Mahatma for the Millenium*, Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series IIb, South Asia, vol. 5 (Council for Research and Values, 2001), p. 237.

\(^{142}\) ‘Why’, p. 15.
the independence struggle into a nationwide mass movement that mobilised every
class of Indian society against the imperialist’. 143

Gandhi’s method involved ‘drawing-in the masses, while at the same time keeping
mass activity strictly pegged down to certain forms pre-determined by the leader, and
above all to the methods of non-violence’. 144 This model of inclusivity brought about
by determination and self-control was appealing to Anand as open-ended: ‘The
opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may
change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-
vio
cence are as old as the hills’. 145 In establishing his purpose as a novelist, Anand
aims to write relentlessly from experience.

Anand repeatedly ‘remembers’ Gandhi in his writings, paying homage to him in An
Apology as well as Roots and Flowers and numerous other essays. He relates
Gandhi’s urge to seek ‘Truth’ in Tolstoy’s philosophy of non-violence as well as the
work of Balzac, Gorky, Stendhal and Ruskin. 146 Anand’s re-telling of his visit to
Gandhi works as a foil to the influence of Bloomsbury while holding onto the primacy
of experience valued and interrogated by modernist writers, coming as it does from
the Bildungsroman tradition:

He felt that I had made Bakha a Bloomsbury intellectual. And he advised me to cut
down a hundred or more pages and rewrite the whole. My own hunches against my
snobbery as a clever young man were confirmed […] I read the new novel to the
old man, who more or less approved, though he gave me Tolstoy’s Childhood,

143 Pandikuttu, p. 237.
144 Sarkar, p. 179.
146 Gandhi and Tolstoy corresponded frequently, debating theories of non-violent social change until
Tolstoy’s death in 1910.
Boyhood and Youth as a model of sincere writing. He said one must not write anything which was not based on one’s experience.  

The reliance upon Gandhi also adds weight to an international Indian-English writing that, having the support of India’s most revered political father, who spoke only in simple Hindustani and turned ordinary Indian dress into a form of protest, is encouraged to embrace its distinctive Indianness.

The status of Gandhi as providing an ‘authentic’ origin for the Indian novel is related to the figural power of the child in that it matters as a notion of beginning more than a historical ‘reality’ in Anand’s work. As he attempts a ‘Flaubertian objectivity’ in revealing human life, as Tolstoy did, ‘in the raw’, the Romantic child provides a possibility of ‘illumination’. While Bakha connects with Gandhi, who is described three times as ‘like a child’, and recognises his own potential through Gandhi’s inclusive appeal to harijans, it is the image of the flush toilet that persists in his newly awakened mind. This insistence on progress distinguishes Anand’s work from ‘Gandhism’ as Anand describes it suffusing Rao’s Kanthapura: ‘the whole atmosphere is charged with the new Gandhian values’. The possibility of Gandhian unity that occurs briefly at the end of Untouchable indicates that while the Swadeshi (self-reliance) campaign and commitment to ahimsa (active non-violence) can be reconciled with the appeal to humanism in Anand’s novels, the ideal of a village model of peasant life as led at Gandhi’s Ashram cannot.

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147 ‘Why’, p. 14. Tolstoy’s autobiographical texts trace the development of a rich landowner’s son as he realises the gulf in experience between himself and the peasants who work his land. This is a comparable realisation to the narrator’s encounter with Bakha the sweeper in Seven Summers.


149 ‘Why’, p. 16.

150 Roots, p. 31.
This limit to Ghandian politics is also made clear in *Coolie* where Munoo is caught up in a strike that he finds to be both exciting and traumatic. While Gandhi’s criticism of strikes as ‘intoxicating’ and ‘too dangerous’ could be applicable to *Coolie*, his unequivocal opinion that strikes ‘do not fall within the plan of non-violent non-cooperation’ is at odds with a novel that depicts conditions that necessitate them.\(^{151}\)

Gandhi as ‘a saviour from above’, a mediator between religious and caste groups, is also a threat to the long-term effectiveness of labour or peasant activism.\(^{152}\) Anand’s novels, through highlighting the need for political engagement and economic change, are therefore forced to place Gandhi at the margins. Just as they complicate the simplicity of the child by involving Bakha and Munoo in caste and class conflict, they test the Gandhian ideal by showing that, for Munoo, there is no return to his easy village childhood, while for Bakha it has always been only a dream.

**AWKWARD TRANSLATIONS**

Gandhi has a unifying but also mobile function in the language of *Untouchable* that Baer defines as a struggle between ‘two voices or “speech acts”’.\(^{153}\) The transition from Bakha’s ‘body and soul drama’ focalised through his limited understanding to the mythically-infused appreciation of Gandhi breaks away from its model of Bloom’s day in *Ulysses*:

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Eager and unconscious, he recalled all that he had heard of this man. People said he was a saint, that he was an avatar (incarnation) of the gods Vishnu and Krishna. [...] And they said that no sword could cut his body, no bullet could pierce his skin, no fire could scorch him!\(^{154}\)
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\(^{151}\) *Strikes, Young India*, 16 February, 1921, cited in Sarkar, p. 208.

\(^{152}\) Sarkar, p. 182.

\(^{153}\) Baer, p. 587.

\(^{154}\) *Untouchable*, p. 138.
The shift in register from the individual to an invocation of non-human agency produces a focus on an alternative future that was not available to Bakha previously. As David Hardiman asserts, ‘there was no authorized version of the Mahatma’.\(^{155}\)

There were numerous borrowings and adaptations of Gandhi, which he did not always discourage, understanding ‘the role of rumour in a predominantly illiterate society going through a period of acute strain and tensions.’\(^{156}\)

Gandhi’s almost magical appeal dramatises the problems of writing the subaltern within the remit of what Baer calls ‘literacy in the modern public sphere’ and, I would add, the imported form of the novel.\(^{157}\) Baer likens ‘the strange collectivity of children’ who wish to dress like British soldiers and crave the ability to write in *Untouchable* to the errant ‘collectivity of rumour’.\(^{158}\) The children, Bakha included, have an affinity with the image of Gandhi, whose face is said to have been woven into a spider’s web. However, the contrast between Gandhi’s speech in the text, based on the article in *Young India* that inspired Anand, and the educated and politicised speech of the final debate stages the linguistic and cultural battle that Bakha, should his choice become real, would enter into.

Bakha’s double-bind is that the medium of the novel in English being used to represent him is inadequate to the task so that he must, as a ‘child of modern India’, await the possibilities outside of the novel presented in its closing scenes. The child is therefore a way of tallying possible outcomes on ‘a blank slate’ but, both in the novel


\(^{156}\) Sarkar, p. 181.

\(^{157}\) Baer, p. 590.

\(^{158}\) Baer, p. 589.
and in Anand’s commentary on his work, the idea of universal childhood innocence is also questioned. Anand’s experiential and experimental method draws attention to this by taking Gandhi’s notion of ‘unlearning’ and his requirement of simplicity into the form that makes the novel.

Gandhi exhorted Anand not to concern himself over which language to use but to ‘Be simple and serve the poor … Be honest … Leave Bloomsbury.’ The ellipses here are an integral part of Anand’s recollection, suggesting that queries remain about how simplicity and the pursuit of ‘Truth’ are to be achieved. Anand’s aim ‘to connect across continents’ possibly references the epigraph to Forster’s *Howard’s End*, ‘Only connect’, as he works to heed Gandhi’s advice: ‘say your say in any language that comes to hand. Only say it quickly. There is not time to lose’. In examining the linguistic textures of Anand’s novels in contrast to the clearly constructed English of his essays, we find that what he calls ‘synthetic speech’, the mixing of English with other languages, serves not only to communicate the lot of the poor, but enacts Bhabha’s hybrid articulation of the nation: ‘the native speech enters into the shell of the sentence in the foreign language’.

Anand’s hard won Indian-English is, as Baer puts it, ‘ironized as a kind of self-defeating, transvestite medium, for the moment precisely un-suited to the task of accessing and giving voice to subaltern consciousness and idiom’. The novel includes many words for which it would be difficult to find a direct translation, such

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159 ‘Pigeon-Indian’, p. 335.
160 ‘Pigeon Indian’, p. 335.
161 ‘Pigeon-Indian’, p. 335.
163 Baer, p. 579.
as *kaliyug* (the *Kali Yuga*, named after the apocalyptic demon Kali. The final stage of four in the Hindu cycle of *yugas* during which people are furthest away from God) and *posh posh* (the ‘warning word’ of a sweepers approach). The difficulty of supplying a translation does not, however, explain why many of the words in *Untouchable* that appear in Punjabi also rendered in English alongside. The choice seems to depend as much on demonstrating a desire for, or reaction to, foreignness as on clarity of meaning. Bakha’s father, Lakha, says of Bakha’s brother: ‘the rascal has gone to get food at the *langar* (the kitchen) at the barracks’. The in-text translation emphasises a tension between the domestic chaos of Bakha’s household run by his ‘inexperienced’ sister Sohini and the clockwork routine that he admires in barracks life. It also creates a hovering effect in which the perspective moves from that of the father to the narrator, whose concern with explanation also encompasses Bakha’s awareness of the two worlds he stands between.

Although the narration is ostensibly that of an extradiegetic voice expressed in ‘standard’ English, the criteria that determines which words are translated is related to Bakha’s transcultural confusion and the question of what kind of linguistic position he would prefer. This question also appears in the text where naming is avoided in favour of description: ‘the mixture of tea-leaves, water, milk and sugar was ready. […] His tongue was slightly burnt with the small sips because he did not, as his father

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164 *Untouchable*, p. 48.
165 *Untouchable*, p. 51.
166 *Untouchable*, p. 76. Comparable translations happen throughout the text, such as ‘*Dawai khana* (dispensary)’ (p. 80). However, the word ‘latrine’ does not appear in Punjabi, perhaps supporting the idea that there is no means of comparing British and Indian attitudes to bodies and their waste until the flush toilet is heralded at the end of the novel.
167 The way in which some words stand not only for themselves but for the very difficulty of translation and cultural division is comparable to the prominence of particular words, and the varying capacity for understanding of different groups in *The Jungle Books*. 
did, blow on the tea to cool it’. Rather than employ the Indian term *chai*, the text puts in place an equivalence between European and Indian tea-drinking, which is then forcefully denied by Bakha in burning his mouth to adopt the ‘custom of the English Tommies’ over the native habit of blowing on the tea.

Translation in *Untouchable* is therefore more than a necessity of communication, it fits with Tejaswini Niranjana’s use of the term:

> not just to indicate an interlingual process but to name an entire problematic. It is a set of questions, perhaps a “field”, charged with the force of all the terms used, even by the traditional discourse of translation, to name the problem, to translate translation.

The intermixing of languages, the ever-changing linguistic combinations of gossip, jokes and abuse, mean that translation cannot be simply read but must be taken on as ‘a disruptive force’ that may, in what Niranjana terms the ideal of postcolonial studies and Anand identifies as the aim of Indian-English, touch upon an inter-linguistic communion: ‘a natural expression of a bilingual, sometimes multilingual, talent nourished mostly by the mother tongue, and seeking a *communion beyond communication*’. Anand tries to capture this aspiration in the term ‘Pigeon-Indian’ as well as offering an ironic rebuff to the diminutive ‘pidgin-English’. Despite his illiteracy, the novel’s narration is spun around Bakha and yet, like the web showing

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168 *Untouchable*, p. 32.
170 ‘Pigeon Indian’, p. 334. Literal translations of Punjabi phrases (‘why do you eat my head’, p. 32) and the simulation of Punjabi syntax are used because they ‘might carry over the sound and sense of the original speech’. ‘Pigeon-Indian’, p. 331.
171 ‘Pigeon Indian’, p. 328.
Gandhi’s face, is distanced as being able to reveal a broader spectrum of linguistic and power relations than he has access to.

The novel achieves its subversion through a mimicry that, like colonial culture, is necessarily heterogeneous. When Bakha climbs a tree despite the weight of his British army ammunition boots, ‘he looked not unlike an ape’.\(^{172}\) Despite looking ‘like a child’ Gandhi is a leader whereas Bakha, who wishes to look like a soldier, is more like an ape as he struggles to understand the scene around him.\(^{173}\) The childlikeness that suggests harmony and innocence shifts from Bakha to Gandhi and back in the novel and is connected to the rhythm of languages through which the mother tongue, as Rao puts it, ‘looks maltreated in an alien language’.\(^{174}\)

Untouchable and Coolie do not present the positive possibilities of hybridity associated with Kim (1901) and Tagore’s Gora (1910). The ‘problem of English’ is not only the challenge of choosing the ‘right’ language for a place or people, but of encapsulating a people for whom and of whom there is no writing. The distance of the disenfranchised from a secure and fulfilling national affiliation is played out in their thwarted desires to become literate: ‘The anxiety of going to school! How beautiful it felt! How nice it must be to be able to read and write!’\(^{175}\) Bakha transmits himself through his affective imagination into the life of others: ‘he often sat in his spare time

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\(^{172}\) Untouchable, p. 142-43.

\(^{173}\) Untouchable, p. 143.

\(^{174}\) Raja Rao, ‘Foreward’, Kanthapura, p. vii. Such variegated linguistic constructions articulate something of the development of the rich performance of Indian English in G.V. Desani’s All about H. Hatterr (1948) that in turn was an influence on Salman Rushdie’s polyphonic idiom.

\(^{175}\) Untouchable, p. 38.
and tried to feel how it felt to read’. The combination of ‘feel’ and ‘felt’ reproduces Bakha’s effort and repeats his removal from the experience of reading as the repetitive ‘tish-mish, tish-mish’ language of the Tommies excludes him from being a sahib. Whilst Bakha has a ‘burning desire’ to speak their language, he also ‘felt like reading’ the Punjabi epic poem Hir and Ranjah so that his linguistic map is not only a fantasy but, like Anand’s, a truly divided one. In a reversal of Bakha’s linguistic exclusion, the missionary Colonel Hutchinson speaks ‘wrong Hindustani’ but still must be treated with respect because ‘he wore trousers and used a commode’. The paradoxical, often comic, relationship between language and appearance in which, even if Bakha spoke English and wore trousers, he would not be a sahib also comments upon the status of the Indian-English novel as itself a translated form.

Facing up to the lack of fit between language and subject, an (inter)national literature and its colonial model, means recognising the impossibility of constituting a subaltern identity, making Anand a transcultural writer in the sense of cultures that meet but, like Forster’s Aziz and Fielding, cannot mix. Bakha’s fantasy breaks away from the Tommies to be torn between modern engineering and Gandhi’s promise of social equality. It is the lack of symmetry in this move and its deliberate insistence that colonialism must be calibrated through other pre-existing and emergent power structures (caste in Untouchable and class in Coolie) that represents the ill-fitting parts of colonial India better than the smoothly turning kaleidoscope of cosmopolitanism.

176 Untouchable, p. 39.
177 Untouchable, p. 38.
178 Untouchable, p. 123.
Untouchable’s use of translation also allows a commentary both on Indian social hierarchy and the history of colonial India as they leave traces in both dominant and dominated languages. Indian words are provided as though in a glossary, such as that offered in Steel’s the Complete Indian Housekeeper: Acha (good); jao (go away); jaldi karo (be quick); sur ka bacha (son of a pig); kute ka bacha (son of a dog). This strategy provides an ironic commentary not only on the refusal of the British to engage with Indian languages that Steel identifies, but also, in the inclusion of swear words, puts the coloniser in a comparable speaking position to the adherent of the violent caste practices that were frequently criticised in the British press.

Bakha is often silent: following the touching, ‘Bakha’s mouth was open. But he couldn’t utter a single word’. However, when he is accused of beating young children, he rises up in a form reminiscent of Rousseau’s ‘noble savage’ with a ‘smouldering’ energy: ‘the soundless speech of cells receiving and transmitting emotions’. Bakha’s exceptional body resists caste prejudice when speech fails. The subaltern body is presented not simply as a part of ‘Mother India’, as Gandhi imagined it, but as a connector between the colonised, working-class masses and the developing body of the child prioritised in British discourses of nationhood.

The child is posited as prior to untouchability and therefore functions as the link between the divided subaltern body (as both beautiful and abject) and the denied ‘soul’ (as subjectivity). These connotations attached to the child work concurrently with the interpellation of the colonial subject as accepting his oppression because he

179 Untouchable, p. 124.
180 Untouchable, p. 47.
181 Untouchable, p. 51.
remains a child. The child’s multiple functions show us how Anand’s ‘emergent’ subject is made through the reverberation of the colonial past upon the present that constitutes what Niranjana terms ‘historicity’. Referring to Bhabha’s ‘Signs Taken for Wonders’, Niranjana defines ‘historicity’ as ‘effective history’, that part of history still active in the present.  

The child operates in *Untouchable* as a mode of historicity, a way of translating the past into the present and transforming both. In placing languages side by side, making them exclude and echo each other around the figure of the child, *Untouchable* explores how this heteroglossia of translation matters to the historicity of the Indian-English novel. Translatability does not imply relativism or universalism but may be something akin to Anand’s notion of his novels as prophesy: the novel is ‘the weapon of humanism’ and the novelist ‘a new kind of god’ so that the importance of the child lies not in its connection to nature, but in its entrance into history.

In *Untouchable*, we find expressed the challenge for Indian writers rewriting from an ‘original’ whose authenticity and authority they disavow. The potential ‘people’ they write for, the ‘public-to-come’, as Baer persuasively calls them, are not subaltern. The use of the subaltern figure in this sense disrupts the creation of what Mufti calls a ‘national realism’ by opposing a silence to every expression of Indian identity and history. Bakha is divided from the crowd by the invisible (in the sense that it is not seen by the colonisers) but indelible (in the sense that it cannot be overwritten even by Bakha’s grandest ambitions) barrier of caste. Discontinuous with this separation is the difference of class, which divides Bakha from those holding the debate about Gandhi.

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182 Niranjana, p. 37.  
183 *Roots*, p. 35.  
as well as from the narrator and which becomes more prominent in *Coolie*. Caste and class in these novels are awkward silences because they are ostensibly explained but cannot be affected or altered by the appeal of the child or, as I move on to consider, by the *Bildungsroman*. Both caste and class fall at tangents to colonialism, preventing them from being read entirely in accordance with what Baer calls ‘the *popular* imagining of the national’, 185 constituted through Gandhi’s *satyagraha* ideal, the Hindu right’s banner of ‘Mother India’ and the demands of radical Socialist activity.

**MODERNIST MEDIATIONS: READING COOLIE AFTER UNTOUCHABLE**

Having explored Anand’s re-imagining of *Untouchable* ‘as a self-conscious novel’ after reading Joyce’s *Portrait*, 186 I now want to focus more explicitly on the modernist modalities in his writing by analysing figurations of the child in *Coolie*. Anand was impressed by what he saw as the deliberate invisibility of the narrator in Joyce’s work and draws upon this technique in focalising his novels through their boy protagonists, allowing their conflict-torn existence to become apparent in the dissonances and repetitions of language.

Leela Gandhi dismisses the intricate realist texture of *Coolie* as ‘unwieldy detail’ but nevertheless calls the descriptions of trade-union activities ‘sketches’, suggesting that, despite their intricacy, they lack wholeness. 187 This contradiction indicates the inadequacy of an analysis of the novel as social realism. I therefore pursue an argument in agreement with Jessica Berman that to call Anand’s work social realism because of its political impetus or mimetic accuracy is to belie the multivocal and

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185 Baer, p. 585.
186 *Roots*, p. 20.
curiously layered narratives he produced. Stephen Kern defines the modernist novel as challenging the requirements of realist writing, while Peter Nicholls identifies a ‘new form of subjectivity’ in modernist narratives.\textsuperscript{188} Nicholls describes the modernist project since Baudelaire as ‘not simply rejecting a poetic taste for trees and rivers; more fundamentally they were denying the connection between poetic vision and social transformation which had underpinned the political optimism of an earlier Romanticism’.\textsuperscript{189}

Such a mode must jettison the Romantic child, allowing, as Joyce does, the child to be one pose among many, one linguistic register that falls away from the flighty selves that Anand acknowledges. And yet the ‘Thirties novel’ is tied down by a restless proletariat, a global economic slow-down and a colonialism choking on its own success, often torturing itself with guilt as Flory does in Orwell’s \textit{Burmese Days} (1934). Particularly in the context of anti-colonial struggle this kind of novel needs ‘to connect’ to secure its relevance to social and political action. Refusing to entirely give up on the Romantic child, \textit{Coolie} pursues this figure into a wretched situation and refuses to let the adult leave him there, as Plotz depicts the Romantic poets doing. It is in this meeting of the constant child with the material need for survival and the aspiration for growth that Anand’s modernist method happens.

Bakha and Munoo are articulated by a knowing narrator focalising a limited perspective through a strong plot in a uniform space, as Kern says is typical of the

\textsuperscript{189} Nicholls, p. 10.
realist novel.\textsuperscript{190} However, while Bakha and Munoo’s actions occur in a realistically delineated space, it is a space already overdetermined by colonial, caste and class relations. Their geographical and historical situations are comprised as partial, marginal and, like the opening scene in Bakha, in defiance of the logical, rational or ethical codes associated with realism. They serve to expose the colonised subject as foreign to himself. In this context, self-articulation must appear, like the primitive excesses of modernism, grotesque. Anand’s texts therefore demand to be read not only as corresponding to some aspects of Western realism or modernism while contrasting with others, but as requiring a reconsideration of modernism as both part of the trans-global, allusive forms of anti-colonial nationalisms and as constituted from particular social and economic conditions; as displaying the complexity of the situation in which colonialism creates modernity’s condition of possibility.\textsuperscript{191}

\textit{Coolie}, written between 1933 and 1935, tells the story of Munoo, a poor Indian boy from the northern hills who is forced from one subservient position to another, from being the servant of a bank official to working in a pickle factory, a cotton mill and as a rickshaw wallah in various locations before dying of consumption following his first involvement in political activism. Munoo passes through multiple channels of Indian social life, taking unexpected diversions and finding friends in unlikely places, almost being adopted by the owner of the factory and eliciting the sympathy of an Anglo-Indian woman who takes him to Simla where he is returned to his ‘proper element’ of the hills.\textsuperscript{192} Munoo contemplates the fickle and glamorous society of the Raj with a

\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Coolie}, p. 255.
‘restrained wonder’193 as he sinks into another ‘new state of existence’, 194 which turns out to be as exploitative as his previous ones and leads eventually to his death.

Reading Coolie after Untouchable means resisting progressive models of development both in relation to the child and Anand’s literary career. Finding Untouchable rich in unusual and suggestive material, we may be tempted to prioritise it as a novel both anticipating the arrival of Indian independence and offering a clear-eyed view of the complexity of a historical moment. Reading Coolie as the second part of a trilogy written in quick succession, we are made to hesitate in our valuations and confront the difficulty of imagining a new nation as modern but also economically equal. The itinerant form of Coolie challenges the Western Bildungsroman, while the more overt oppression of a child protagonist who is not allowed moments of illumination or intimations of freedom in the way Bakha is questions the success of the revelatory inflections of Untouchable.

While in Untouchable, Bakha’s ‘unconscious’ self is repeatedly referred to, allowing his impressions and reveries to suggest an unknown or uncontrollable aspect to the narrative, in Coolie, Munoo has only a ‘subconscious’, which enables the narrator to consider the different layers or levels of his self. While this may seem to allow the narrator more knowledge and control, it actually has the effect of cutting off the potentiality of the subaltern character who is not allowed either to have an inaccessible self or to develop through a meaningful plot, but rather is subject to

193 Coolie, p. 254.
194 Coolie, p. 257.
continual distress that finally overcomes the resilient possibilities expressed in his ‘subconscious’ desires.

_Coolie_ combines ‘Dickensian’ detail with a narrative focus on Munoo’s consciousness. Tracing Munoo’s efforts to evade the control of those stronger than himself, the novel exemplifies Anand’s peculiarity as a writer attempting to ‘stage the recovery of self’ at the scene of relentless social brutality:

For the most part men realize themselves through the force of external necessity, in the varied succession of irrelevant and unconnected circumstances. Munoo soon got used to life in this primitive factory. It was a dark, evil life. He rose early at dawn before he had had his full sleep out, having gone to bed long after midnight. He descended to work in the factory, tired, heavy-lidded, hot and limp, as if all the strength had gone out of his body and left him a spineless ghost of his former self.

The omniscient narration introducing this passage suggests that Munoo’s story may eventually be one of triumph over adversity. However, this possibility is qualified not only by ‘for the most part’, but by the word ‘men’, which stands in marked contrast to the novel’s insistence on Munoo’s child status. The word ‘realize’ may also be read as exclusionary, for, while Munoo comes to comprehend the grimness of his situation, he does not, in the sense of individual growth, realise himself. The passage as a whole is a reversal of the expectations of social and personal development attached to the novel form. The ‘dark’ factory later becomes an ‘underworld’ whose ‘primitive’ enclosed nature is opposed to the wide world of heroic adventure open to the novelistic hero.

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195 _Conversations_, p. 7.
196 _Coolie_, p. 89.
Hardships such as those that happen to Dickens’ David Copperfield or Oliver Twist are also detailed in *Coolie*, but the promise of release by fortunate circumstance is a false one for the colonised worker. The ‘as if’ places the narration as external to Munoo so that he is a ‘ghost’ both of his former (child) self and because he is a subaltern figure. Momentarily, the narrative comes closer to Munoo’s own consciousness: in singing hill songs of ‘doleful melody’ and ‘ringing tenderness’ Munoo ‘regained the wild freedom of his childhood and moved to a quicker tempo’. However, the perspective remains external to him; only when he is ill and comforting words ‘glow’ in his body, and later in the novel when he becomes involved in political activism, do we find a fuller approximation of the heightened experience of the mind known in modernism.

George Levine argues that texts ‘touched by the realist impulse’ try to resist the conventions of narrative in order to treat things as they are in a ‘deflation of ambition and passion’ that sets the individual ‘within large containing social organizations’. This, Levine insists, is not simply a way of containing disorder by refusing the excesses of language, but is actually a means of imagining and releasing it. In this way, the realist conventions found in the passage above can be read as a deliberate reversal of the overarching narratives of colonial benevolence and industrial progress that were being dismantled in the 1930s by avant-garde artistic practice and political resistance.

197 *Coolie*, p. 90
198 *Coolie*, p. 91
The ‘strange and errant intervention’ that Anand performs in *Untouchable* is continued in *Coolie*, which explicitly supplements the project of the PWA rather than emphasising the Gandhian idea of an ‘Indian consciousness’. Instead of forging a novel of satisfying national realism or an incendiary modernism, Anand offers texts that can perhaps best be termed ‘transnational modernism’ with the emphasis being, as I suggested in considering translation, on a meeting of cultural forms and languages on unequal terms that means amalgamation is not necessarily a purpose or a possibility. I am not arguing that Anand is most usefully compared to Joyce, for his work has more in common with that of Forster or Orwell, but that only by expanding the focus of modernist studies and acknowledging the inter-relations between colonial and metropolitan authors is it possible to do his most impressive and innovative writing justice.

*Coolie* utilises the connective realist tradition that Levine identifies but also, in relying on the child, highlights a break between the knowing position of the narrator and the unknowing emergence of the child, which allows, at particular junctures, the instabilities of modernity to become manifest in the brittleness and repeated failures of language. At the beginning of the novel, the fourteen year old Munoo, called in one of his aunt’s more generous curses an ‘ominous orphan’,201 must leave his home in the hills to go to the servant job his uncle has procured for him in the town. In the hills, Munoo spends his time driving cattle, going to school and lounging with the friends who look up to him as their leader:

> Meanwhile, it was pleasant to sit here with his fellows, all little boys the same age as himself, for when they had stolen enough fruit during their wanderings behind

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200 Baer, p. 583.
201 *Coolie*, p. 1.
The note of ‘meanwhile’, following as it does impatient calls from Munoo’s aunt, tells us that time is limited. It is in the understanding of what this means that congruity between the child’s perception and that of the narrator becomes crucial. We know already that Munoo is the envy of his friends because he is going to town and ‘he had dreamed, of course, of all the wonderful things which the village folk spoke about when they came back from the town’. This apparently innocent apprehension is contrasted with Munoo’s receptiveness to the modern industrial world established through his love of machines. The child, therefore, stands between the past as continuity and rural idyll and the future of industrial production. The problem he encounters, however, is in the present. Munoo goes to town at the wrong time: ‘But he had meant to go to town when he had passed all his examinations here and was ready to learn to make machines himself’. The disjunction of historical periods means Munoo cannot become an individual free from the system that needs him to remain indentured. However, he is protected from this knowledge because, although he is conscious of his intentions in the way Bakha is aware of his dream to go to school, as a child he is also a ‘strong wild self’ connected with primitive or animal elements, leaving concern about the future to his ‘subconscious’. It is this instinctive aspect of the child that, paradoxically, allows the narrative to repeatedly pick itself up and move on.

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202 Coolie, p. 3.
203 Coolie, p. 3.
204 Coolie, p. 3.
205 Coolie, p. 32.
The apparently simple scene of contented playfellows, when set within the novel as a whole, is one in which the very transparency of realism and the child produces, in Bhabha’s terms, colonial ambivalence. What Bhabha calls ‘the effect of content’ is similar to Roland Barthes’ ‘reality effect’ in denoting the way in which the ‘real’ or the ‘concrete’ resist meaning so that a scene is ‘simply there’ and any need for narrative structure is dispelled. Where Bhabha differs from Barthes, building on Derrida’s understanding of the ‘dis-location’ that happens in what ‘writes/is written’ but adding to it a consideration of power, is in suggesting that transparency is actually the product of authority so that the colonial scene is not simply set to capture the subject at a particular moment. Rather it is framed to allow neither equivalence nor difference between self and other, making the recognition of colonial authority difficult: ‘we encounter not plenitude but the structured gaze of power whose objective is authority, whose “subjects” are historical.’

In the case of the passage above, Munoo is neither equivalent to the figure of the Romantic child nor other than it. The ideal of natural innocence is already discounted through a recognition of economic necessity and social divisions; Munoo knows already that the family of one of his higher-caste friends is responsible for the misfortunes of his own parents. The notion of purposeful development through education is also already dismantled, so that ‘the reality effect’ of the transparent child

208 This insight might apply to Kipling’s framing of native scenes in, for example, ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’ and to Steel’s child Sonny at the centre of a circle of viewers in *On the Face of the Waters*. Sonny is like but not equivalent to the watching Indians and, although dressed up as angelic, in his history of disguise and adventure he also is suggestive of its degenerative opposite.
is besieged by what Bhabha calls ‘the other scene’ made up of phantoms produced through ‘a process of splitting as the condition of subjection:

a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid.\textsuperscript{209}

The writing of a child without a future, a child who, at crucial points of subjection, becomes a divided self, is part of the challenge of hybridity to ‘the rules of recognition’ that are the basis of colonial authority. It is not the celebratory hybridity of Kim or Mowgli, and yet it reaches the same moment of crisis in which the ‘bastards’ or ‘doubles’ who have been figured as natural realise that they cannot rely upon the enfolding arms of empire for their future.

In \textit{Coolie}, this hybridity is a process by which the imperial ideal of rational development and individual improvement is undermined in the psychic and political disjunctions between this transparent scene and the narrative and social processes surrounding it. When Munoo becomes identified primarily as a worker, he can only imitate and make strange a childhood produced by his own exclusion from it. When Munoo asks ‘What am I — Munoo?’ the answer is simple: ‘I am Munoo, Babu Nathoo Ram’s servant’. The text reads, ‘the answer came to his mind’, suggesting that it is imposed both by the novel and its colonial situation. Munoo’s interrogative is ‘what’ rather than the ‘who’ of Kim and he hears no echo of his name as in ‘I am Kim Kim Kim’. Munoo’s answer undercuts the very idea of the question as useful, except to ‘a little hero of the Empire — a fantasy boy’.\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{209} Bhabha, ‘Signs’, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Conversations}, p. 15.
Raymond Williams’ capacious but historically pointed idea of modernism tries to make room for this kind of connective artistic practice in which, because of colonialism or class, subjectivities clash:

Although Modernism can be clearly identified as a distinctive movement, in its deliberate distance from and challenge to more traditional forms of art and thought, it is also strongly characterized by its internal diversity of methods and emphases: a restless and often directly competitive sequence of innovation and experiments, always more immediately recognized by what they are breaking from than by what, in any simple way, they are breaking towards.\textsuperscript{211}

The suggestion that modernism could be an explosive movement outwards as well as being a nexus of complimentary practices fits with the mobility and dislocation that of Anand’s novels. At a thematic level, Bakha and Munoo long to escape the present but, as economically and socially disenfranchised anti-heroes, ‘breaking towards’ the future is impossible. Their estrangement from the social forms they inhabit resonates with the range of techniques the text employs to get close to them. When Munoo sees hill people in the town carrying weights on their backs: ‘He could not realize the significance of the world’.\textsuperscript{212} While many of the Indian terms and activities are clarified for a Western readership, there is no one to transcribe for Munoo. Because of his uncomprehending immersion in events, the narration does not have to step back far to produce an ironic commentary on his situation as colonial subject, child and, in his role as a servant, primitive.

As a domestic servant in an Indian household, Munoo’s position is explicitly animal, removing the negotiation between child and animal that Steel’s benevolent but authoritarian colonial practices entail. He is cursed by the mistress, Bibiji, in a voice ‘shrill and hard’ with no suggestion of motherly feeling or expectation of

\textsuperscript{211} Williams, p. 43.  
\textsuperscript{212} Coolie, p. 9
improvement. When he exuberantly responds to the gramophone, the ‘wonder machine’, by performing a monkey dance for the children, he fulfils the assumptions behind the mistress calling him a monkey. Imitating a circus monkey performs Munoo’s own situation, his captivity and inferior status in being called a dirty, ignorant hill boy. This self-made connection with the primitive becomes evidence of Munoo’s exclusion from a developmental narrative. Munoo cannot be a child, for children in this family are cared for and go to school. The primitive is both prior to modernity, and therefore recognisable by it, and also mysterious to a rational, future-orientated model of childhood whose contingency upon economic and social factors is concealed. Like the museum objects that Gikandi discusses, Munoo has already been archived as primitive, the other to the human subject, so that the narrative of modernity can imagine a future to which he is the foil.

Bakha similarly fights for recognition as human: he is ‘like an ape’ at Untouchable’s finale, ‘his awkward naïve self’ contrasts with Gandhi, who is repeatedly described as ‘like a child’, again suggesting that the childlike is something to be practiced rather than naturally possessed. Bakha’s contemplation is earlier interrupted by a ‘swarm of monkeys’ in an animalistic denial of the text’s concern with self-articulation. This likening of the native or child to the animal is part of what Achille Mbembe calls ‘elementariness and primitiveness’ that means that Africa and, I would also argue, the subaltern population of India are examples of ‘all that is incomplete, mutilated and unfinished’ as well as able to be understood with the

213 Coolie, p. 22
215 Untouchable, p. 142.
‘intimacy’ of what is already known.\textsuperscript{216} As Anand’s novels make clear, anti-colonial art associated with the primitive cannot break away from inadequate forms by proposing the growth of the individual subject. It must therefore place in opposition to nature (in the form of the Romantic or primitive child) the collective capacity of racial, caste and economic others to have a history.

Munoo’s inability to claim a self or a history despite the text approaching him from various angles allies Anand’s work with the ‘polyphonic modernities’ of the period\textsuperscript{217} occurring at what Williams calls ‘the wide margins of the century’.\textsuperscript{218} The challenge of reading \textit{Coolie} and \textit{Untouchable}, whilst refusing to rely on ‘modernist universals’\textsuperscript{219} involves taking on the ‘strangeness and distance’ that characterised modernist literature. Anand senses that, as an Indian in Bloomsbury, he both instances a global future and transplants a past described, he records, by Virginia Woolf as ‘the unfathomable’\textsuperscript{220} to be re-animated at the hands of the avant-garde. The India that exists simultaneously with this London faces the discontinuity of a history in which a lack of mobility and knowledge produced by colonialism is precisely what enables capitalist development. Anand must find a language to convey a system that is both united and unequal; this is what Parry terms ‘the conditions of possibility’ of the literatures of peripheral cultures.\textsuperscript{221}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{216} Mbembe, \textit{On the Postcolony}, pp. 1-2. The position of monkey is comically turned back onto the sahib ‘Mr England’ in \textit{Coolie}, who is called a ‘monkey-faced man’ by a Westernised doctor named Dr. Prem Chand. (p. 45).
\item \textsuperscript{218} Williams, p. 35.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Williams, p. 47.
\item \textsuperscript{220} \textit{Conversations}, p. 107.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Parry, ‘Peripheral Modernisms’, p. 34.
\end{itemize}
Coolie describes Munoo’s efforts to truly grasp his position:

his consciousness extending from his person to which, with curious naïveté and accidental profundity, it had traced itself, beyond the circle of home into the town where his master was slave to someone else.²²²

The individual appears as an invention of an external consciousness trapped in the repetition of oppressive relations that, we might infer, have made the divided self what it is. The word ‘curious’ posits a link to fantastical children’s literature in the Alice in Wonderland tradition, while the ‘circle of home’ corresponds to the fiction of the self as contained. The struggle to trace a self that is displaced undermines the idea, as Jacqueline Rose says, ‘that psychic life is continuous, that language can give us mastery, or that past and future can be cohered into a straightforward sequence, and controlled.’²²³

While the dissolution of self in Coolie is radical, it is articulated in a received idiom in which sub-clauses illuminate the matter at hand rather than, as in many modernist examples, obfuscating the meaning. The separation of the knowledge that the narrator possesses from Munoo’s own impressions both implicates Coolie itself in the work of the stories of ‘greatness’ and reflects upon the ability of the child, as physical or ‘primeval’ energy, to override what the language of society has told him, as he ignored his aunt’s demands at the novel’s opening. It is this ability to draw on another dimension that Eagleton, following Benjamin, links to primitivism in saying that modernism ‘involves a kind of time-warping, in which you turn your face to the primitive and archaic in order to catapult yourself beyond the depleted present into

²²² Coolie, p. 35.
²²³ Rose, p. 134.
some currently unimaginable future’. In turning to the child, Anand’s anti-

*Bildungsroman* uses this ‘time-warping’ at the point where the subject is
dismembered through bodily and linguistic metaphors that locate colonial division as
constitutive of the relation between the self and the world. In the passage above, this
confusion remains contained in sentences of realist suppleness, but as Anand extends
his critique beyond the child’s own situation to collective experience, the novel uses
the child’s perspective as a means of expressing the intensities and double-vision that
Nicholls finds to be characteristic of modernist compositions. In the following
passage the narrative perspective is repeatedly broken and reformed elsewhere:

A phrase like ‘down with wage cuts’ soared in the shimmering air and poised itself
like a song-bird above the horizon, the fluctuating voice of the myriads of men
becoming the one pointed symbol of their poverty and wretchedness, a pregnant
cry reverberating with the pain of all these dwellers of the slums, the feeble new-
born babes, the naked children with distended stomachs, the youths disfigured by
small-pox and sores and hookworm, the men who were old without ever having
been young, the women whose bellies were always protuberant with the weight of
the unborn.”

The political slogan is ‘like “down with wage cuts”’ but is not actually identified. The
suggestion is that in the primal scene of pain the precise demand, as a phrase of the
future, doesn’t matter and cannot be articulated in language that the child Munoo can
comprehend. The cry soars as the sound of the crowd does around Bakha in

*Untouchable*, but it is also a gesture of frustration that recurs in modernist texts: ‘She
has provided us with a cry. But only a cry. And what is a cry?’ The desire expressed
in this question in Woolf’s *The Waves* (1931) is to be able to see ‘the thing’ following
the death of the novel’s colonial hero Percival. The audience listening to the cry of a

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225 *Coolie*, p. 229.
singer are in a ‘swollen’ state ‘gorged with food’,\textsuperscript{227} while Anand’s are starved. But in both cases it is the bodies, frozen in their refusal to mean anything, that resist the cry. Anand’s coolies, as ‘figures’, are indistinguishable and therefore, as Peter Childs points out is the case in many modernist texts, have an ambiguous relation to a ‘civilized, humane, conscious, bourgeois and Western rational subjectivity at threat from an Other that is in some respects its antithesis and in some respects its mirror-self’.\textsuperscript{228} Woolf’s unidentified ‘we’ are an example of the horrified reversal Childs describes as the Orient moves from an external threat much imagined in literature at the turn of the century to a silent or shameful aspect of the West’s ‘unconscious’ by the 1930s. Add to this the position of colonial writers as a prickly but nevertheless constitutive part of avant-garde practice and we begin to see the difficult configuration of child/colonial/primitive/animal that Anand’s novels produce.

In \textit{The Waves}, Neville says, ‘We are walled in. But India is outside’.\textsuperscript{229} At this juncture, England becomes ‘a dream of the visionary’ to which India is ‘a distant counterpart set against this vision’.\textsuperscript{230} India as ‘within our scope’ is laid out by Woolf as a ‘twisted jungle, swarms of men’ in which Percival ‘sits alone, looking at the enormous mountains.’\textsuperscript{231} The lost Percival on his flea-bitten mare at the crisis point of Empire can be compared and opposed to the ghosts that Anand invokes after the bloody communal riot: ‘Then the cries of the half-dead arose with the swish of sea air that came from the Chaupatti beach, and fugitive forms nestled about as they emerged

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{227} \textit{The Waves}, p. 106.  
\textsuperscript{229} \textit{The Waves}, p. 88.  
\textsuperscript{230} Childs, p. 124.  
\textsuperscript{231} \textit{The Waves}, p. 89.}
from strange unknown corners and vanished into the air’. Later, the text returns to this moment of protest through Munoo’s perspective: ‘the waves of revolt falling upon the hard rock of privilege and possession’ and he feels ‘sad and bitter and defeated, like an old man’. For Munoo, time is curtailed by the numbing exploitation of the colonial system but for him India is not outside, it is the motion of the refigured self that moves ‘like a wave that comes rippling against the tide, shivering against contending waves, fading backwards, breaking, reforming and thrusting its steel-grey head onwards’. It is, as Woolf’s novel reluctantly implies, the moving onwards of a tide of resistance that will, Anand’s more optimistic writings suggest, break through the walls of empire.

In this way, Anand’s combination of modernist narrative patterning with attention to social and political injustice forces us to reconsider the relation within modernism of what Jessica Berman calls ‘political engagement’ to linguistic experiment. Rather than evidencing ‘a gradual process of disengagement with the modernist creed’, the move Anand makes from the reveries of Untouchable to the stratified impressions of Coolie makes necessary Boehmer’s question concerning colonial writers of this period: ‘Can they be seen as forming a constitutive part of the modernist movement rather than being merely its symptom, or sympathetic effect?’. On the jacket of the Penguin edition, Munoo is claimed as a ‘universal figure’ possessing the ‘passion not only of India but of mankind’. To make this assertion is to demand that both the child and India be constant as the scene of the natural origins and necessary continuation of the coloniser’s culture. However, as I have argued, Anand’s novels refuse the

233 Coolie, p. 250.
234 Coolie, p. 54.
235 Gandhi, ‘Novelists’, p. 175.
236 Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, p. 129.
Romance of the child and of the primitive by forcing together realist and modernist methods in order to ‘break towards’ an anti-heroic narrative of resistance.

CONCLUSION

Coolie and Untouchable do not provide us with a choice between utopian possibility or spiritual disappointment so richly conceived of in earlier Indian novels in the mode of Anandamath. Neither do the novels offer childhood as a metaphor for a simpler collective life, as Gandhi does in his autobiography The Story of My Experiments with Truth (1929), or as the material for moulding an enabling hybridity as happens through the imperial boy. However, in an analysis considerably enriched by the commentary of Anand’s essays and autobiographical writings, they can be appreciated as piecing together realistically conceived subaltern lives through modernist forms to imagine ‘a new humanism’, or at least the need for it. In doing so, they both participate in a break with nineteenth-century narratives of development and resist the imposition of a European model of the modern, industrial nation upon a colonised culture.

Whilst I would not wish to deny these novels’ ability to change minds and produce what Berman calls, after Hannah Arendt, ‘enlarged thinking’, it is worth being aware that such an appreciation may go too far in claiming that they prove, in contrast to Anand’s critique of Bloomsbury, that modernism was ‘politically engaged’. Coolie was published nineteen years after Portrait but twelve years before Indian independence. It remains to be seen how ‘peripheral modernisms’ with their often
prominent political concerns will continue to be examined in relation to the enclosed modernist canon of ‘enduringly valued novels’ that Kern champions.\textsuperscript{237}

As Harish Trivedi has argued, the influence of English literature on Indian literature is part of ‘a master narrative’ consisting mainly not of literary or cultural influence, but of ‘a more comprehensively hegemonic oppression’.\textsuperscript{238} It is in response to the weight of this colonial mass that Anand and scores of other writers in English and Indian languages endeavoured to produce an intertextual rather than imitative Indian literature that uses the child to question traditional notions of influence and development across artistic and socio-political spheres.

\textsuperscript{237} Kern, p. 6.
Conclusion

The initial impetus of this study was to think about the child as a figure for the origins of the self and the nation at the colonial scene of the Raj. In doing so, it has been important to read the child not as a ready-made metaphor for the nation, but rather as a figure whose openness involves, and serves to define, in contrast to the adult or the coloniser: the colonised, the primitive, the animal and the narratives of constancy and growth through which they are formed. The child, as Jacqueline Rose contends, is a way of working out our relation to language and, therefore, to the world: ‘a conception which places the innocence of the child as a primary state of language and/or culture in a close and mutually dependent relation.’

This thesis has explored the way in which the child is a contested and a vital figure for the nation, both in what Benita Parry terms ‘the do-it-yourself hagiography of the Raj’ and in Indian efforts to render colonialism an irrelevant part of a greater Indian history. As Carolyn Steedman argues, in the nineteenth century, the child ‘became the question of interiority’ and of continuity as its body performed the problem of how to attach individual physiological growth to that of the collective: be it family, nation or race. Child study pioneers, including Sully, evoked a complex, layered idea of the self according to ‘an evolutionary interpretation of the unconscious in which childhood becomes both the origin of the adult self and the link to the collective past’. As the texts I have examined demonstrate, such figurations of the child are

1 Rose, *Peter Pan*, p. 9.
2 Parry, *Postcolonial Studies*, p. 121.
3 Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, p. 76.
4 Bourne-Taylor, p. 97.
often compelling or diverting in their production of contradictory structures of language and history in which both the constant and the growing child play a part. When considering the child in relation to the nation and, as I suggest below, to postcolonial or global inter-relations, we see that the concept of the child functions as ‘an instance of the “human” through which the history of humanity could be told’. While childhood, in common parlance, is gone in an instant, the child remains a position to which we may, as Karin Lesnik-Oberstein proposes, wish to return, even as we insist on becoming responsible for children and their literature, because our knowledge of the world is presumed to surpass theirs.

As Rose’s work on children’s literature compels us to realise, we cannot fail to be seduced by the promise of a fantasy that is both ourselves and our futures and, as Claudia Castañeda suggests, is in need of our protection. As the jacket of Coolie suggests, in evoking Munoo as ‘a universal kind of figure’, everyone may enter Sully’s ‘Storyland’ and find it familiar. However, as Marianna Torgovnik shows via continued re-articulations of the primitive, the child is also associated with what is strange, even as it is assumed to mirror our own development and desires: ‘we conceive of ourselves as at a crossroads between the civilized and the savage.’ To return to the point I drew earlier from Fabian’s work: we do not read the primitive or the child, we read in terms of the primitive or the child.

The implications of this awareness take us out of ‘Storyland’; for if historical representation, ‘nation narratives’, global development goals and political priorities

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5 Castañeda, p. 13.
6 Sully, Studies in Childhood, p. 54.
7 Torgovnik, p. 17.
involve working with and doing things ‘for’ children, then it is imperative that we aim to consider the child with critical clarity. This may include scrutinising critical practice involving actual children across fields including psychology, sociology, technology and medicine, as Erica Burman, Castañeda and Karen Wells do. Or it may mean engaging with cultural representations to open up dialogues around the demands we make of the child and childhood in order to suggest that there are other stories to be heard across languages and localities.

Rather than offering a recap of my analysis of the child across and between colonial and anti-colonial texts in Britain and India, I am prompted to look forward to future critical work on the child. This thesis has explored a part of the ‘back story’ to the postcolonial child, propelled by the insights of Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein, amongst other scholars working on the child and childhood, the primitive and the nation. To pursue my arguments further, there is a temptation to look to post-Independence India to ask how the child figured ‘between’ the British Raj and Mother India has fared, coming as it did before the new nation. Before moving on, however, I consider the possibilities of further investigation of the child in this period.

Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan’s portrayals of the child intertwined with the nation are markedly different in focus to those of Anand. They require a critical recalibrating that may take more account of Indian mythological or religious traditions, although they might also be said to anticipate in some form the strategies of postcolonial literatures. In contrast, work by British authors, including Forster and Orwell, whose

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colonial narratives are notable for their absence of children, provides a sobering, end-of-empire perspective on the incipient Indian nation that, as Peter Childs shows in *Modernism and the Postcolonial*, was already a source of disquiet in modernist writing. To continue this line of thought, there is more to be said about the meeting of Indian writers with European modernism and, further to the work of Parry and others, the child in other ‘peripheral modernisms’ must be carefully considered.9

Looking further back, Tagore’s short stories offer a rich inventory of perspectives on the child. While often filtered through a fate-filled perspective comparable to that beloved by Steel in her native storytellers, but foreign to the convulsive resistance of Anand’s protagonists, they possess some of the discomfort and haunting found in modernist texts. I am thinking here of ‘Skeleton’ in which a dead woman is presented with her own skeleton before going on a journey of self-discovery, as well as ‘Wealth Surrendered’, which ends with the line: ‘Then he vanished, to the place which no one playing hide-and-seek on earth can discover.’10

Indian women writers from Krupabai Satthianadhan and Toru Dutt in the nineteenth century to Attia Hosain in the twentieth also deserve attention in reconfiguring the relationship of woman, child and nation up to and after partition. Hosain’s autobiographical *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) depicts the independence struggle through the experiences of a fifteen-year-old Muslim schoolgirl, dramatising

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9 Lazarus argues that the theoretical assumptions of postcolonial studies have resulted in a ‘woefully restricted’ corpus of texts being examined (*The Postcolonial Unconscious* p. 22). For this reason, as well as in the interests of a materialist critique, it is worth looking at both avowed modernist texts and those more tangentially associated with modernism as well as ‘postmodernist’ ones. See also Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

fear and indecision rather than nationalist commitment. Before the cataclysm of partition, ‘nation-narratives’ under stress meet increasing consternation about the way woman is used in the biography of the nation.\textsuperscript{11}

In Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (1946), the beneficent motherland is reconceived according to a socialist ideal in which India herself is presented as ‘perverse and obstinate’, stubborn and childlike not at all in the typical manner of a maternally inspired nationalism.\textsuperscript{12} According to Nehru, India must open her eyes (as Anand’s characters do in coming into consciousness) and grasp independence (as they try to do against heavy odds) in order for a modern nation to be formed. She must make up for the ‘arrested growth’ caused by colonialism.\textsuperscript{13} As Nicole Weickgenannt Thiara observes, Nehru’s ‘impious’ image of India indicates how Mother India had become an obvious cultural formulation. Nehru points to the problem that the ‘apparent inclusiveness of the image of India as mother suppresses the articulation of other differences, for example those of class, gender and religion.’\textsuperscript{14} As Satyajit Ray’s much admired *The Apu Trilogy* (1955-59) makes clear, these stratifications of Indian identity were being urgently imagined after Indian Independence was achieved.\textsuperscript{15}

However, his text does not dismiss the power of India as mother, instead it re-imagines her as a daughter of modernity.

\textsuperscript{13} Nehru, pp. 507-9.
\textsuperscript{14} Weickgenannt Thiara, pp. 141-2.
\textsuperscript{15} *The Apu Trilogy* re-tells the story of *Pather Panchali* (1928) and *Aparajito* (1932) by Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, the most well known *Bildungsroman* narratives in Bengali. The films are influenced both by European cinema and by the Indian theatrical tradition, particularly the *rasa* of classical Sanskrit drama.
Weickgenannt Thiara makes the case that, in Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995), Aurora is ‘a modern yet rooted incarnation of India’. Certainly, her son Moor, who has a disease that makes him grow at twice the usual speed, articulates the challenges of figuring growth and development for a postcolonial India. Avenues for analysis here include not only the trading of histories between families, places and peoples (the Indian-Portuguese family in the novel are in the spice trade) via the moveable chid figure, but also the way in which the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* draws into itself politics, art and religion as well as disability.

In Clare Barker’s recent intervention, disability proves a particularly pertinent site for the analysis of what Burman calls the ‘damaged’ child as opposed to the ‘whole’ child of Western psychological models. Barker looks at representations of physical, as well as psychological, disability to propose that the malleable child’s body may become a ‘supernormative’ figure that she terms the ‘disabled child-nation’. Barker interrogates, as does Castañeda, the way in which children as ‘embodied’ are often absent from critical accounts because of their ‘hyperlegibility in terms of national or cultural allegory’.

Children’s bodies are, according to this view, overdetermined, while the cataloguing of their achievements via educational and cultural discourses proceeds in tandem with a focus on the biological as providing normative models: ‘Scientific (especially biological) figurations of the developing child therefore continue to operate in a wide variety of domains, such that this figuration is endurably powerful in the making of

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17 Barker, p. 2.
18 Barker, p. 3.
the real. As Lesnik-Oberstein urges, we should examine the ways in which this takes place, rather than losing ourselves in a quest for the ‘real child’.

Contemporary concerns over the frailty or undeveloped position of the global South are comparable to the positioning of the colonised as savage, animal-like or degenerate in the nineteenth century. These binarisms should make us aware that any desire to see the postcolonial child as a lithe and agile form crossing borders must be tempered. The child as natural, simple or immediate has, in many cases, been adapted in historical, literary and critical discourses to weather the tremulous doubts of modernism and decolonisation and to become one of what Rooney and Nagai call the ‘able cultural brokers’ valorised as suitable for cosmopolitan or postcolonial theory. As the postcolonial relies, in sometimes uncomfortable ways, on the colonial, we must ask if and, if so, how the colonial or colonised child has become a hybrid transmitter of memories and futures, or whether that child is still marginalised, dismissed, and made a face of aid campaigns whose aspirations for global capitalism the subaltern cannot share.

Along with the map-faced, telepathic ‘child-nation’ that is Saleem in *Midnight’s Children*, there are numerous postcolonial children in South Asian literature who figure, and perhaps defigure, the nation. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Bapsi Sidwa’s *Ice Candy Man* (1988), Shyam Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* (1994) and Kamila Shamsie’s *Kartography* (2004), to name a few, all feature children who are at the epicentre of conflict and change and funnel their narratives through the confusions

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19 Castañeda, p. 44.
20 Rooney and Nagai, p. 2.
and contortions that the child offers as a ‘lens’ on history. In Hindi, Krishna Baldev Vaid’s *Diary of a Maidservant* (2007) offers an alternative to prevalent narratives of urban middle-class life through the perspective of a poor young girl. In a realist idiom that has been identified as feminist, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande explore the troubling relations between parents and children, particularly daughters, between continents. Meanwhile, Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* (1995) probes the very different world views and experiences that the child is allowed, depending on class and caste divisions. Such writing arguably owes as much to the international humanist/socialist consciousness of Anand and his fellows in the PWA as it does to the pull of the world literary market analysed in Graham Huggan’s *The Postcolonial Exotic.*

Postcolonial children are also prominent in film, most recently in the adaptations of *Midnight’s Children* and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* both released in 2012. Vicky Lebeau asks the question, ‘What does cinema want of the child?’ and her analysis of the way in which cinema can locate the child ‘in the field of vision’ and ‘be a means to reflect on the significance of the drive to see, and to know, the child and her world’ has rich implications for postcolonial possibilities of seeing. Ang Lee’s film of *Life of Pi* is concerned with the falsity of the division between myth and memory, offering a disturbing but celebratory connection between the child and the animal in splendid technicolour. An orphan grows up, depicted through a magical realist form

21 See Elizabeth Jackson, *Feminism and Contemporary Indian Women’s Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
22 See *Postliberalization Indian Novels in English* (London: Anthem, 2013), ed. by Ayesha Iqbal Viswamohan. The essays engage with diaspora writers including Pankaj Mishra and Rohinton Mistry, as well as popular Hindi writers including Chetan Bhagat.
particularly associated with ‘being’ postcolonial, and is restored to a normative family life through fatherhood, but in the West.  

This trajectory suggests that, while the postcolonial child may go anywhere, he or she is always tied to the dominant biological and cultural expectations that drive interest in the child. More contentiously, I consider Benh Zeitlin’s *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) to be about a postcolonial child, even though the film is set in the Louisiana bayou in the American South. The film stars the untrained five-year-old Quevenzhané Wallace as a child who, according to one reviewer, ‘simply is’.  

And yet this is a film about cultural and economic division, about race, about the way in which we demand that the child feed our imagination by remaining innocent in desperate circumstances. We might call it a post-imperial American film.

From this brief survey of postcolonial children, it seems clear that the child, like Kim sitting astride the gun Zam-Zammah that has passed through many hands in its history, is only temporarily on top of the world. Postcolonial artists show us that the ongoing relationship with former colonies is far from simple. Whilst I have focussed on the Indian context, there is plenty of scope for analysis of the child in colonial, anti-colonial and postcolonial contexts across regions. For example, internationally acclaimed writers including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ben Okri and Tsitsi Dangarembga, all represent children through both an intense relationship with their environment and as a means of addressing national conflicts and successes, past and present. Their work vindicates the claims of Gikandi and Mbembe that colonialism

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was not imagined in the same way everywhere and Africa as ‘the supreme receptacle of “absence”’ makes the postcolonial child vital in its own multiple fashions.\textsuperscript{27} Chris Abani’s \textit{Song of Night} (2007), for example, tells the story of a child soldier, raising questions on the exchange and use of the child’s body as well as on the relation of fiction to testimony.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to another inflection of ‘the child’ implicit in all these directions of investigation: the idea of ‘youth’. Whilst the child brings what Lee Edelman calls ‘reproductive futurism’ and may therefore be critiqued as a means of denying any or other forms of sexuality, youth is widely associated with a dawning knowledge of sexual difference and with the staking of a claim to identity that must contend with cultural and political notions of development on their own terms. I specify youth rather than adolescence firstly because the nineteenth-century ‘evolutionary sweep towards perfection’ leaves little room for the association of adolescence with ‘cultural liminality or hybridity’ that Randall proposes, but does have space for youthful energy or ambition because it retains some of the imaginative or romantic connotations of the child.\textsuperscript{28}

Secondly, I suggest a focus on youth because adolescence carries with it medical and psychological definitions that tie it to an empirically examined stage of physical development. Scholarly consensus is that the concept of adolescence arose in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and was a ‘distinctly masculine and middle-

\textsuperscript{27} Barker analyses Okri’s \textit{The Famished Road} (1991) as requiring ‘radical cognitive reorientation’ of the reader to engage with the boy protagonist Azaro (p. 158) while Dangarembga’s novels ‘negotiate cultural health’ through the dynamics of gender (p. 62).

\textsuperscript{28} Shuttleworth, p. 267; Randall, p. 6.
class’ idea. Randall situates his work in relation to G. Stanley Hall’s Adolescence (1904) in which it is the juncture where Western and primitive civilisations meet. Hall writes from a position in which individual ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny so that analysing the child is a way of analysing (and controlling) the race and the purpose of this phase of experiment is for the child to ‘be apprenticed to the higher qualities of adulthood’.  

While Randall contends that adolescence participates in ‘certain key themes of childhood’, the difficulty is that, unlike Hall, Randall is interested in the unstable, discursive flow of signifiers and identity-formations in accordance with Bhabha’s concept of hybridity and Spivak’s theorisation of linguistically produced difference. Yet he wishes to tie hybridity to a teleological idea of childhood that, in focusing on adolescence as something to be controlled or resolved, refuses the contradictory figurations of desire that, this thesis has shown, relate to the child. On this basis, I would like to suggest that, in approaching children’s literature and children in literature as ways of ‘seeing’ how other discourses, including those of gender, race, nation and class, operate, youth may be a more fruitful concept.

From Rousseau’s Confessions (1782-89) to Tolstoy’s trilogy Childhood, Boyhood and Youth (1852-6) and J.M. Coetzee’s Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life (1998) and Youth (2003), the concept of youth can facilitate thinking ‘between’ the child as innocent or elsewhere and the adolescent as an apprentice adult. Unlike adolescence,

31 Randall, p. 11.
which relies upon an atomistic developmental paradigm even as it has the potential to subvert it, youth is where the idea of the child meets an idea of the world and works to connect.

I do not propose that these ideas should be separated, for youth has much in common with the growing child as I have defined it, as well as carrying some of the features of the constant child towards adulthood. In the maelstrom of imperial self-examination and resistant nation making, it is simply important to reiterate that the child, although increasingly scrutinised, often remains, recalcitrantly, the blank slate, the obvious and the universal. In biological, psychological, educational and ethical debates, particularly at what Robson calls ‘switchpoints’ in the cultural valuations of both the child and the nation, the child as ‘a unique knot of problems of origins’ becomes, through figurative use and bodily representation, the very form of history.  

32 Robson, p. 122.
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