An Evolutionary Model of the Boy’s Quest, 1863-1901

by

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Department of English
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Abstract

In tandem with the coming-of-age of children’s literature itself, this dissertation explores the growth of the boy’s quest-romance, a sub-genre of nineteenth-century boy’s adventure literature. Like Franco Moretti, who observes that literary forms evolve according to the “pressure of cultural selection,” I posit an evolutionary model of the boy’s quest, focusing on the work of George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, R.L. Stevenson, and Rudyard Kipling as forming a hypothetical branching of this model (Graphs, Maps, Trees 72). By framing close-readings of primary texts within the historical and literary cultural climate of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, I trace how the boy’s quest evolves in response to popular tastes: first by disengaging itself from its Evangelical roots, and later by initiating a modernist experimentation with the linear quest structure. While Jacqueline Rose argues that children’s writing resists such experimentation, my study challenges this view by demonstrating that children’s literature does not simply reflect cultural change but also pioneers this change with its capacity for generic innovation.

Focusing on the intersection between gender and genre in these texts, I begin by exploring this model of the boy’s quest in MacDonald’s Princess books (1872, 82) in order to test its gendered restrictions; by shifting his focus from Irene’s search for identity to that of her male companion Curdie, MacDonald reinforces the connective thread between masculinity and
quest-romance that my dissertation outlines. I next explore Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* (1863), in which the male narrator’s emphasis on physical courage or “pluck” distances Kingsley’s work from that of his Evangelical contemporaries and establishes an important precedent for Stevenson’s “a-moral” romances. By highlighting David’s ability to manipulate his own representation as a storyteller, I aim both to overturn the caricature of “poor Davie” common in criticism of *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona* (1893), and to suggest that Stevenson is introducing metafiction to the quest-romance, a trend that Kipling continues in the Mowgli stories (1893-5) and *Kim* (1901). In attempting to evade his protagonists’ adult roles as imperial agents, Kipling dismantles the linear quest in favour of perpetual childhood, establishing an important precedent for J.M. Barrie into the early twentieth century.
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Introduction

Anthropologist and folklorist Andrew Lang opens his preface to *The Red Book of Romance: Tales of Knights, Dragons & High Adventure* (1905) with the farcical account of a “poor little lonely boy in a great house with a large library” who forces himself to read the “very dull” and “very long” five-volume romance *The History of Polexander* (1632-7) by Marin le Roy de Gomberville (Preface vi). Because “some very stupid grown-up person” had told him that “if he once began, he must read every word of it,” the little boy “sat and sobbed over *Polexander*” until it was eventually “taken away from him and locked up,” thereby preserving his life. To remedy the misfortunes of other young readers tackling similarly adult romances, Lang presents his own volume of short romantic tales selected from folklore and from longer works like *The Faerie Queene* (1590; 1596). Omitting the protracted “sorrows of lovers who cannot get married” and other elements “[t]hat could not amuse a small boy,” Lang expressly aims to entertain his young male reader, advising him to “read something else that you do like” should his “book of Romances” fail to prove compelling. Just as “you are not expected to eat more mutton than you want to eat,” Lang concludes from his opening example that “every boy should stop reading a book as soon as he finds that he does not like it” (vi).

Published in 1905, Lang’s preface offers an interesting perspective on the development of children’s literature across the preceding century. Confining learning to “[l]esson books” that “are not meant to be amusing,” Lang desires to please rather than to teach his young readers, in express contrast to the writers who produced heavily didactic and religious-themed literature for children in the early nineteenth century. Moreover, the strategy by which the storyteller aspires to divert his readers – “ma[king] the old romances much shorter” and “keeping the liveliest parts, in which curious things happen” – indicates that Lang recognizes the necessity of specifically
tailoring romance to fit his juvenile readership (vi). By reformulating quest-romance as the exclusive territory of the “small boy,” Lang and the male writers whose fiction will inform my dissertation – Charles Kingsley, R.L. Stevenson, and Rudyard Kipling – succeed in both distancing themselves from the didactic tradition of children’s literature established by their female predecessors as well as reviving an outmoded genre that had fallen from favour in writing for adults. How the boy’s quest-romance evolved over this period, in tandem with the coming-of-age of children’s literature itself – a field which, as Kimberley Reynolds observes, “not only tolerates but embraces generic mutation” – will inform the focus and structure of this study (Radical Children’s Literature 16).

My word choice in the preceding sentence is significant. Inspired in part by Franco Moretti’s discussion of the relationship between literary history and evolutionary theory, my dissertation posits what I call an evolutionary model of the boy’s quest. Using the example of British detective fiction in its “early stages,” Moretti suggests a correlation between a genre’s staying power and its favourable reception with the public: if “[r]eaders discover that they like a certain device, and if a story doesn’t seem to include it, they simply don’t read it (and the story becomes extinct)” (Graphs, Maps, Trees 72). This suggestion that literary forms survive, evolve, or die out owing to the “pressure of cultural selection” is particularly informative for my own study of the boy’s quest (72). In keeping with Moretti’s observations as well as the “Darwinian cast” of the “critical historiography of children’s literature,” which frequently posits a “period of growth and enhancement” culminating in the Victorian and Edwardian “Golden Age,” this study presents the evolution of the boy’s quest as part of a larger development in nineteenth-century publishing for children (Lerer 173): namely, what J.S. Bratton and other critics have identified as the gradual disappearance of “didactic form” from Victorian children’s literature (Bratton 207). By tracing the growth of the boy’s quest from its didactic beginnings in The Water-Babies
(1863) to its modernist disintegration in *Kim* (1901), I will examine how this form diverges in response to sociocultural influences: on one end, by disengaging itself from its Evangelical roots, and on the other, by responding to the “crisis of raw materials” in the wake of imperialist expansion (McClure 9).

As a genre that is perpetually linked to the boy’s periodical press – an industry charged with satisfying an important yet fickle “consumer group” – the boy’s quest is necessarily tied, like the emergence of detective fiction, to readers’ popular tastes: namely, the increasing eagerness of “vast numbers of young men ... to spend a penny for their entertainment” rather than their “edification” (Dunae 14, 26). And yet, in the case of boy’s literature, readers’ predilection for adventurous tales is also seen by critics like Patrick Dunae as leading to a kind of creative stagnancy. With the fluctuating loyalty of their readers, publishers were reluctant to depart from the successful but formulaic fiction of writers like G.A. Henty: in the author’s historical romances for boys, a morally upstanding young gentleman “distinguishes himself” in one of Britain’s colonial wars by virtue of his pluck and acts of self-sacrifice and is rewarded accordingly with both social and financial security back in England (Richards 75). By “transform[ing] real wars into Romance” (75), Henty was able to sell his work at an astonishing rate of 150,000 copies per year in Britain alone during the period of the early 1890s (Dunae 21). And yet the popularity of Henty’s formula in the last decades of the nineteenth century was relatively brief: as Dunae notes, “until the mid-1880s [Henty] was “less popular than Kingston, Ballantyne, Marryat, and Mayne Reid” (20). Coinciding with the steep rise and fall of the British Empire itself, Henty’s particular brand of the quest was seemingly destined for literary extinction: his last book was published in 1906, four years after his death and five years after the publication of *Kim* had presented Kipling’s doubts about the endurance of Empire.
If we conceptualize genre in the form of an evolutionary tree, as Moretti proposes, then Henty’s compressed period of fame indicates one particular branching of the boy’s quest that emerges in response to a specific cultural need (i.e. the rise of the boy’s periodical press and the high period of imperialism) and dies out as that need begins to dissipate at the turn of the century: in spite of the sheer number of books that Henty wrote and sold during his lifetime, very few, if any, of his romances remain in print today. By contrast, another hypothetical branching of the boy’s quest, as represented by Kingsley, Stevenson, and Kipling, continues to survive and thrive, with new editions of their work continuing to be produced over a century later, an endurance that I would attribute to their collective failure to conform to a prescribed formula of the boy’s quest. Like Henty, these writers similarly follow Northrop Frye’s “classic structure of romance” by testing and subsequently rewarding the romantic hero in their work (Richards 75). However, Kingsley and the writers who follow him present a model of the boy’s quest that is constantly in flux, evading the sort of prescriptive outline or blueprint that Jeffrey Richards deduces from Henty’s work. While the predictable pattern of Henty’s fiction suggests the common criticism that late nineteenth-century boy’s literature is formulaic, I aim to establish the opposite by proposing the rise and fall of the Victorian quest-romance for boys. As the field of children’s literature itself was “growing up” (Hunt 59), the quest-romance model was, I will argue, similarly evolving, first by disengaging itself from the Evangelical tenor of early nineteenth-century children’s fiction and then by becoming increasingly “a-moral” and fragmented (Stevenson “Gossip” 54) in ways that heralded the “realistic disenchantment” with romantic idealism into the twentieth century (McClure 12).

The implications of this evolutionary model will be examined in more detail later in this introduction. As a preface to my discussion of romance, however – a literary form with “a tendency to turn up, Proteus-like, in a multiplicity of different guises” as Patricia Parker writes in
Inescapable Romance – I must first explain how I have specifically defined this genre in relation to my study of nineteenth-century boy’s literature (5). Because it is a form or genre “which historically has had an extraordinary resilience,” one of the “problems” involved in discussing romance is “the need to limit the way in which the term is applied” (Parker 4). Like Parker, then, who aims to offer up a “prospect” (4) on romance poetry that is “suggestive rather than inclusive,” I do not attempt to address the many “Protean varieties” of romance here (14). While I do briefly consider other genres that are affiliated with or that branch out from this umbrella term “romance,” such as fairytale and the Gothic, my central focus remains on one particular manifestation of this form – the quest-romance – that flourished within the specific cultural and historical framework of the late Victorian and fin de siècle period, when male writers and readers worked to “reclaim the kingdom of the English novel” from their female counterparts (Showalter 79).

While my study is concerned specifically with the romance revival of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the origins of this gender turf war over romance can in fact be traced back as far as the 1760s. As Betsy Bolton writes, from the late eighteenth century onward, male romance revivalists “urged a return to a purer, more English form” of the genre in response to the unwholesome but popular “feminized, Frenchified prose romance” (56, 50). Fearing that this new breed of romance would corrupt its impressionable readership – thought to be made up exclusively of women, children, and servants – these revivalists presented an alternative in the form of the verse romances of the Middle Ages. In encouraging a return to this purely “English” form of romance, in which chivalric codes governed women’s behaviour and “the working orders vanished from sight,” eighteenth-century men of letters were attempting to counteract the dangerous “fantasies of social mobility [and] freedom from the constraints of social status” introduced by these foreign romances (Bolton 56). By creating a dichotomy between
“gentlemanly” medieval verse romances, which remained exclusive to the (male) scholars who could read them in their as-yet-untranslated forms, and the popular print romances, which belonged to “the disreputable mixed-age world” of the semi-literate public, these early male revivalists established the groundwork for a gendered debate over romance that would persist into the Victorian era and beyond (Michals 12). Walter Scott’s dismissal in 1810 of “those popular narratives, which are the amusement of children and the lower-classes” (qtd in Rogers 67) is echoed some fifty years later in Charles Kingsley’s parody of the popular female-authored romances that make up Waste-paper-land in The Water-Babies (1863): just as Scott implicitly contrasts his own lyrical romances with these “popular narratives,” Kingsley similarly juxtaposes his own “manful” fairytales against the “sugared slough” of sentimental romance fiction including Susan Bogert Warner’s The Wide, Wide World (1850) – despite (as I will demonstrate in my second chapter) Warner’s obvious influence on his own writing (Glaucus 15).

Just as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century male romance revivalists “purged [the genre] of its French and feminizing influences” by reintroducing “English” medieval verse romances (Bolton 56), their late Victorian counterparts “extolled the masculine and homosocial ‘romance’ of adventure and quest, descended from Arthurian epic” as a replacement for “the heterosexual romance of courtship, manners, and marriage” (Showalter 79). For Kingsley, Stevenson, Kipling and their contemporaries, this new breed of romance provided a welcome alternative to the form that had dominated circulating libraries for much of the nineteenth century: the weighty, three-volume novel of manners. In place of the insipid “clink of teaspoons

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1 Writing in Ballantyne’s new edition of Daniel Defoe’s novels, Scott uses this pejorative to describe Defoe’s fiction; given the later influence of Robinson Crusoe (1719) on the nineteenth-century romance revival and the rise of the “boys’ book,” it is ironic that Scott consigns Defoe’s work here to the so-called “popular narratives” belonging to a mixed-age, semi-literate public, in opposition to what he calls “gentlemanly” worthy reading.
and … accents of the curate,” of which Stevenson speaks with disdain in “A Gossip on Romance” (1882), or the “stolen wills,” “missing heirs,” and other hackneyed conventions that Kipling satirizes in his poem “The Three-Decker” (1884) (l. 6),\(^2\) the romance genre offered a welcome alternative in the form of what Stevenson calls “clean, open-air adventure” (“Gossip” 57, 54).

The waning of this “three-decker” format that had previously dominated the Victorian publishing industry opened up a new market for shorter, single-volume publications, including the late nineteenth-century quest-romance. By prefacing romance with the word “quest” throughout this study, my intent is to examine how men writing in the late nineteenth century reshaped romance as an explicitly and exclusively male journey undertaken by a plucky young protagonist. While these male writers were “determined to write for boys,” the prospect of adventure also regularly attracted more mature readers (Showalter 79), with H. Rider Haggard dedicating his romance *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) to both “big and little boys” (37). For the Victorians, “to read a romance was … in some sense pleasurably to regress” (Fraser 6) and the boy’s romance, with its “illusion of eternal masculine youth,” frequently provided this experience for adult readers (Showalter 80): Lang writes that Haggard’s romances “make one a boy again while one is reading them” (qtd in Showalter 80). For instance, while Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* with his stepson Lloyd Osbourne in mind, the author was astonished to discover that his boy’s romance had inadvertently sparked the interest of his own father: he writes in “My First Book” (1894) that “I had counted on one boy; I found I had two in my audience. My father

\(^2\) Likening the “three-decker” novel to the sailing warship of the same name (“three-decker” meaning three fully armed decks in naval terms), Kipling’s poem imagines the passing of this format – and the trite conventions associated with it – on to the Islands of the Blest, known in Greek mythology as a kind of heaven for the virtuous. As of its 1896 publication in a collected volume of the author’s verse, the epigraph to this poem concludes definitively that, “The three-volume novel is extinct.”
caught fire at once with all the romance and childishness of his original nature” (195).

On one hand, then, the genre of the boy’s quest invited a dual readership of both men and boys and “most particularly fathers and sons,” reflecting Teresa Michals’ assertion that “[t]hrough most of the nineteenth century, the novel’s core readership remained mixed-age” (Michals 132, 2). Like Michals, who posits that “child” and “adult” should be examined as “relational terms in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century English book market” (11), my own consideration of texts like Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and Conrad’s *Lord Jim* (1900) alongside the work of Kingsley, Stevenson and Kipling similarly indicates a fluid binary between these two categories of readers. At the same time, however, one of my chief aims in this study is to explore how my chosen authors specifically reimagined quest-romance as a genre for boys, coinciding with “the rise of a distinct market for children’s literature [beginning] in the middle of the eighteenth century” (Michals 2). In the case of Kingsley and Stevenson, this re-imagining was achieved in part by positing an actual boy as their ideal reader: Kingsley expressly wrote *The Water-Babies* for his “youngest son, Grenville Arthur” as well as for “all other good little boys” (41), while Stevenson used his stepson as a “touchstone” in writing *Treasure Island* (“My First Book” 193). By focusing on the quest to the exclusion of other elements that had once denoted romance in the past – such as the extended scenes of “love-making” that Lang omits from his tales in *The Red Book of Romance* – writers like Kingsley and Stevenson were adjusting romance to fit their prospective readership (vi); for instance, mirroring Lang’s strategy, Stevenson excludes women from *Treasure Island* at the request of his young collaborator (“First” 193), and focuses instead on the adventure or “brute incident,” which had first attracted him to romance when he was a boy (“Gossip” 53).
For Northrop Frye, adventure is the “essential element of plot in romance” and the “complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest,” which he divides into three main stages: the perilous journey (agon), the crucial struggle (pathos), and the exaltation of the hero (anagnorisis) (Anatomy 186-7). This archetypal quest journey – in which the hero’s search for his identity (for the hero is traditionally male) culminates in his “recognition” and subsequent restoration to his rightful place in society – loosely informs the structure of the specific texts that I will examine here, including Kingsley’s The Water-Babies (1863), Stevenson’s Kidnapped (1886) and Catriona (1893), and Kipling’s Mowgli stories (1893-5) and Kim (1901). For all three writers, the completion of the quest is linked to the realization of masculine identity in all its various guises: Tom the water-baby becomes fit to “‘be a man’” after completing his quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere, David Balfour grows into a middle-aged gentleman-lawyer after winning his inheritance, and Mowgli and Kim are rewarded for their adventures with very adult positions in the imperialist system (Kingsley 229). And yet the divergent outcomes of these quests suggest changing masculine ideals across the period delimited by these texts (1863 to 1901): while Tom and David acquire some level of maturity and stability as they are reintegrated into their respective societies, Mowgli and Kim remain childish so that they can continue to perform the work of empire.

By enacting a perpetual return to childhood, Kipling’s fiction disrupts Frye’s three-part outline of the “successful” quest, suggesting that the boy’s quest evolves by increasingly working against this outline. Rather than confining my study to Frye’s definition or to any other “particular phrasing” of this form, then, I posit a more fluid model of the boy’s quest, which is consistent with Adena Rosmarin’s concept of genre as “a kind of schema, a way of discussing a literary text in terms that link it with other texts and, finally, phrase it in terms of those texts” (21). Following the “pattern of reasoning” that Rosmarin outlines in The Power of Genre – one
that “explicitly moves from definition of genre to defining specific instances of that genre and then to the unfolding of that specificity” – I want to transition here from outlining my theoretical model of the boy’s quest to examining the particular “instances” of this form in the work of my chosen authors. If genre is, as Rosmarin argues, a “conceptual model for the way critical argument effectively moves” from “general to particular,” then the boy’s quest-romance can only be specifically articulated through my analysis of the texts that I have linked under this particular “model” (42, 33). By presenting the evolution of this genre across the fiction of Kingsley, Stevenson, and Kipling, I will examine how the boy’s quest specifically manifests itself in relation to its changing cultural climate (e.g. the spread of imperialism) as well as the larger development of children’s literature during the late nineteenth-century Golden Age.

Because the boy’s quest was from its inception an unambiguously gendered genre, my study will be largely focused on the work of these three authors who imagined themselves as writing primarily, if not exclusively, for a young male readership. As Showalter remarks, male writers pursued boy readers simply because "writing for boys meant not writing for girls" (80): Haggard plainly reflects this “boy’s club” sentiment when he juxtaposes his own invigoratingly masculine adventure stories with the sentimental and domestic fiction intended for “little girls in the schoolroom” (“About Fiction” 177). As a preface to my investigation of the boy’s quest, however, my study begins by examining the problematic role of little girls as well as grown women in Victorian quest-romance. In keeping with Rosmarin’s assertion that genre operates as a “tool of critical explanation” by “pushing itself to its explanatory limits” (Rosmarin 48), my aim is to test the gendered restrictions of the boy’s quest by extending the implications of this masculine model to a female protagonist of nineteenth-century children’s literature, namely Princess Irene in George MacDonald’s The Princess and the Goblin (1872) and The Princess and Curdie (1882). By positing a complementary female model of the quest and by suggesting
the ultimate failure of this model in my prefatory first chapter, I will lay the groundwork for the subsequent chapters of my dissertation, in which I outline how the quest establishes itself as the exclusive territory of male writers and boy readers in late Victorian children’s fiction.

In my analysis of MacDonald, I argue that the author derives his model of the female quest by bridging the genres of fairytale and romance. While late nineteenth-century male writers were claiming quest-romance as their exclusive territory, female writers began to regard fairytale as a “dormant literature of their own” (Auerbach and Knoepflmacher 11), a vehicle for a subversive feminist voice in tandem with the rise of the suffragette movement (Zipes Relentless Progress 126). Because this genre enabled MacDonald and his female contemporaries – including writers like Jean Ingelow, Juliana Horatia Ewing, and Edith Nesbit – to contest the problematic placement of women in Victorian society, the fairytale genre became the ideal platform for MacDonald’s narrative of Princess Irene. By creating a hybrid of fairytale and quest-romance – genres frequently linked together as “degenerate” forms of legend or mythology by nineteenth-century men of letters like Lang and Walter Scott – MacDonald is able to grant his female protagonist the power and agency of a male quester within a domesticated and feminized setting (Fraser 6).

Empowered by her Great-great grandmother Irene, who represents the figure of the female storyteller or spinster commonly encountered in fairytale, and by her liberating female space in the attic, Irene undergoes a spiritual awakening that culminates when her grandmother’s thread leads her deep under the ground. By overcoming her fear of the goblins in order to rescue Curdie, Irene demonstrates that she is breaking away from the gender restrictions imposed on her by her nurse Lootie, as well as transitioning out of the childlike dependency and helplessness that she initially exemplifies in The Princess and the Goblin. In spite of this promising development,
however, MacDonald’s model of the female quest is curtailed by his ultimate refusal to deviate from Victorian gender norms. As her ailing father’s helpmate and Curdie’s future wife, Irene is increasingly restricted by her role as the “Angel in the House,” leaving Curdie to assume narrative centrality in The Princess and Curdie. In this way, MacDonald’s inability to sustain the female quest reinforces the connection between masculinity and romance in the late nineteenth century. By shifting his focus from female to male quester, MacDonald asserts the “boys only” message inherent to the late nineteenth-century quest-romance tradition and upheld by the other male writers – Kingsley, Stevenson, and Kipling – whose fiction I will explore in my subsequent chapters.

Curdie’s rise to prominence over the course of MacDonald’s two “Princess” books suggests how the boy’s quest evolves by increasingly defining itself against any form of female influence, as my analysis of Charles Kingsley’s The Water-Babies (1863) in Chapter Two will demonstrate. Just as Curdie’s spiritual awakening is provoked by his interactions with the Grandmother, Tom the water-baby’s transformation from an ignorant “savage” into a reformed pilgrim is similarly guided by the female fairies whom he encounters on his journey, namely Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby (Kingsley 70). However, by ultimately choosing to isolate his protagonist from the fairies’ guidance, I argue that Kingsley is deliberately establishing the late nineteenth-century boy’s quest in opposition to the feminized moral code ingrained in earlier adventure tales for boys, which presented “the ideals of Victorian womanliness [...] as the ideals of Victorian manliness” (Nelson Boys Will be Girls 5). Instead, The Water-Babies represents an ongoing conflict between female and male role models, each with their respective messages for Kingsley’s protagonist: while the fairies urge Tom to restrain his “savage” instincts and to exemplify Christianity charity and forbearance to the weak, the
masculine narrator counteracts these tenets by encouraging his “little man” to assert his physical courage or “pluck” in accordance with the law of the survival-of-the-fittest.

Borrowing his predecessor John Bunyan’s strategy in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), Kingsley attempts to resolve this conflict of values by re-framing the romantic quest as a spiritual pilgrimage: like Bunyan’s hero, who seeks redemption by “questing” for Christian values, Tom journeys to the Other-End-of-Nowhere in order to elicit the repentance of his abusive former master Grimes. However, just as Christian’s excessive pride or vainglory threatens to undermine the salvation awaiting him in the Celestial City, Tom’s failure to demonstrate Christian love and forgiveness toward Grimes problematizes the sincerity of his spiritual progress: although this final encounter is intended to represent the culmination of his religious training, Tom’s final encounter with Grimes instead reinforces Kingsley’s Social Darwinist subtext, in which the apprentice sweep naturally surmounts his degenerative former master by virtue of his physical and moral superiority. By replacing an ethic of duty and piety with one of courage and pluck, Kingsley distances his own fiction from that of his Evangelical contemporaries and establishes an important legacy for future boy’s writers like Stevenson and Kipling, who also separate their own writings from the didactic children’s literature of the early nineteenth century.

Building on Kingsley’s model of the quester, Stevenson’s boy-heroes are likewise known for their pluck and not their piety, in accordance with the author’s own essays characterizing romance as a thoroughly “a-moral” genre (“Gossip” 54). In the third chapter of my dissertation, I examine how Stevenson’s cunning and calculating protagonists – focusing particularly on David Balfour, the hero of *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona* (1893) – set his work apart from both the didactic “machinery of the boys’ magazine” as well as from the boy’s stories of his
predecessors like Henty, whose exemplary young heroes act as vehicles to “convey the moral content of his stories” (Federico 117; Arnold 31). Over the course of his adventures, David repeatedly contravenes the principles of a “good Kirk-going, Lowland Scot” that he professes to hold at the outset of his journey (Letley Introduction to Kidnapped and Catriona xvi-xvii): for instance, rather than sacrifice his future legal career by publicly revealing his connection to the Appin murder, David intentionally suppresses testimony that might have prevented James Stewart from being wrongfully prosecuted for the crime. While he is frequently represented in Stevensonian criticism as an “inactive and inept” hero, my own analysis reveals that David emerges as a master manipulator over the course of Kidnapped and its sequel (Kiely 98). By self-consciously cultivating the persona of “poor Davie,” a helpless and hapless “country lad,” David is able to eschew personal responsibility for his actions, including his role in James’ death, while gradually taking control of the romance plot to which he initially falls victim (Catriona 231).

As the unsuspecting target of his uncle Ebenezer Balfour’s kidnapping scheme, David initially resembles Stevenson’s other famous cabin-boy Jim Hawkins, whom Marah Gubar likens to a “helpless parrot” easily duped by Long John Silver’s sweet talk (71). But while Jim proves to be no match for the silver-tongued sea cook whose very “character is to plot,” David is able to successfully overcome his disempowerment through his increasing grasp of narrative authority (Honaker 46). By exposing certain plots (his first kidnapping instigated by his uncle) and suppressing others (his entanglement in the Appin murder), David meticulously orchestrates his own upward mobility, eventually succeeding to the position of power which he has cultivated from the outset of his journey: at the end of Catriona, a more seasoned and mature David – now a lawyer and married father of two children – is revealed to be the narrator of his own carefully crafted tale. While his clumsy swordplay is antithetical to the image of the prototypical robust
adventure hero, David’s clever wordplay suggests that he embodies what Gubar calls the “appealing autonomy of the plucky boy adventurer” to a far greater degree than Jim Hawkins or even the capable protagonists featured in Henty’s fiction (Gubar 69).

In the unlikely figure of David Balfour, whose self-sufficiency hearkens back to the forefather of boy’s romance Robinson Crusoe, Stevenson delivers up the ultimate fantasy of power and control for his young male readership, signalling that the author has reached the pinnacle of nineteenth-century boy’s quest-romance. And yet, as he gestures toward an increasingly metafictional form of the genre – for instance, in David’s ability to manipulate his own heroic representation – Stevenson suggests that romance is becoming increasingly ironic as the fin de siècle approaches. In my fourth and final chapter, I examine how Kipling responds to this trend by repeatedly attempting to recapture romance in his fiction, a pattern that he first establishes in “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” (1888) and “The Potted Princess” (1893). In these semi-autobiographical tales, as well as in the Mowgli stories (1893-5) and Kim (1901), I argue that Kipling recycles romance in order to postpone the trauma that he associates with impending maturity, a maturity that takes on a particularly sinister quality for Mowgli and Kim. By returning to younger versions of these protagonists, Kipling is attempting to evade the implications of his protagonists’ adult roles as agents of Empire: the Mowgli stories featured in the two Jungle Books (1894, 1895) persistently revisit Mowgli’s (seemingly) innocent childhood before his former wolf “brothers” are transformed into his servants, while Kim and the lama’s renewed quest for the river of the arrow enacts a symbolic return to the protagonist’s childhood following Kim’s schooldays, a hidden bildungsroman in the text that the author ultimately refuses to narrate.

This strategy of delay, I would argue, represents Kipling’s attempt to “fin[d] some way to
return to the earlier, more heroic days of the imperial adventure,” as John McClure writes in *Late Imperial Romance* (McClure 11). And yet, with each new attempt at revival, romance only re-appears with more and more irony in Kipling’s fiction, eventually becoming entirely conscripted by the goals of imperialism. Just as David Balfour learns to compartmentalize his romantic Jacobitical history in order to preserve his legal career, the adult Mowgli revealed in the story “In the Rukh” (1893) recognizes the value that his childhood poses to the Empire and exploits it in order to insert himself into the imperial hierarchy as a government-appointed forest ranger. Kim, meanwhile, is unable to reconcile his role as the lama’s disciple or chela with his budding career as a spy: as an agent of Empire, Kim’s search for the lama’s river will ultimately result in “the eradication of the last elsewhere,” signalling how imperialism once again invades and works to deconstruct romance (McClure 11).

*Kim’s* open ending, which leaves its protagonist perpetually torn between his two conflicting roles, represents a breakdown not only of *Kim’s* search for identity but also of the quest structure itself, suggesting a dismantling of romance that continues into the early twentieth century. By connecting romance with a perpetual return to childhood – a strategy that J.M. Barrie similarly adopts in *Peter and Wendy* (1911; re-titled *Peter Pan*) – Kipling’s work indicates the disappearance or demise of the linear quest narrative in favour of modernism’s experimentation with the traditional romance form. Although Jacqueline Rose has argued that writing for children resists such experimentation, reflecting a long-standing perception that children’s literature is both “conservative and creatively dependent” (Reynolds *Radical* 8), my aim in this chapter – as well as in this project as a whole – has been to challenge this view by examining how the boy’s quest is transformed in Kipling’s work, as well as in that of the other authors whose writing comprises my dissertation. Like Tom the water-baby and Mowgli “the frog,” who gradually shed their animal guises in order to become men, the boy’s quest evolves
from the formula first popularized by Henty, demonstrating that children’s literature does not simply reflect cultural change but also pioneers this change with its capacity for generic innovation.
Chapter 1

No Girls Allowed? Crossing into Romance Territory in George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin*

Introduction: The impossibility of the female quest in nineteenth-century literature

“‘Do you know what makes me smile? Well, it is this. I am made this way that I should have been a man child. In my own thoughts it is so I am always; and I go on telling myself about this thing that is to befall and that. Then it comes to the place of the fighting, and it comes over me that I am only a girl at all events, and cannot hold a sword or give one good blow’” (Stevenson *Catriona* 300).

In a conversation with her future husband David Balfour – the hero of both Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona*, its sequel (1893) – Catriona Drummond wistfully laments her problematic placement as the female lead in a Victorian boy’s romance by declaring that she “should have been a man child.” Her impassioned speech to David reflects the way in which nineteenth-century writers effectively shut out their female characters from the liberating narrative possibilities that the romance genre represents for its male protagonists, leaving these would-be heroines with only a handful of circumscribed functions in the text. For instance, Catriona, whom David initially characterizes as a “bloodthirsty maid,” is reduced to a clinging vine in the second half of the novel that is, with some irony, named for her (300). With her sudden dependency on David, who now describes his sweetheart as being “like a little child” (434), Catriona’s role is transformed into that of the damsel-in-distress, presumably so that Stevenson's budding hero may prove his manhood through her rescue.

Stevenson's novel typifies the problematic relationship between nineteenth-century

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3 After their arrival in Holland, a penniless Catriona tells David herself that, “I am cast upon your hands like a sack of barley meal,” while David similarly reflects on their situation: “she depended altogether on my help ... she was of the frail sex and not so much beyond a child, and it was for me to be wise for the pair of us” (422, 420).
romance and the figure of the young girl or woman, as outlined by Laurie Langbauer in her study *Women and Romance*. According to Langbauer, the two roles available to girls and women in Dickens' romances are the streetwalker and the homebody, and both are equally restrictive. While women who stay in their “proper place,” like *Bleak House*’s narrator Esther Summerson, are essentially imprisoned in the home, those who wander – including Nancy in *Oliver Twist* (1838), Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), and Lady Dedlock in *Bleak House* (1853) – become social outcasts by “enact[ing] the narrative disquiet of romance” (149, 131). Because they are “carried away by their transgressive desires,” these wandering women signify the restless and rebellious quality of the romance genre itself: specifically for Dickens, how romance “ignore[s], defe[rs], or attempt[s] to unsettle the kind of narrative closure [that the author] especially associated with a well-ordered novel” (131). Both of these limiting female gender roles are ultimately consoling to men: women who attempt to escape their domestic imprisonment by wandering only succeed in indirectly reinforcing the power of the male order that is attempting to contain them. In the case of Nell Trent in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, for instance, her lingering illness and eventual death put a stop to her wandering by re-placing her within the Victorian home, where she can be safely worshipped by her acolyte Kit and his children (Langbauer 140): “he would teach them how she had gone to Heaven, as all good people did; and how, if they were good like her, they might hope to be there too one day”

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4 This division in Dickens between women who remain at home and women who wander is similar to the opposition between the blonde and the brunette in Walter Scott’s Waverley novels: Scott's blondes are conservative in nature, while his brunettes are more radical, existing only on the periphery of conventional society (see Welsh [48-55]). As Frye outlines in *The Secular Scripture*, fair-haired characters like Rose Bradwardine in *Waverley* (1814) and the Lady Rowena in *Ivanhoe* (1819) are thoroughly domestic and, as a result, are usually the chosen mate of the central, passive hero (84-5). By contrast, the dark-haired heroines of Scott’s novels – Flora MacIvor in *Waverley* and Rebecca of York in *Ivanhoe*, for instance– are more passionate characters who, as outcasts or “others,” (Flora is Highland Scots; Rebecca is Jewish) are often socially marginalized (Flora leaves Scotland for a French convent while Rebecca and her father emigrate to Granada).
Generally speaking, Stevenson and Dickens approach what Northrop Frye calls the mode of romance from two different angles: while the former experiments with quest-romance (the focus of my third chapter), the latter frequently highlights the role that chance and coincidence play in everyday life, suggesting the romance of circumstance. Nevertheless, both authors highlight the limited roles available to girls and women in nineteenth-century romance. Neither author is ultimately able to imagine their female characters as anything more than accessories to the development and maturity of their male protagonists: women are ultimately “regard[ed] ... as so many superfluous girls in a boy’s game,” as Henry James writes in relation to Stevenson (qtd in Buckton 140). In an age in which romance, and particularly its sub-genre the quest-romance, was being increasingly gendered as masculine territory – male writers wrote about male heroes for the benefit of a predominately male readership – Dickens and Stevenson suggest the impossibility of the female quest journey in their work. Unless women pretend to be men – like Joanna Sedley alias John Matcham in Stevenson’s *The Black Arrow* (1888) – they cannot openly quest in Victorian fiction without putting their physical and social well-being at permanent risk.

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5 Having made this distinction, I will also acknowledge that Dickens’ novels do sometimes resemble quests: for instance, *Oliver Twist* (1839) subtitled “The Parish Boy’s Progress,” partly borrows its structure from Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) (see Janet Larson’s essay “*Oliver Twist* and Christian Scripture”).

6 Emma Letley and Annette Federico seem to side, tentatively, with James in this regard. While Letley remarks that Stevenson “was determined to create memorable female characters” in his later fiction, she also acknowledges “a certain unease on Stevenson’s part in the treatment of his heroine [Catriona]” (Introduction to *Kidnapped and Catriona* xxvi-xxvii). She ultimately ends her discussion of Stevenson’s female characters with a question: whether it is David or the author himself “who feels more at ease with a child-Highlander, a child or a ‘sister,’ than with a grown woman?” (xxviii). Federico uses a quotation from Stevenson’s essay “*Virginibus Puerisque*” (1881) comparing marriage to the “domestication[on] of the Recording Angel” as the rationale behind the exclusion of female characters from his fiction, concluding that “[l]etting a woman into the all-masculine world puts an end to boyish pranks ... and symbolizes the point of no return” (118).
By contrast, George MacDonald explores and attempts to rectify the failure of the female quest in *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872). This chapter examines MacDonald’s text as only one possible exception to what I and others have recognized as the failure of nineteenth-century literature to imagine female characters as questers in their own right. Using the subversive genre of fairytale, which was regarded by Victorian women writers as a “dormant literature of their own,” MacDonald attempts to provide a successful model of the female quest-romance for his protagonist Irene (Auerbach and Knopflmacher 11). Despite the fact that she is rigidly confined to the domestic sphere as a result of her age and gender, MacDonald employs motifs borrowed from fairytale – namely, the character of the Grandmother, a feminist re-interpretation of the Dame Bunch/Mother Goose storyteller, and the matriarchal space of her attic – in order to initiate Irene’s quest for self-discovery in *The Princess and the Goblin*. However, her progress is abruptly cut short in the book’s sequel: MacDonald curtails Irene’s development, focusing instead on her male counterpart’s transformation from Curdie the miner's son to Prince (and later King) Conrad. The haunting and de-stabilizing finale of *The Princess and Curdie* (1882) – in which the kingdom of Gwyntystorm is destroyed and ultimately reverts back to a state of nature – suggests the author’s own frustration at his inability to sustain the female quest.

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7 That there are other exceptions to this general trend is more than likely; in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess* (1905), for instance, Sara Crewe’s attic-space initiates her quest for self-realization in much the same way that Irene’s discovery of her grandmother’s attic does in MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin*. There is also the possibility, as critics like Annette Federico and Kimberley Reynolds have explored, that girls responded to this lack of female questers by identifying instead with the male heroes of quest-romance. Addressing the perceived gender divide in nineteenth-century children’s publishing, Reynolds writes that “girls’ stories in themselves were not and are not sufficient” and that, consequently, girls have “always supplemented their literary diet” with “books and periodicals directed at their brothers” (*Girls Only?* xix), while Federico posits that “[y]oung female readers of *Atalanta* [which serialized *Catriona*] may have been encouraged to cross gender lines” (117).
Feminist fairytale?

Before initiating a discussion of MacDonald’s Princess books, I will first establish the larger context behind MacDonald’s writing: as the title of this section suggests, I will explore the way in which the fairytale genre frequently served as a vehicle for women’s writing and for the burgeoning women’s movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, Victorian women writers were beginning to reclaim the fairytale as a means towards exploring their own problematic placement in society; on the other hand, as critics like Alison Lurie and Jack Zipes have emphasized in their work on the genre, there is a prevailing sense that fairytales, and their sources in oral folktales, have always been “women’s literature” (Lurie 19). Zipes explores both positions in his most recent publication on fairytales, Relentless Progress (2009): while he emphasizes the active role that women have played in terms of “disseminating, challenging, and appropriating the tales” since the literary fairytale was first established in the eighteenth century, Zipes specifically locates feminist rewritings of the traditional tales at the end of the nineteenth century, arguing that, “it is largely through the rise of the suffragette movement ... that women writers became more aware of the patriarchal implications and prejudices of the canon and thus began a more conscious revision of the classical tales” (126).

MacDonald’s fairytales, including his two “book-length fairy-tales” The Princess and the Goblin and The Princess and Curdie, can be considered as part of this late nineteenth-century effort to consciously revise the canonical, masculinist fairytales which Zipes identifies here (Zipes Fairy

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8 While other eighteenth-century women (Sarah Trimmer and Mary Martha Sherwood, for instance) were explicitly against fantasy for children, Sarah Fielding’s The Governess, or Little Female Academy (1749) reveals an important connection between British women writers and fairytale as early as 1749. Fielding’s novel is one of the first works in English to defend the didactic value of fairytales: the governess referred to in the title, Mrs. Teachum, uses interpolated fairytales to teach her charges moral lessons (for instance, that “meekness, compassion, and patience prevail over mere strength” [Gadeken 66]). For a further discussion of Fielding, see Sara Gadeken’s essay or Elizabeth Wanning Harries’ extended analysis in her book, Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale (2001).
Tales and the Art of Subversion 109). The Princess and the Goblin opens as a fairytale in which Princess Irene is confined to the domestic sphere, and MacDonald’s description combined with Arthur Rackham’s illustration of the bored princess suggest how this confinement is hindering Irene’s maturation. The author’s solution to this dilemma is ultimately to create a hybrid of two very different genres, fairytale and quest-romance, allowing him to grant his protagonist the power and agency of a male quester within the confines of a female domestic setting. I will discuss how this model of the female quest both succeeds and fails in this chapter; however, in order to establish the background for the workings of gender and genre in MacDonald, I will begin by exploring the state of the fairytale in Victorian England.

I have titled this section of my chapter “Feminist fairytale.” This means that I will endeavour to focus on fairytale as an outlet for female-oriented fantasy (written by women and featuring female protagonists) in the nineteenth century; I do not mean to suggest that all or even a majority of nineteenth-century fairtales are feminist in nature. In fact, nineteenth-century men were primarily responsible for (re)writing the tales which have been most frequently canonized and that we would now consider to be the “classics” of the genre; as Zipes maintains in his groundbreaking work Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion (1983), men like Charles Perrault, the Grimm brothers, and Hans Christian Anderson have primarily shaped the evolution of the literary fairytale, “patriarchaliz-[ing]” the oral folk tales that had been passed down through generations of female storytellers (7). In addition, while many prominent female writers devoted their attention to fairytale, the names predominately associated with nineteenth-century fairytale are arguably all male: the Grimm brothers and Hans Christian Anderson were the

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9 Zipes has re-asserted this argument more recently in Relentless Progress: The Re-Configuration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling (2009).
formative influences on the genre in its wider European context, while Andrew Lang’s popular and colourful series of fairy books – beginning with the publication of *The Blue Fairy Book* (1891) – introduced fairytales from a wide variety of different cultures to British children. Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) – arguably the most famous children's book to come out of the Victorian period and also widely popular in its own time – can also trace its roots back to fairytale, according to its creator.  

Although male writers like Lang, Anderson, and Carroll contributed their own original material to the genre, their collective influence on nineteenth-century fairytale can be most clearly seen in their capacity as the selectors and editors of the tales. Alison Lurie writes that the majority of the fairytales which are still well-known today reflect the taste of the literary men who edited the first popular collections of fairy stories for children during the nineteenth century. They read the hundreds of folktales that had been gathered by scholars, chose the ones that most appealed to them as conventional upper-middle-class Victorians, and then rewrote these tales to make them suitable for Victorian children.  

Lang and the Grimm brothers, for instance, rewrote fairytales in accordance with their own

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10 Carroll initially refers to the book as “the fairy-tale of *Alice's Adventures Underground*” in his diary (qtd. in R.L. Green Introduction xi), and speaks (self-deprecatingly) of his “desperate attempt to strike out some new line in fairy-lore” (xii). I myself have deliberately omitted Carroll’s two Alice books from my discussion of feminist fairytale because I would argue (alongside other critics, like Seth Lerer) that Carroll’s work is closer in terms of its structure, language, and themes to Edward Lear and the tradition of literary nonsense.

11 Lurie writes further that “[b]y the late nineteenth-century, a canon had been established” which was made up of “the dozen or so tales these [male] editors had liked best [and that] were reprinted again and again”: in this way, the story of the Sleeping Beauty rose in popularity while the complementary tale “The Sleeping Prince” was overlooked and gradually forgotten (21). In response to the nineteenth-century popularity of “The Sleeping Beauty,” Christina Rossetti's narrative poem *The Prince's Progress*, about a prince who arrived “too late,” presents a feminist re-interpretation or response to this classic fairytale.
personal views on morality and gender roles. As Perrault does with his “witty morals in verse” and George Cruikshank with his “temperance tracts” (Lurie 20), Lang openly refers to “guarding the interests of propriety, and toning down to mild reproofs the tortures inflicted on wicked stepmothers” in his process of adapting multicultural fairytales for an audience of British children in the preface to *The Crimson Fairy Book* (v). Similarly, despite the disproportionately large number of girls and women in their original collection of tales, the Grimms self-consciously “bowdlerized” their tales so that, with “each subsequent edition ... women were given less to say and do” (Lurie 19-20).

Clearly nineteenth-century men were extremely influential in terms of the historical evolution of the literary fairytale. However, I would argue that recognizing the unique affinity between women writers and fairytale is equally crucial if we are to fully understand the significance of the genre in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the male writers and editors of Victorian fairytales suggests that women did not contribute to the development of this canon; however, Zipes has questioned “whether women have ever really broken” with canonical fairytales:

> It is misleading to think that the canon of fairy tales excluded women's writing or that it was totally constituted by men and totally served patriarchal interests. Nothing in the fairy-tale canon has ever been totally male or totally patriarchal, even though women's voices have constantly been obfuscated, discarded and

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12 In *Children’s and Household Tales* (1812, originally titled *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*), there are sixty-one female characters and only twenty-one male characters (Lurie 21).

13 By contrast, Lurie argues that there are “more active heroines” in the later volumes of Lang’s fairy book series, which were “largely compiled and revised by his wife” (21).
submerged. (*Relentless* 124-5)

Thus, while Zipes acknowledges the importance of postmodern, feminist re-tellings of canonical fairytales (he particularly singles out the work of Anne Sexton and Angela Carter), he locates a similarly subversive female voice in “early women's writing” of fairytales, more specifically “in the works of the French salon writers of the seventeenth century” as well as “in the Victorian women’s writing of the nineteenth century” (125).14

In order to account for the presence of this female subversion in what has frequently been considered as a male-dominated genre, Zipes borrows Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of a literary or artistic field as both a “field of forces” as well as a “field of struggles” (qtd in Zipes *Relentless* 122) in order to argue that the fairytale has always been (in Zipes’ words) a “force field of conflicts in which various writers, artists, and groups of people contend for power” (122). While men may have guided and shaped the evolution of the literary fairytale, women writers began slowly to regain the influence they had lost over the genre during its transition from (matriarchal, oral) folktale to (patriarchal, literary) fairytale during the nineteenth century (122). At a time in which male writers were claiming fantasy in order to tell stories of romance and adventure that were for and about men, the connection between women and fairytale allowed female writers to write their own way into the fantasy genre.

Fairytale became a gateway into the larger realm of fantasy writing for female authors during the Victorian period. While women writing in the eighteenth and early nineteenth

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14 Marina Warner (*From the Beast to the Blonde*) and Elizabeth Wanning Harries (*Twice Upon a Time*) have similarly focused on the way in which fairytale has been shaped by women; however, because both Warner and Harries primarily focus on this development within a European and French context, I have primarily chosen to cite Zipes, whose work foregrounds British women writers, in this section of my chapter.
centuries like Mary Shelley and Ann Radcliffe influenced the development of gothic romance, their Victorian counterparts, such as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell, primarily confined themselves to writing three-decker “realistic” novels.¹⁵ And yet elements of the fantastic and of fairytale are often hidden in these novels: for instance, Frances Burney (Evelina) and Jane Austen (Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, and Persuasion) play on the Cinderella motif in their novels, while Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre employs the “animal groom” motif from “Beauty and the Beast,” in which “the heroine of the tale brings about the transformation of a bewitched animal into its true state as a human being” (Ralph 5).¹⁶ By embedding these fairytales within otherwise realistic novels, writers like Burney, Austen, and Brontë effect a compromise between “the realism of everyday” which they were expected “to adhere to and propagate” in their writing, and the “lost authority” represented by fairytale, a genre which “was once associated with authoritative women, the sages femmes or Märchenfrauen, whom male experts [like Perrault and the Grimm brothers] demoted to the status of mere informants” (Auerbach and Knoepflmacher 12, 7).

Both Perrault and Lang dismiss their source-material as “‘old wives’ tales, governesses’ and grannies’ tales”’ (Perrault qtd in Lurie 19), and as stories “told by peasant or savage

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¹⁵ Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1847) is perhaps the only female-authored novel to truly carry on the gothic tradition in the nineteenth century, and critics have consequently seemed to consider it as a throwback to Romanticism. Other instances of the gothic in Victorian women’s writing – for instance, in Charlotte or Anne Brontë’s fiction – usually function as interludes or “narrative annexes” within the larger text; for more on the narrative annex, see Suzanne Keen’s Victorian Renovations of the Novel (1998).

¹⁶ “Beauty and the Beast” is perhaps the only exception to Zipes’ comment that men were largely responsible for the canonization of fairytales (Relentless 126): he writes that the story of the beast bridegroom was included in the canon “primarily due to the efforts of French women writers Mme d’Aulnoy, Mme de Villeneuve, and Mme Leprince de Beaumont” (125). For a further discussion of fairytale tropes in Brontë’s novel, see Karen E. Rowe’s essay “‘Fairy-born and human-bred’: Jane Eyre's Education in Romance.”
grandmothers in many climes” (Lang, Preface to *The Crimson Fairy Book* v). Yet, by acknowledging this “lost authority” which women once held over folktale, these male editors also indirectly substantiate the connection between women and fairytale. The link between women and oral folktale suggested that it was only “natural” for women to turn their writing talents to the fairytale; this connection was strengthened by women’s status as the primary caregivers of children during this period – and that fairytale was increasingly regarded as a sub-genre of children’s literature during the nineteenth century. As a result, Victorian women began to revise male-authored fairytale and to craft their own original tales in order to critique patriarchy and to introduce a feminist agenda. For instance, Juliana Horatia Ewing’s “The Ogre Courting” (1871) parodies “the unending domestic virtues (and economies) insisted upon by unreasonable husbands” (Sumpter 61); Edith Nesbit’s “The Last of the Dragons” (c.1900) – in which an enterprising princess defeats a tyrannical old dragon – illustrates a similar dynamic. Anna Isabella Ritchie, by contrast, rewrites “Cinderella” (1868) as a society tale set in the Victorian drawing-room: her heroine, Ella Ashford, suggests the way in which circumscribed gender roles suck the vitality out of girls and women.

These examples, in addition to Jean Ingelow’s *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869), Ewing’s “Amelia and the Dwarfs” (1870), Mary De Morgan’s “A Toy Princess” (1877), Mary Louisa Molesworth’s “The Story of a King’s Daughter” (1884), and various tales authored by MacDonald (like “The Light Princess” [1864], “The Giant’s Heart” [1864], and “The History of Photogen and Nycteris” [1879]), are the sort of fairytale to which Zipes is referring when he stipulates that “there were feminist precedents set in the literary fairy-tale tradition by the end of

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17 As Lang’s comment about “peasant or savage grandmothers” suggests, fairytale, like romance, is considered to be a juvenile genre in the nineteenth century, and its sudden surge in popularity incites nineteenth-century fears about degeneration and devolution. I will be exploring this link further in my second chapter on *The Water-Babies*. 

the nineteenth century” (*Don't Bet* 13). As the nineteenth century progressed, tales featuring “a good deal of sublimated outrage” – including those authored by the suffragette Evelyn Sharp (“The Spell of the Magician’s Daughter” [1902]), and by Edith Nesbit (*The Book of Dragons* [1900]) – became increasingly common.

Although Zipes has been perhaps the foremost authority on the early development and evolution of the feminist fairytale in Victorian Britain, other critics have also begun to study the impact of nineteenth-century women’s writing on the genre. For instance, Caroline Sumpter’s *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (2008) highlights the way in which serials like *The Monthly Packet* (1851-1899) and *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (1866-1885) provided a forum for feminist fairytales (the latter magazine originally published Ewing’s tales “The Ogre Courting” and “Amelia and the Dwarfs”), while also forming a female community of writers and readers which addressed women’s issues like educational reform (52-66). In addition, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas’ study *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* (2007) analyzes Ewing’s “Amelia and the Dwarfs,” Ingelow’s *Mopsa the Fairy*, MacDonald’s “The Light Princess,” and Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) as double-edged tales that seem to perpetuate stereotypes, while frequently “undermin[ing] the literary clichés which [were] meant to frame prescriptive femininity,” particularly in the cases of Ewing and MacDonald (8). Both Sumpter and Talairach-Vielmas also highlight the way in which Victorian women revive the lost tradition of the female storyteller, the spinster or “granny” to whom Perrault and Lang jokily refer and who was once personified by figures like Mother Goose or Dame Bunch: the persona of “Aunt Judy” and the narrator of Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* both fit into this category, as does (I will argue shortly) Irene’s great-great-
grandmother in MacDonald’s two Princess books.  

**The Princess and the Goblin:** MacDonald's model of the female quest

My analysis of the rise of the “feminist” fairytale, coupled with my initial discussion of the way in which nineteenth-century romance is re-gendered as masculine in my introduction, is meant to suggest a dichotomy or opposition between female-oriented fairytales and male-oriented romance. As my overview of Victorian fairytales in the previous section suggests, however, this dichotomy cannot be rigidly defined: clearly authors of both sexes were tremendously influential in the development and evolution of the nineteenth-century fairytale. But while this boundary is flexible for male writers who were allowed to write both fairytales as well as full-scale romances, female writers were increasingly excluded from the romance genre as the nineteenth century progressed.

By identifying this correlation between gender and genre, I am trying to account for this literary double standard as well as its resulting impact on Victorian women’s writing. Because women were effectively shut out from participating in the quest-romance tradition both inside and outside the text, the fairytale genre became the outlet through which women writers could openly engage in the fantastic. Fairytale opened up new narrative possibilities for both female readers and writers.

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18 According to Sumpter, “Aunt Judy” first appears in the title of a collection of children’s stories authored by Margaret Gatty, but later becomes a pet name for her daughter, Juliana Horatia Ewing (63). Through their magazine, Gatty and her daughters Ewing and Horatia Eden essentially revise the figure of the singular spinner of tales in order to suggest a larger female community of storytellers: the original “Aunt Judy” (Gatty) was succeeded by Eden (as editor of the magazine) and by Ewing (as its regular contributor).

19 Andrew Lang’s famous analogy in which he likens romance and realism to two sides of a shield – the “silver” focusing on “the study of manners and character,” and the “golden” concentrating on “adventure” – enables him to effectively shut female writers out from the romance tradition: for instance, he classifies Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Through One Administration* (1883) in the former category, despite the fact that (like much of Burnett’s work) the storyline features some rather outlandish twists and turns: for instance, the novel ends with the death of one of the characters who is scalped by a “Red Indian” (“Realism and Romance” 689).
writers and female characters: under the cover of “fantasy,” women could use fairytale covertly to critique the gender codes prescribing female behaviour in the nineteenth century.

In addition, while female characters are always peripheral to male quest-romance – a genre which foregrounds the close bonds shared between men – fairytale enabled both women and men to feature strong and independent female protagonists. For instance, in George MacDonald’s two adult romances, *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895), female characters are primarily featured as spiritual guides (the unnamed fairy godmother figure in *Phantastes*) and as secondary love interests (the childlike Lona in *Lilith*) to the male questers. By contrast, in his many short fairytale stories (particularly “The Giant's Heart” and “The History of Photogen and Nycteris”) as well as in his two Princess books, girls are the equals of and companions to boys, frequently rescuing their male counterparts as both sets of protagonists “quest” for spiritual salvation. For instance, in *The Princess and the Goblin*, Irene uses her grandmother’s thread in order to rescue Curdie from the goblins underground; while Irene’s faith in the grandmother only grows stronger over the course of the narrative, Curdie remains skeptical about her existence well into the book’s sequel, *The Princess and Curdie*.

Juliet Dusinberre’s argument in *Alice to the Lighthouse* (1987) can perhaps explain this disparity between the representation of female characters in MacDonald’s adult fiction and his

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20 Of all the female characters featured in these two texts, Lilith is certainly the most prominent and arguably the most compelling, and yet her strength is gradually subdued over the course of the story: like H. Rider Haggard’s *She*, Lilith represents a rival “matriarchal goddess” who must ultimately be vanquished by the male narrator (Showalter 83).

21 *The Princess and the Goblin* and its sequel *The Princess and Curdie* were originally serialized in the children’s magazines *Good Words for the Young* (1870-1; edited by MacDonald) and *Good Things* (1877). MacDonald’s fairytale were also directly marketed to children; the interpolated tales in his adult novel *Adela Cathcart* (1864), for example, were re-printed and re-packaged into separate collections intended for a younger readership: *Dealings with the Fairies* (1867) was followed by *Works of Fancy and Imagination* (1871), and the two volumes of *The Gifts of the Child Christ, and Other Tales* (1882).
children’s fiction. Using the example of Lewis Carroll’s Alice books and their influence on modernist writers like Virginia Woolf, Dusinberre’s text focuses on the way in which children’s literature has frequently pioneered cultural change, allowing for a greater freedom of literary experimentation than in literature written for adults (4-5). Dusinberre’s proposal suggests that MacDonald was able to achieve in *The Princess and the Goblin* what he could not in his adult romances: that is, to create a prototype or model of the female quest-journey. By creating a hybrid of fairytale and romance, MacDonald is able to use children’s literature as a vehicle for a uniquely female-oriented – and in many ways a feminist – quest-romance.

**From fairytale to romance: A question of scale**

In accordance with nineteenth-century theories of cultural degeneration and devolution, the Victorians seemed to imagine the relationship between fantasy genres like mythology, romance, and fairytale as a kind of continuum.22 For instance, in the model that Walter Scott outlines in the preface to his long narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), romance and fairytale are on a decreasing scale; according to him, “the mythology of one period would seem to pass into the romance of the next, and that into the nursery tales of subsequent ages” (Scott 182). In this schema, mythology becomes romance, which in turn is transformed into fairytale; while both genres are derivative forms of mythology, fairytales also represent an offshoot of romance: a feminine and feminized genre which Scott, like Perrault and Lang, consequently relegates to the

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22 The theory of recapitulation – the idea that each individual, in growing from babyhood to adulthood, was destined to repeat the process of human evolution from savagery to civilization – also seemingly inspires Lang and Kingsley to liken Greek mythology to fairytales. Lang writes that the *Odyssey* is made up of “the oldest [fairy] stories in the world, and as they were first made by men who were childlike for their own amusement, so they amuse children still” (“To the Friendly Reader” in *The Green Fairy Book*), while Kingsley’s *The Heroes* (subtitled “Greek Fairy Tales for My Children”) is also prefaced on this theory: he tells his young reader that, “nations begin at first by being children like you” (12), explaining that the ancient Greeks “were but grown-up children” at the time when the “fairytales” he is about to narrate took place, and that “all nations love fairytales when they are young” (16).
Northrop Frye also categorizes different genres according to the hero’s relative powers of action in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) in order to differentiate between mythology and romance: the first features a hero who is “superior in kind” to other men and to his environment, while in the second the hero is merely “superior in degree” (33). However, Frye’s classificatory scheme does not make a further distinction between romance and its many associated forms (of which he specifically mentions legend, folk tale, and märchen23) (33). Matthew T. Dickerson and David O’Hara go one step beyond Frye by attempting to address the crucial distinction between romance and its sibling genres such as fairytale:

In our discussion of the differences between myth, heroic fantasy, and fairy tale, we saw that one usual difference is in the might and nature of the main characters. The myths are about the gods; heroic fantasy is about heroes (larger than life, but not gods); while fairy tales are about the simpleton, the tailor, the younger brother, the good-hearted and virtuous peasant who accomplishes some great task despite a lack of heroic strength. (151)

If, as I am proposing, we replace the term “heroic fantasy” with “romance,” this schema then becomes useful in terms of the argument I am trying to make. In a romance, the hero is “superior in degree” to his fellows and his surroundings: while his “actions are marvelous,” he is

23 While fairytale derives from the French “conte de fées,” the term “märchen” is also “usually translated by ‘fairy tale,’ or ‘household tale,’” because there is “nothing in English that is quite satisfactory,” as Vladimir Propp observes (7). In addition, märchen is also frequently associated with fairytale because of the two collections of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (published in 1812 and 1814 and translated as *Children’s and Household Tales*) produced by the Brothers Grimm. Although the Brothers include many of the familiar stories that we now refer to as fairtales, these collections of märchen also contain “more than a half-dozen other subgenres of folktales [or *Volksmärchen*], such as animal tales, etiological tales, saints’ legends, moral tales, jokes and anecdotes, chain tales, and nonsense tales” (Ziolkowski 47).
“himself identified as a human being” (Frye 33). By contrast, while fairytale, like romance, similarly invokes “a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended” (33), the hero of a fairytale is much more humble in his status and abilities.

To turn to MacDonald more exclusively here, we can see the differences in scale between fairytale and romance juxtaposed within his own body of work. MacDonald's own fantasy fiction seems to be classified in terms of its length: his shorter works (under 50 pages in length) are called “fairytales,” while his longer works of fiction are subtitled “romances” (*Phantastes: A Faerie Romance* and *Lilith: A Romance*). Falling somewhere in between these two categories are MacDonald’s longer fairytales (both included in U.C. Knoepflmacher’s edition of MacDonald’s *Complete Fairy Tales*), “The Wise Woman, or The Lost Princess: A Double Story” and “The History of Photogen and Nycteris” (subtitled “A Day and Night Mährchen” [sic]), as well as the two Princess books which demonstrate a “movement along the spectrum of significance” from fairytale to romance (Dickerson and O’Hara 158).

As Dickerson and O’Hara argue, *The Princess and Curdie* is more heavily informed by the romance tradition than *The Princess and the Goblin*, which is closer to fairytale. For instance, the goblins featured in the first book, with their tender feet and abhorrence of poetry, are all too easily defeated; by contrast, in the second book, Curdie’s opponents are now wicked and fully-grown men with the hearts and souls of beasts. And just as Curdie’s enemies have grown between the first and second books, so too has Curdie himself. In the first book, Curdie is introduced as a twelve-year-old miner, the son of Peter Peterson. But in the book’s sequel, which takes place the following year (meaning that Curdie has now reached the crucial age of puberty), we learn that he is in fact a descendant of the royal family: by marrying Irene in the book’s finale, the humble Curdie is transformed into Prince (and later, King) Conrad. In this
sharp reversal of fortunes, Curdie resembles “the peasant-hero of any of a number of Grimms’ fairy tales” (Dickerson and O’Hara 157). However, Curdie’s character transformation across the two books would be most unconventional for a hero in a fairytale: while “the heroes in the tales collected by [the Grimms] almost always make virtuous choices from the start,” the gradual spiritual evolution which Curdie experiences is “very uncommon in their tales” (158).

Fairytale differs from romance primarily in terms of character development; although both genres are often structured around the hero’s quest, romance internalizes this journey to a far greater degree than fairytale. While most fairytales (and romances, for that matter) begin and end with a sharp reversal of fortunes – dirty cinder-girls are transformed into beautiful princesses – the fairytale genre does not typically represent the ways in which these exterior changes mirror an internal transformation. In fact, fairytale characters are usually static – they are set apart from their peers from the outset for being good, kind, and virtuous, and they remain so throughout their tales despite the hardships they are necessarily forced to endure. In order to enable his protagonists to grow and develop beyond the stock characters featured in fairytale, MacDonald internalizes the quest, transforming it into a process of spiritual evolution for both Curdie and Irene. While Irene does not undergo a change in her material position like Curdie – she is from the start a princess – she does gradually learn more about what behaving like a princess actually entails. She begins the text as a young girl who relies on her nursemaid Lootie to dictate her behaviour, but by the end of the first book she has become a mature eight-year-old who has assumed her rightful position and privileges as heir-to-the-throne: she begins to take charge of the servants herself, who look at her with astonishment because “[u]p to this moment they had all

24 The basic structure outlined in Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (first English translation 1958) is inherently similar to Joseph Campbell’s pattern of departure-initiation-return in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), or to the six phases that form the “cyclical sequence in a romantic hero's life” in Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).
regarded her as little more than a baby” (201).  

Irene’s newfound maturity results from the quest that she herself initiates after discovering her “beautiful mother of grandmothers” upstairs in her attic (21). Prior to meeting her grandmother, Irene is trapped in a kind of domesticated fairytale atmosphere. In the novel’s opening, MacDonald relates that Irene was born in the king’s palace, but because her mother was not strong, she was soon sent “to be brought up by country people in a large house, half castle, half farmhouse, on the side of another mountain, about half-way between its base and its peak” (2). MacDonald’s description tellingly proceeds by halves: because it is part farmhouse, Irene’s abode cannot truly be called a castle, and its majestic stature is further undermined by the fact that it does not tower over the countryside from the very top of the mountain, being instead located “half-way between its base and its peak.” Through this description, MacDonald is signalling to his readership that the fairytale he has set out to write is in fact a hybrid of genres. While still maintaining an air of fantasy and regality (the house is “half castle” after all), Irene’s home – like MacDonald’s fairytale – will be firmly rooted in the domestic realm. Just as Irene has been moved from her king-papa’s palace to her current home in the mountains, the reader’s expectations have been similarly adjusted or re-rooted: we can now assume that this will not be a fairytale in which we will mingle with lords and ladies at court, but rather one in which we will encounter humbler folk like cinder-girls and woodcutter’s sons.  

25 All in-text references to The Princess and the Goblin are from the 1926 Macmillan edition (unless otherwise noted).  

26 MacDonald later returns to this sense of a domestic fairytale in his description of the house’s gardens, in which the mountain’s rocks and “[t]ufts of heather” are mixed with “lovely roses and lilies and all pleasant garden flowers. This mingling of the wild mountain with the civilized garden was very quaint, and it was impossible for any number of gardeners to make such a garden look formal and stiff” (80). Here the garden’s roses and lilies check or tame the wildness of the “hardy mountain plants and flowers” (80). The threatening wildness of the mountain has been tamed or brought down in scale, suggesting that the threat that the mountain-dwelling goblins represent might also be
Losing herself: A princess under domestic surveillance

Because she is constantly being sheltered from the goblins (including the very knowledge of their underground existence), Irene’s interactions with the natural world are necessarily limited. Although the narrator supports this decision to protect Irene – he specifies that, “they [the princess’ caretakers] had good reason [to keep her indoors], as we shall see by and by” (5) – we as readers are meant to recognize that this sheltered existence is stifling to Irene’s growth and development. For instance, in the first chapter we learn that “the little princess had never seen the sky at night” (5); a ceiling painted to depict the night-sky has become the rather unsatisfying replacement for actual stargazing (2).

With a limited freedom to explore – she is allowed to play outdoors only in good weather, and even then she must always be safely inside before dark – it is no wonder that on the day that she discovers her grandmother’s attic-realm, Irene has been prevented from going outside due to a rainstorm. Despite the toys which cover the great table in front of her, toys so wonderful that MacDonald’s narrator warns the illustrator not to attempt to draw them, Irene is bored and listless: “she got tired, so tired that even her toys could no longer amuse her” (6). Although the illustrator Arthur Hughes has evidently taken the narrator’s advice about not similarly restrained or controlled. As Dickerson and O’Hara write, the enemy and the level of fear which this enemy is meant to evoke in the reader is brought down to the appropriate level – as such, it is fitting that the child readers of MacDonald’s domestic fairytale encounter frightening goblins, and not the more terrifying orcs, for instance, featured in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (151).

27 We know that the narrator is a “he” because in the original version of the novel, MacDonald interrupts the story several times in order to include moments of dialogue between the narrator and an unidentified child reader or listener who refers to the author interchangeably as “Mr. Author” and “Mr. Editor.” Although most modern editions remove this dialogue between narrator and audience from the novel (including the 1996 Puffin Classics edition), older editions, such as the one to which I primarily refer throughout this chapter (published in 1926 by Macmillan), frequently include this interaction between reader and editor.
attempting to draw the toys, there is an illustration of the princess (included in the 1996 Puffin edition) sitting in a chair with her head resting on her hand, a dull look on her face, and one of her necklaces drooping out of her mouth: a clear depiction of childish boredom. The princess’ nurse Lootie is also included in this drawing, bending over her listless young charge in a visual depiction of the watchful eye to which Irene is constantly being subject.\(^{28}\)

This freeze-framed moment in time – the scene immediately changes when Lootie leaves the room and Irene leaps from her chair and runs out of the room – suggests that because Irene has been kept indoors and under surveillance, her development is at a stand-still. It is no coincidence that on the night Irene spends in her grandmother’s bed, she dreams happy dreams of the outdoors: of “summer seas and moonlight and mossy springs and great murmuring trees, and beds of wild flowers with such odours as she had never smelled before” (93). Irene’s respite throughout the book is the relaxing and healing time she spends in nature: faced with a rainy day in which she is cooped up inside, the only solution for her boredom that she can imagine is to “go out and get thoroughly wet, and catch a particularly nice cold, and have to go to bed and take gruel” (7) – a chain of events that will once again result in the monotony of being indoors with no source of amusement. Irene’s development has effectively reached a dead end.\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) The keys at Lootie’s waist also indicate the way in which Irene is being kept literally under lock and key; as Elizabeth Langland writes in *Nobody’s Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*, Lootie’s housekeeping keys symbolize her power as household manager (53). Because of her class status, Lootie does not strictly resemble the figure of the middle-class wife and mother that Langland outlines in her study: Dickens’ idealized homemakers, like Agnes Wickfield in *David Copperfield* (1850) or Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* (1853), more closely resemble Langland’s description. However, Lootie is the head female servant, and her role as surrogate parent to Irene also gives her considerable domestic power and influence over the king’s household and, arguably, over the king himself. Thus, I would argue that her power in these unusual circumstances approximates that of a middle-class lady.

\(^{29}\) Irene’s bored and listless state prior to encountering her grandmother resembles that of Adela Cathcart in MacDonald’s 1864 novel, who is initially described as suffering from “a kind of moral atrophy” or psychological depression (103). Like Irene, the circumstances of Adela’s life are stifling (she is in love with the local doctor, but has long been expected to marry her cousin), but the embedded fairytales told by the narrator throughout the text
Finding herself: The grandmother and her attic

While the illustration of Irene slumped in her chair suggests how the duties and responsibilities of the domestic realm are stifling to the individual development of girls and women, it is curiously the domestic realm that provides Irene with the much-needed solution to her tedium. As in MacDonald’s “faerie romance” for adults *Phantastes*, the “border-crossing between primary and secondary worlds” in *The Princess and the Goblin* is “effected by transforming a domestic interior” (Keen 36): in *Phantastes*, Anodos uncovers his own great-grandmother figure hiding in a secret compartment of an old writing desk (Keen 36), while Irene’s discovery of her great-grandmother is precipitated by running up a “curious old stair of worm-eaten oak, which looked as if never anyone had set foot upon it” (7). This transformation of the domestic into the fantastic is particularly crucial for Irene: because both her age and her gender compromise her ability to explore the outdoors in the way that Curdie—a lower-class male child four years her senior—does on a daily basis in his work as a miner, the house in which Irene is contained must open itself up in order to enable her to access this secondary fantasy world.\(^{30}\)

The grandmother’s attic—and, by extension, the large house in the country in which Irene resides as a young child—is also significant because it represents a matriarchal or female-

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\(^{30}\) In this respect, both *Phantastes* and *The Princess and the Goblin* follow Farah Mendlesohn’s definition of the “portal-quest fantasy”: “In the portal fantasy a character moves from the mundane world into the fantastic otherworld ... Although many quest fantasies start in a full otherworld, the rupture when [the protagonists] move into the wider world is as large as if they had stepped through the portal. The wider world is always unfamiliar to the protagonists, with the result that quest fantasies function in the same way as portal fantasies” (79). It is interesting to note that both MacDonald and C.S. Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) (which Mendlesohn calls the “most familiar, and archetypal, portal fantasy in the United Kingdom” [80]) choose domestic fixtures or furnishings to function as gateways into the fantastic.
ruled enclave within the patriarchal kingdom of Gwyntystorm governed by Irene’s father: in the
countryside, a male mining community propels the country’s industry, while the townsfolk to
whom we are introduced in the book’s sequel are predominately male shopkeepers, soldiers, and
corrupt city councilors. While the palace in Gwyntystorm is the property and principal residence
of Irene’s “king-papa,” Princess Irene’s house in the country rightfully belongs to her great-
great-grandmother, the first and original Irene. The grandmother is able to preside over the
activities of the household and most importantly her granddaughter’s development from her
residence in the attic, a space that can represent both female confinement as well as female
autonomy according to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Fortunately in The Princess and the
Goblin, the attic serves as a liberating space for its central female characters: for the elder Irene,
the attic becomes a “room of her own” in which she can support and provide for herself by
raising her pigeons, while for the younger Irene, the attic initiates her quest for identity. 31

At first, the grandmother’s attic seems to function as a replacement for the nursery: the
grandmother’s traditional female tasks – she spins thread for her granddaughter on her spinning-
wheel and tends to her “poultry” (her white pigeons) – suggest that it is another restrictive
domestic space. But in fact, the attic represents a liminal space between the domestic and the
spiritual realms, as well as between the domestic and the natural world; in it, indoor things
become outdoor things, and outdoor things become indoor things: the grandmother’s lamp
becomes a moon to guide Irene on her quest to rescue Curdie from the mines, and the
grandmother tames or domesticates wild pigeons so that they resemble hens sitting on their nests.

31 Jane Eyre’s Bertha Mason Rochester – the original “Madwoman in the Attic” – as well as the unnamed narrator
in “The Yellow Wallpaper” are both held captive in attics. Elsewhere in nineteenth-century fiction, however, the
attic space can offer female characters – like Fanny Price in Mansfield Park, Lucy Snowe in Villette, and the slaves
Cassy and Emmeline in Uncle Tom’s Cabin (who use their master’s garret as a sanctuary) – a modicum of autonomy
and independence (for further analysis on these particular texts, see Gilbert and Gubar).
MacDonald essentially uses the grandmother’s attic-space to achieve a compromise: the “loveliest” dreams that Irene experiences in her grandmother’s bed, full of “summer seas and moonlight and mossy springs and great murmuring trees, and beds of wild flowers with such odours as she had never smelled before” (92), are much more consoling to the nature-deprived Irene than the “sky ceiling” in her nursery (7), while still sheltering her from the threat of the goblins.

The grandmother’s attic is also a liminal space in terms of gender and genre: because it is equally positioned between (feminist) fairytale and (masculine) romance, the attic symbolizes the generic hybrid that MacDonald is attempting to create in *The Princess and the Goblin*. On the one hand, Irene’s relationship with her grandmother, including her regular visits to the attic, chronicles her progress towards maturity, a movement which involves both internalizing (“finding” herself) and externalizing (rescuing Curdie from the mines) the quest-romance: it is as much a “voyage in” as it is a “voyage out.”32 The discovery of her grandmother’s attic awakens Irene to a higher level of intellectual and spiritual development, suggesting what Frye calls an “ascent into a higher world.” As signified by her climb up the oak staircase, this ascent is a movement that signifies “escape, remembrance, or discovery of one’s real identity, growing freedom and the breaking of enchantment” (*Secular Scripture* 129).33

On the other hand, fairytale clearly enables the female quest in MacDonald’s text; the

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32 Irene’s progress in MacDonald’s text corresponds to the prevailing pattern in “fictions of female development” of “a movement from the world within to the world without, from introspection to activity,” according to the editors of *The Voyage Out* (13).

33 As I have attempted to highlight in my analysis of the text’s opening, there is a necessary link between setting or place and genre in *The Princess and the Goblin*. While the main level of the house indicates the quotidian world, a kind of watered-down or domesticated fairytale environment, I would argue that moving either above or below this level – either up the stairs and into the grandmother’s attic, or downwards into the underground world of the miners and goblins – initiates the text’s transition from domestic fairytale into the romance genre.
The author manipulates and transforms the conventions of fairytale – namely, the figure of the spinster – in order to initiate the text’s transition into the genre of romance. Irene’s great-great-grandmother, the gatekeeper of her granddaughter’s quest, represents MacDonald’s re-invention of the female storyteller. This figure, “variously known as Mother Goose or Dame Bunch,” has been an icon of the genre beginning with the publication of Charles Perrault’s *Contes de Ma Mère Loye* (1695), which featured an “etching of [a] wool-spinning crone” on its title-page, thereby presenting a powerful image of the female origins of fairytale (Auerbach and Knoepflmacher 14). However, the positive connotations associated with female storytelling gradually disappeared as male editors like Perrault and Lang began to appropriate the authority of these women: the original female sources were suddenly labeled “grannies” and the word “spinster” changed its meaning from a woman “capable of spinning wool as well as stories” to an old, unmarried woman (14).

To combat this denigration of the female storyteller, Victorian women writers began to resuscitate the image of the spinster by emphasizing the central role of women in the creation, adaptation, and transmission of fairytales: for instance, Juliana Horatia Ewing’s “Amelia and the Dwarves,” Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*, Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s *Fairy Tales for Grown Folks*, Maria Louisa Molesworth’s *The Tapestry Room*, and Frances Browne’s *Granny’s Wonderful Chair* all highlight the role of female narrators and female narratees in the development and evolution of the genre. To this list of exclusively female-authored fairytales, we can add George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie*, which warrant inclusion by virtue of their positive depiction of the female storyteller in the figure of Grandmother Irene.

The pivotal role played by the grandmother in MacDonald’s fairytale fiction presents the
strongest case for the author’s affinity with nineteenth-century feminist fairytale. In the two
Princess books, the significance of the grandmother’s changing appearance (she is represented
variously as an old crone and as a young enchantress) is two-fold: it charts the spiritual
development of the grandmother’s two young charges Irene and Curdie, and suggests how
MacDonald is interrogating the negative stereotype of the female storyteller. Like the miners,
for whom the grandmother is transformed into the demonic figure of Old Mother Wotherwop,“an old hating witch, whose delight was to do mischief” (Curdie 40), both Irene and Curdie
initially perceive the elder Irene as an old woman spinning alone in her garret. However, as
both children progress in their spiritual development, the grandmother increasingly appears
before them as a beautiful young woman, dressed in velvet and adorned with jewels, her long
silver hair turned to gold (Goblin 113). Because they have learned to look beyond outer
appearances, Irene and Curdie come to see the grandmother as she truly is: a spiritual guide and
mentor, rather than a malevolent spinster who is the product of old wives’ tales.

In The Princess and the Goblin, MacDonald transforms the spinster storyteller into a
positive female role-model for the motherless Irene. The grandmother’s bare garret, containing
only a spinning-wheel and a chair (15), immediately suggests (for readers who are familiar with
fairytales) the wicked fairy’s curse in “Sleeping Beauty.” Irene’s discovery of the attic,

34 Although the grandmother first appears before the princess as “a very old lady” (Goblin 11), Irene immediately
recognizes her inherent beauty: “[s]he was dressed in black velvet with thick white heavy-looking lace about it; and
on the black dress her hair shone like silver” (14). By contrast, when Curdie sees the grandmother for the first time
(this encounter occurs in the sequel), she is “a small withered creature”: he likens the figure stooped over her
spinning-wheel to a “long-legged spider holding up its own web” (Curdie 23) and compares her hands to “the grey
claws of a hen” (24). These contrasting visions of the grandmother reflect the children’s differing stages of spiritual
progress: Curdie’s description demonstrates the negative impact of the miners’ tales of Old Mother Wotherwop on
his thinking; he is lagging behind Irene who can already appreciate both the grandmother’s outer and inner beauty at
their first meeting.

35 One of Irene’s visits to the attic is triggered when she accidentally runs the pin of a “curious old-fashioned
brooch” into her thumb (83). This pin-prick is doubly significant: it provides another parallel to the “Sleeping
however, does not provoke a curse: instead of a wicked fairy, she finds a caring and nurturing figure who encourages her to develop beyond the rigid dictates set out in her father’s household. Without the guidance of her grandmother, Irene’s development would most certainly be curtailed; raised under the solitary female influence of her nurse in a stagnant domestic environment, Irene would presumably grow to resemble Lootie: a capable wife and housekeeper, but with little or no awareness of the spiritual. Thankfully, her discovery of the grandmother in her attic awakens Irene to a higher level of intellectual and spiritual development. In particular, the grandmother’s thread – “a shimmering ball ... about the size of a pigeon's egg” (117) – challenges Irene to confront the threat of the goblins by venturing down into the mines to rescue Curdie. Recognizing perhaps her granddaughter’s limitations, Grandmother Irene literally spins a quest for her namesake; her handiwork – she tells her granddaughter that “‘I am spinning this for you, my child’” (87) – is a thread that will take Irene down into the mines to rescue Curdie. In this way, MacDonald is able to use a figure borrowed from fairytale – a literal spinner of tales – in order to conceive a new genre: the female quest-romance.

Finding herself: The role of language and FID in Irene’s quest

The text’s shift in genre from fairytale to romance is initiated by Irene’s discovery of the attic, which initiates the princess’ quest. For MacDonald’s heroine, this movement upward is also a movement inward, and the author’s language choices signal the way in which Irene’s effort to

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36 Like the ball of string which Curdie uses to navigate his way through the mines, the grandmother’s thread suggests the pebbles that Hop-o’-my-Thumb and Hansel and Gretel use to find their way home (according to Perrault’s and the Grimms’ versions of the tales): the narrator explicitly draws attention to this parallel (in reference to Curdie) on page 95 of The Princess and the Goblin.
confront her fears – namely the goblins or “cobs” and their creatures – provoke an internal transformation. MacDonald’s use of language to signal a corresponding shift in genre reflects Ursula K. Le Guin’s discussion of the vital importance of style in fantasy writing in “From Elfland to Poughkeepsie”: because Elfland (a stand-in for any fantasy or alternative landscape) is meant to be a place to which we can escape as readers, the language of fantasy should reflect this alterity, according to Le Guin; while she acknowledges that techniques like “archaicising” help to achieve this necessary “distancing from the ordinary” (15), Le Guin reserves particular praise for authors like Tolkien who write in the “noblest” of styles: “plain, clear English” (22).

Though Le Guin’s essay does not specifically address MacDonald’s work, I would argue that he also adopts a plain style in *The Princess and the Goblin*: MacDonald consistently and convincingly uses language “intended to express the immediate and the trivial” in order to express “the remote and elemental,” which according to Le Guin is the most difficult style to achieve in fantasy writing (22-24). However, the author’s style does shift subtly across the text from the more straightforward language of fairytale (“There was once a little princess whose father was king over a great country full of mountains and valleys” [2]) to a more flowery prose that signals MacDonald’s transition into the romance genre. For instance, MacDonald uses a rich language to describe Irene’s immersion – a kind of baptism – in her grandmother’s bath:

> When she opened her eyes, she saw nothing but a strange lovely blue over and beneath and all about her. The lady and the beautiful room had vanished from her sight, and she seemed utterly alone. But instead of being afraid, she felt more than happy – perfectly blissful. And from somewhere came the voice of the lady, singing a strange sweet song, of which she could distinguish every word; but of the sense she had only a feeling – no understanding. Nor could she remember a
single line after it was gone. It vanished, like the poetry in a dream, as fast as it
came. (184)

MacDonald’s language here suggests a sense of the spiritual or the numinous. This is a
watershed moment in Irene’s quest for self-discovery, in which her grandmother relates to her an
important lesson; as MacDonald writes, later in life she will recall “snatches” of this particular
melody that will “make her happier, and abler to do her duty” (184). MacDonald’s evocative yet
mysterious description here – “strange lovely blue”; “strange sweet song”; “vanished, like the
poetry in a dream” – suggests but does not completely reveal Irene’s profound spiritual
experience. The sense of the ethereal that MacDonald invokes in this passage accords with Le
Guin’s statement that “[the fantasy genre’s] affinity is not with daydream but with dream”: it is
“surrealistic [and] super-realistic, a heightening of reality” (5).37

MacDonald’s use of free indirect style or discourse (referred to hereafter as FID) also
reflects the way in which searching for her grandmother forces Irene to gaze inward. There are
several instances of FID in The Princess and the Goblin, but, interestingly, all of these instances
are clustered around Irene’s visits to her grandmother, as well as her journey into the mines to
rescue Curdie.38 For example, when Irene first “loses herself” which leads, of course, to her
discovery of her grandmother, MacDonald writes that:

37 While immersed in her grandmother’s bath, Irene loses all sense of time: “How long she lay in the water she did not know. It seemed a long time – not from weariness but from pleasure” (184). Irene’s inability to keep track of the time when she is visiting her grandmother – she is often gone for hours at a time and returns to her nursery to find a very anxious and angry Lootie – further suggests that the grandmother’s attic represents an alternate world, a fantasy landscape to which the reader is never fully introduced.

38 Interestingly, there are no corresponding examples of FID from the perspective of MacDonald’s male
protagonist, Curdie, as he ventures into the mines to discover what the goblins are plotting and later enters the king’s house in order to rescue Irene. The book’s sequel, however, does feature FID from Curdie’s perspective: for instance when the grandmother appears to Curdie and his father in the mines.
Very soon she was sure that she had lost the way back. Rooms everywhere, and no stair! Her little heart beat as fast as her little feet ran, and a lump of tears was growing in her throat. But she was too eager and perhaps too frightened to cry for some time. At last her hope failed her. Nothing but passages and doors everywhere! She threw herself on the floor, and burst into a wailing cry broken by sobs. She did not cry long, however, for she was as brave as could be expected of a princess of her age. After a good cry, she got up, and brushed the dust from her frock. (8)

MacDonald’s moment of didacticism here, in which he reminds his readers how a true princess behaves in difficult situations, is supported by Irene’s internal dialogue; although she initially succumbs to her feelings of despair (“Rooms everywhere, and no stair!”; “Nothing but passages and doors everywhere!”), Irene recovers quickly after indulging in a “good cry” and is ready to continue her search. Le Guin writes that a fantasy “is a journey into the subconscious mind, just as psychoanalysis is. Like psychoanalysis, it can be dangerous; and it will change you” (24, original emphasis). MacDonald demonstrates the ability of the fantasy landscape to change a person’s inner make-up through Irene’s visits to her grandmother’s attic as well as through the tasks and trials that the grandmother sets out for her granddaughter.

**Finding herself: The role of faith in Irene's spiritual quest**

Irene’s first visit to her grandmother’s attic sets in motion two different tasks or quests that she must carry out. First, Irene must somehow find herself: like any medieval knight on a quest, she must ultimately prove her mettle. Part of this initial quest also involves testing Irene’s belief in her grandmother: her ability to have faith in her even in her absence and not to fall into denial and doubt. Having established firm faith in the grandmother, Irene’s second quest is to leave the
protective confines of her house in order to rescue Curdie from the goblins underground; by making Irene Curdie’s rescuer, MacDonald revises the role of Ariadne from the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. After rescuing Curdie and taking him to see her grandmother in order that he might be similarly “converted” to her faith, Irene has successfully completed both of the quests set out for her: while her individual progress or journey is coming to a close, Curdie’s is only beginning.

The ball of thread tied to Irene’s ring finger is meant to act as a permanent link between grandmother and granddaughter: the elder Irene tells the princess that by following the thread, they will always be reunited. The challenge for the young Irene, however, is not to “doubt the thread” even though it may seem to lead her home “in a very roundabout way indeed” (120). This challenge – to accept the workings of the thread based on a firm and unshakeable faith in the grandmother – is at the heart of Irene’s quest. While Irene’s underground rescue mission is much smaller in scale than Curdie’s cross-country pilgrimage to the capital city in the sequel, both journeys can rightfully be called spiritual quests because both are meant to test the quester’s faith in a higher power, personified by the grandmother. That Irene’s journey is specifically meant as a test of faith is confirmed by her elder namesake, who tells Irene prior to her ordeal that, “… I must put you to one trial – not a very hard one, I hope” (92, original emphasis). The grandmother’s qualification here is not, I would argue, an admission that the trial will be easy, but instead serves as an expression of her faith in Irene that she will successfully pass her test. Because her granddaughter already has a firm faith in her existence, Irene’s grandmother hopes that this faith will guide Irene and assist her in her difficult quest.39

39 My argument differs here from that presented by Cordelia Sherman, who argues that Irene’s heroic rescue of
Irene’s faith in her grandmother, however, is not unshakeable: instead, it is consistently challenged by the adverse circumstances in which Irene finds herself throughout the text. For instance, on the day following her initial meeting with her grandmother, Irene immediately starts upon a “fresh quest” (27) to visit her “beautiful mother of grandmothers” (19), but to her dismay, is unable to find the “old stair of worm-eaten oak” that will take her to the attic (7). In the concluding paragraph of this chapter, entitled “The Princess Lets Well Alone,” the princess openly doubts her grandmother’s existence: “Her failure to find the old lady not only disappointed her, but made her very thoughtful. Sometimes she came almost to the nurse’s opinion that she had dreamed all about her” (28). Although MacDonald stipulates that, “that fancy never lasted very long,” Irene’s faith in the grandmother has been sufficiently shaken that she “wondered much whether she should ever see her again” and she “resolved to say nothing more to her nurse on the subject, seeing it was so little in her power to prove her words” (30).

Irene’s intention here, to “prove her words” so that Lootie will believe her, suggests that her ability to believe and have faith in her grandmother is still at a very rudimentary level: like her nurse, she cannot believe without seeing. But while the text implies that servants like Lootie cannot be expected to believe without seeing, Irene’s grandmother would naturally expect a greater degree of faith from her own granddaughter. Because of her doubt, Irene’s individual development suffers a set-back: the rest of the autumn “comes and goes” by and “the winter Curdie “is mitigated by the fact that both the reader and Irene know that she is safe wherever she goes” (26). As I have attempted to demonstrate in my analysis, Irene’s fear frequently leads her to doubt her grandmother, so that travelling down into the mines to face the goblins (whom she has been taught to fear) requires a great deal of courage on her part; in this respect, I also disagree with Nancy-Lou Patterson, who questions the level of courage required in Irene’s rescue of Curdie by contrasting Irene’s journey underground, in which she is perpetually guided by the grandmother’s thread, with Curdie’s independent “quest” in the book’s sequel in which “the hero goes out to meet his adventures” (170).
dr[aws] on” before Irene once again stumbles across her grandmother’s stair (82-3). If Irene had possessed a stronger faith in her grandmother, there would not have been such a prolonged interval between her first two lessons (each visit becomes a lesson in faith for Irene); as her grandmother tells her, “‘… you would have found me sooner if you hadn’t come to think I was a dream’” (86).

Irene constantly struggles to maintain her faith in the grandmother in spite of the feelings of doubt that she naturally experiences whenever she is thrown into dangerous circumstances. For instance, when she encounters one of the frightening cob’s creatures in her bedroom, Irene nearly decides to run up her grandmother’s stair in order to escape, but hesitates:

… [W]hen she came to the foot of the old stair, just outside the nursery door, she imagined the creature running up those long ascents after her, and pursuing her through the dark passages – which, after all, might lead to no tower! (106, original emphasis)

Irene’s internal dialogue is italicized in order to emphasize Irene’s momentary doubt. Overcome by the thought that her grandmother might not be waiting for her at the top of the stairs, Irene instead runs out the door and up the mountainside, which puts her in an even more perilous position: alone on the mountain in the dark, Irene feels the misery of “one who had done something wrong” because she realizes that she has broken her promise to her grandmother to visit her that night (107). Thankfully, physical proof of the grandmother’s existence in the form of her lamp comes to the doubting Irene’s rescue. Irene’s internal dialogue here – “What could that light be? Could it be – ? No, it couldn’t. But what if it should be – yes – it must be – her great-grandmother’s lamp …” (109) – stresses that her faith in her grandmother is still
developing; MacDonald’s use of FID and the em-dash demonstrate that Irene is still struggling to believe wholeheartedly in the grandmother’s existence.

Doubt also plays a key role when Irene is lead underground by her grandmother’s thread in order to rescue Curdie. The thread that Grandmother Irene spins for her granddaughter symbolizes Irene’s struggle between faith and doubt: because it is invisible, Irene has no means of knowing where the thread will lead her, so she is ultimately forced to trust her grandmother's judgment. When her thread leads her farther and farther up the mountain and finally into the side of the mountain itself, she shudders but “d[oes] not hesitate” (156). Irene’s fear, however, begins to overcome her better judgment as the thread leads her into the darkest and steepest passageways of the mountain: she begins to question whether she will ever get back home, and what she would do if she lost her hold on the thread or if it broke (157-8). When the thread suddenly disappears behind a heap of stones, Irene finally breaks down in tears: “For one terrible moment [Irene] felt as if her grandmother had forsaken her” (159).

In this instance, however, Irene demonstrates that she has learned from her previous mistakes by recovering more quickly from her fear and doubt. The princess’ bravery and cunning ultimately triumph here: realizing that “her grandmother’s thread could not have brought her there just to leave her there” (161), Irene decides that she might remove some of the stones to see where the thread continues to lead, which results in her discovery of the imprisoned Curdie. Such demonstrations of perseverance and courage on Irene’s part elicit the narrator’s praise, and

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40 Irene’s thread finds its counterpart in the string that Curdie uses to navigate the mines and the goblins’ underground passages. Like Irene’s thread, Curdie’s string is prepared by a female caretaker (his mother straightens its tangles every night), and it also causes him to fall into moments of doubt: on one particular night when he is trying to find his way out of the underground caves, he wonders if his string “[c]ould … have led him wrong?” (131).
he frequently encourages his child readership to emulate the princess’s behaviour. But the narrator’s tone is also gentle and forgiving when Irene’s courage inevitably fails her; for instance, when the princess runs up the mountainside instead of up her grandmother’s stair, the narrator remarks,

It was foolish indeed – thus to run farther and farther from all who could help her, as if she had been seeking a fit spot for the goblin creature to eat her in at his leisure; but that is the way fear serves us: it always sides with the thing we are afraid of. (106-7)

The narrator excuses Irene’s foolish behaviour here because, as he rationalizes, all people behave similarly when they are confronted by their fears. What is more important is that Irene battles with and ultimately overcomes her doubt in order to carry out the quest that her grandmother has set her. As such, MacDonald asserts that Irene’s strength and faith are not an inherent part of her character; they are part of her virtue because, like any chivalric knight of romance, she has worked to achieve these qualities.

As readers, we are both told and shown that Irene matures: after she has undergone the period of testing set out by her grandmother, Irene is no longer the sheltered little princess to whom we are introduced in the book’s first chapter. In Chapter 24, Irene begins to assert her independence from her nurse Lootie: when an angry Lootie refuses to believe the reason for her disappearance (she has been out rescuing Curdie), Irene asks the other servants to take charge of her until her father comes home, telling them in an authoritative tone: “I do not think my papa would wish me to have a nurse who spoke to me as Lootie does. If she thinks I tell lies, she had better either say so to my papa, or go away”’ (201). With the help of her grandmother, Irene has
been able to successfully “find herself”: no longer dependent on Lootie, Irene begins to assume the rightful authority and responsibilities that the title of princess necessarily entails.

Irene’s newfound maturity is also reflected in the increasing amount of time that she spends in the outdoors, away from the confines of the domestic realm. The narrative is set roughly over the course of one calendar year, beginning on a rainy day in either late summer or fall, and ending sometime in the following spring or summer. The initial training that Irene receives from her grandmother, then, occurs over the course of the fall and winter, preparing her for the spring and summer months when she will have greater mobility outdoors in order to perform the tasks which her grandmother has set out for her. Like the beloved primroses growing in her garden, which die only to be re-born again, Irene’s growth and maturation mirrors the natural cycle.

Irene’s arrested development: The Princess books or the Curdie books?

Thus far my focus has been on Princess Irene and her development over the course of The Princess and the Goblin; as such, I have neglected to discuss the corresponding development of MacDonald’s other protagonist, the miner-boy Curdie. The book’s title is something of a misnomer: while it highlights Irene’s prominent role, it contains no mention of Curdie, despite the fact that nearly half of the book’s thirty-two chapters are focalized through him. In this respect, The Princess and the Goblin is equally devoted to both Irene and to Curdie, though critics frequently attempt to claim either Irene’s or Curdie’s centrality, usually downplaying the role of the protagonist of the opposite gender. For instance, Nancy-Lou Patterson responds to

41 Although there are thirty-two chapters in total in The Princess and the Goblin, and Chapter 17 entitled “Springtime” comes only just over the halfway point, the action speeds up considerably in the latter half of the book. It is safe to say, then, that the book concludes in either spring or summer. Irene also tells Curdie that she will visit him next summer (246), and we know that The Princess and Curdie is set exactly one year after the first book.
C.S. Lewis, who in his novel *That Hideous Strength* makes reference to “the Curdie books” (qtd in Patterson 169), by arguing that the books should rightly be named after Princess Irene: “The *Princess and the Goblin* begins, continues, and ends with Irene as the dominant element, presenting with remarkable power a female structure and meaning” (181). By contrast, Joseph Sigman maintains that “the ‘Princess’ books are about Curdie”: the “dramatic center” of the first book is Curdie’s (not Irene’s) “struggle with unbelief,” while the second book is “totally devoted to Curdie, and in it Irene is reduced to a very minor character” (187).

As part of my effort to trace the female quest in MacDonald’s work, I have chosen to highlight Irene’s role in *The Princess and the Goblin*; I will now turn my attention to Curdie’s development. Like Irene, Curdie is also charged with a two-part quest in the text: to discover what the goblins are planning underground and, once that plot has been uncovered, to prevent them from usurping the king’s household and from kidnapping Irene. Irene’s and Curdie’s quests take place more or less simultaneously, and MacDonald alternates narrating from each protagonist’s perspective. Like Sigman, however, I have also noted that Curdie’s particular quest overtakes the narrative in the second half of the text. As Curdie’s struggle to prevent the goblins’ plans assumes centrality, MacDonald chooses with increasing frequency to narrate the course of action from the viewpoint of his male protagonist: while the first six chapters are by and large narrated from Irene’s perspective, the last eight chapters are either focalized through Curdie or through MacDonald’s third-person narrator. As Curdie’s quest begins to eclipse Irene’s in the latter half of *The Princess and the Goblin* and in the book’s sequel, *The Princess*

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42 Like Lewis, C.N. Manlove similarly refers to “George MacDonald’s ‘Curdie’ books” in *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* (45). While I agree wholeheartedly with both Manlove and Sigman, I have chosen to consistently refer to the “Princess” books in this chapter to avoid any unnecessary confusion (and because “Princess” is included in both titles).
and Curdie, Irene is transformed from being a quester in her own right to being a function of Curdie’s quest.

MacDonald’s gender politics in the Princess books

MacDonald has frequently received critical praise for his depiction of equal partnerships between the sexes in his work, as well as the absence of gender stereotypes portraying girls and women as the “weaker sex.” As I have previously mentioned, MacDonald’s fairytales usually introduce boy-girl pairs who work towards their individual spiritual development as a team. While it is true that in some of his fairytales, the female character is spiritually weaker than her male counterpart and requires his help in achieving spiritual enlightenment, these tales are balanced by others in which the male character achieves enlightenment with the help of a female spiritual guide. MacDonald was also remarkably progressive in championing women’s rights: he was, for instance, particularly supportive of higher education for women. And yet the roles played by female characters in his novels and fairytales do not diverge significantly from the traditional

43 These pairs include Tricksey-Wee and Buffy-Bob in “The Giant’s Heart,” Alice and Richard in “Cross Purposes,” Mossy and Tangle in “The Golden Key,” Photogen and Nycteris in “The History of Photogen and Nycteris,” and Diamond and Nanny in At the Back of the North Wind.

44 Examples of this trend can be seen in “Cross Purposes,” “The Light Princess,” “The Golden Key,” and “The Carasoyn.”

45 Tales in this vein include “The Giant’s Heart,” “The History of Photogen and Nycteris,” and At the Back of the North Wind, as well as MacDonald’s faerie romances for adults, Phantastes and Lilith.

46 MacDonald lectured at the Manchester Ladies College and was appointed Professor of English Literature at Bedford College in London, the first women’s college to be founded by a woman, Elizabeth Jesser Reid (Saintsbury 64, 78). His friendships with Reid and other like-minded women, including Barbara and Anna Leigh-Smith – cousins of Florence Nightingale who were “well-read, cosmopolitan and free-thinking” – profoundly influenced MacDonald’s position on women’s rights: biographer Kathy Triggs writes that “[t]he cause of women’s education and women’s emancipation was discussed freely in the MacDonald home (64, 75). According to his son Greville, MacDonald even became convinced of the superiority of the opposite sex: believing that girls were “‘far above boys in goodness,’” MacDonald punished his sons but spared his daughters (qtd in Saintsbury 140).
gender roles women played in nineteenth-century society. Although MacDonald does deserve praise for the unusual degree of power and strength that his female spiritual guides display – particularly his unconventional re-imagining of death as a nurturing female in *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) – the idea of women being closely in tune with the spiritual is still in keeping with gender roles set out by nineteenth-century writers such as Coventry Patmore and John Ruskin, who imagined women as being spiritual help-mates to their men.

In *The Princess and the Goblin*, both the grandmother and Curdie’s mother Mrs. Peterson take on this role of female spiritual guide to Curdie. Mrs. Peterson’s role is particularly crucial in that it is she who first convinces her son of the grandmother’s existence, telling him in “Chapter 23: Curdie and his Mother” that “‘Perhaps some people can see things other people can’t see, Curdie’” (184-5). Although Mrs. Peterson is specifically addressing Irene’s particular ability to see the grandmother here, she evidently includes herself among the spiritually enlightened who can see what others cannot: she goes on to relate in the same chapter how the grandmother’s lamp saved her as a young woman from a physical (and perhaps sexual) attack from the goblins.

The narrator’s description of Mrs. Peterson also clearly aligns her with the nineteenth-century figure of the “Angel in the House,” who is in charge of keeping and maintaining a comfortable and orderly domestic haven to which her men may retire at the end of a hard working day:

Mrs. Peterson was such a nice good mother! All mothers are nice and good more or less, but Mrs. Peterson was nice and good all *more* and no *less*. She made and kept a little heaven in that poor cottage on the high hillside – for her husband and son to go home to out of the low and rather dreary earth in which they worked. I
doubt if the princess was very much happier even in the arms of her huge great-grandmother than Peter and Curdie were in the arms of Mrs. Peterson. (93, original emphasis)

It is telling that the narrator never gives Mrs. Peterson a first name (unlike her husband and son), reinforcing that her identity exists solely in relation to the men in her life. His praise here, coupled with the explicit connection between Curdie’s mother and Irene’s grandmother, also indicates that the narrator fully endorses Mrs. Peterson’s role as domestic angel: she is the “true wife” of Ruskin’s description, whose very being is tied up with the idea of home (“And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her” [“Of Queen's Gardens” 98]).

Irene’s relationship with Curdie clearly mirrors the bond that both Mrs. Peterson and the grandmother share with the miner-boy. If we consider the purpose behind Irene’s two quests – to discover more about herself in light of her grandmother’s teachings and to rescue Curdie from the goblins – both journeys are arguably less significant in terms of Irene’s individual development and more instrumental in terms of preparing her for her future role as Curdie’s spiritual guide. In *The Princess and the Goblin*, and later in *The Princess and Curdie*, the female quest for self-realization is ultimately subordinated to the male quest for self-realization. Although MacDonald does demonstrate Irene’s budding maturity in the first book, Irene’s growth only seems to be significant in so far as it will allow her to act as a surrogate (grand)mother, and later a suitable mate, for Curdie. In the first book, Irene’s discovery of the grandmother is essential because it ensures that Irene – and later Curdie through Irene – will be properly mothered.

Irene’s development is suspended when Curdie’s quest to rescue the princess from the goblins assumes centrality in the second half of *The Princess and the Goblin*. Moreover, she
seems to have regressed: in one of the book’s last chapters (Chapter 30: The King and the Kiss), she is carried around like an infant, first in Curdie’s arms and then later in the arms of her king-papa. In the sequel *The Princess and Curdie*, Irene’s transformation from quester to object of another’s quest is complete: Irene is required to act as a surrogate parent both to Curdie and to her own father, whom both she and the grandmother nurse back to health after a prolonged illness. Curdie also treats Irene as a damsel-in-distress in the second book. His ability to shield the princess from the king’s corrupt ministers and their plans for her becomes a marker of his own progress as a future king and husband; as Curdie expresses at one point, “Could this have been managed without the princess, [he] would have preferred leaving her in ignorance of the horrors from which he sought to deliver her” (154). Curdie essentially begins to live up to the ideal of the true “kingly” man as set out by Ruskin in “Of Queen's Gardens”: while he “must encounter all peril and trial” in his “rough work in the open world,” he must also “guar[d] the woman from all this” by working to keep her home a sanctuary from the world (98). As such, it is not surprising that Irene is also deprived from taking an active role in Curdie’s final battle against the townspeople: in a seeming echo of Ruskin’s assertion that “… the woman’s power is for rule, not for battle” (98), Irene watches this conflict from a distance “mounted on the prettiest of white ponies” (240-1).

Despite the fact that only four years separate the two in age, Curdie repeatedly refers to Irene as a child or as being somehow childlike. In both books, Curdie’s tone is often patronizing or condescending whenever he speaks to or thinks about the princess. For instance, when he initially refuses to believe in the grandmother’s thread (which is helping them to escape from the goblins), he thinks to himself, “‘What nonsense the child talks! … I must follow her, though, and see that she comes to no harm. She will soon find that she can’t get out that way, and then she will come with me’” (162). While Curdie is temporarily awed into submission after Irene’s
thread leads them out of the mines, he once again assumes a condescending tone with her when she leads him up to her grandmother’s attic. Curdie’s inability to see the grandmother makes him angry with the princess for “‘making game of [him]’” (175); he refers to Irene mockingly as “Your Royal Highness” and tells her “‘I think you had better drop it [the game], princess, and go down to the nursery, like a good girl’” (175).

Curdie’s retort attempts to put Irene back in what he considers to be her rightful place: the sheltered domestic space of the nursery. The image that Curdie introduces of a meek Irene suddenly retreating to the nursery from which she has been effectively trying to escape since the first chapter of *The Princess and the Goblin* is incongruous with the mature and independent young girl whom we have gradually seen emerge over the course of the first book. MacDonald also seems to force Irene back into the nursery in the second book: aside from the scene in which she watches the progress of the battle, Irene is never pictured outside the domestic confines of her King Papa’s palace. In keeping with the Victorian image of the ideal woman upheld by figures like Dickens and Ruskin, MacDonald also describes the princess paradoxically as being both a child and a woman. The narrator tells us in the first chapter of *The Princess and the Goblin* that, “The princess was a sweet little creature, and at the time my story begins was about eight years old, I think, but she got older very fast” (2): she is required to mature more quickly in order to nurture both Curdie and her ailing father.

Forced to be both surrogate wife and daughter in one, Irene is both a grown-up child and

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47 As critics have frequently observed, Dickens’ ideal woman embodies the qualities of both child and adult, in that she combines a child’s innocence and obedience with an adult woman’s capacity for household management: examples include Esther Summerson (*Bleak House*), Agnes Wickfield (*David Copperfield*), Amy Dorrit (*Little Dorrit*) and Little Nell (*The Old Curiosity Shop*). Ruskin’s similar obsession with the childlike woman is well documented, both in *The Ethics of the Dust: Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallisation* (1866) and in his relationship with Rose la Touche.
a childlike woman, who watches the king “with looks of childish love and womanly tenderness that went to Curdie’s heart” (154). When Curdie first sees Irene after a year’s separation, MacDonald describes the remarkable change in her appearance: “She was only between nine and ten, though indeed she looked several years older, and her eyes almost those of a grown woman, for she had had terrible trouble of late” (144). While Irene tries to assert her maturity – with a smile that has in it a “strange mixture of playfulness and sadness,” she tells Curdie, “‘I am not the little princess any more. I have grown up since I saw you last, Mr. Miner’” (144, original emphasis) – Curdie replies with, “‘So I see, Miss Princess … and therefore, being more of a princess, you are the more my princess’” (144). Irene’s sudden maturity is not important in terms of her individual development as a young girl; rather, her grown-up behaviour and appearance signals to Curdie that he will soon be able to claim possession of her as his bride.

Conclusion: The failure of the female quest in *The Princess and Curdie*

On the final page of *The Princess and Curdie*, MacDonald abruptly recounts Irene and Curdie’s marriage and future reign as Queen and King of Gwyntystorm, as well as the eventual downfall of the kingdom following their deaths:

One day at noon, when life was at its highest, the whole city fell with a roaring crash. The cries of men and the shrieks of women went up with its dust, and then there was a great silence. Where the mighty rock once towered, crowded with homes and crowned with a palace, now rushes and raves a stone-obstructed rapid of the river. All around spreads a wilderness of wild deer, and the very name of Gwyntystorm had ceased from the lips of men. (256)

Critics have frequently puzzled over this sudden cataclysmic ending to Irene and Curdie’s story: Roderick McGillis, for instance, notes that the author’s tone in the ending of the sequel has
resulted in the critical consensus that “the book lacks control, that it is dark and pessimistic, that it reveals an irrational anger and bitterness on the part of its author, and that it is overly graphic in its depiction of violence” (“High Seriousness” 156). The “irrational anger and bitterness” of the ending has also confused me a great deal. While there have been several different explanations proposed for this sudden change in tone – McGillis himself attributes this difference to the author “strengthening and deepening [his] vision” in the second book (156-7) – I would like to propose another potential explanation: that MacDonald’s sudden pessimistic turn is a reflection of Irene’s disappointing fate.

MacDonald has to sacrifice Irene’s quest for self-development so that she will grow up to be Curdie’s “Angel in the House,” supporting him from within the confines of the home. Despite his assertion that Irene is intelligent – according to her King Papa, she is more than capable of reading aloud to him the state documents which require his signature (Curdie 167) – MacDonald cannot seem to conceive of a future for Irene that would allow her to develop into the mature and accomplished woman that she promises to become in The Princess and the Goblin. Aside from marriage or death, the only alternative open to girls in the romance genre is to remain in a kind of limbo or stasis. We have already seen this in relation to Dickens and Stevenson: Nell’s death means that she is forever frozen in childhood, while Catriona is suddenly reduced to a childlike or “bairnly” state, according to the narrator David Balfour, in the second half of Stevenson’s novel. Only the pre-pubescent child-woman is invited to participate in romance: once she has truly begun to grow up, she is effectively shut out from the genre entirely.  

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\[48\] For instance, at the end of Peter Pan, the grown-up Wendy, like her mother Mrs. Darling before her, is shut out
MacDonald does not ultimately deviate from this pattern, and yet I would speculate that we might ascribe some of MacDonald’s evident frustration with the ending of The Princess and Curdie to the failure of his female quest-romance. The “happily-ever-after” ending which MacDonald’s fairytale frame leads the reader to anticipate is compromised by the deaths of Irene and Curdie and the destruction of Gwyntystorm in the conclusion of the second book. But perhaps Irene is married and killed off so that MacDonald can interrogate the problem (or impossibility, we might say) of women and romance. The tragedy of Princess Irene in The Princess and Curdie is that, despite all of her promise, MacDonald cannot imagine an ending for his heroine that will not, in some way, stunt her development.

In shifting his focus from the female to the male quester in the two Princess books, MacDonald reasserts the connection between gender and genre in the nineteenth century. The Princess and the Goblin represents an at times uneasy union between fairytale and romance. By grounding his text in the themes and language of fairytale – a vehicle for women writers in the Victorian period – MacDonald attempts to initiate a female-centered quest in a genre that was increasingly defined as the exclusive territory of boys and men in the Victorian period. However, the author’s ultimate inability to sustain the female quest prefigures the complementary fascination with boy’s adventures in the Edwardian period. As Catherine Robson writes in Men from ever returning to Neverland because she is no longer able to fly; J.M. Barrie has to continually re-generate new pre-pubescent mother-figures for Peter out of Wendy’s blood-line. Similarly, thirteen-year-old Susan Pevensie is prevented from returning to Narnia at the end of Prince Caspian (1951), the second book in C.S. Lewis’ Narnia series, because she and her elder brother Peter are “getting too old” (185). However, while Peter returns to Narnia in the final book of the series The Last Battle (1956), Susan is “no longer a friend of Narnia” because “she is interested in nothing now-a-days except nylons and lipstick and invitations” (129). Neil Gaiman’s re-invention of Susan’s life post-Narnia in the story “The Problem of Susan” (2004), in which she appears as the lonely, middle-aged Professor Hastings, suggests the two classes of girls and women who appear in the romance genre: those who never entirely grow up, like Lucy Pevensie, or those who are shut out and left behind, like Susan Pevensie/Professor Hastings.
in Wonderland, the nineteenth-century obsession with the figure of the young girl slowly gave way to a complementary fascination with all aspects of boy-culture in the twentieth century, and MacDonald exemplifies this transition in The Princess and Curdie (1882). Like the famous Edwardians J.M. Barrie and Frances Hodgson Burnett, whose work collectively suggests the specter of the little boy who will never grow up, MacDonald’s last full-length publication for children is devoted to celebrating the exploits of a young, thoroughly male hero. With The Princess and Curdie, the ground has ultimately been paved for the romance writers whom I will subsequently explore – namely, Charles Kingsley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Rudyard Kipling – for whom the collective message of their work is no girls or women allowed.

49 The two important precursors to Curdie are Diamond in At the Back of the North Wind (1871) and the titular character in Sir Gibbie (1878), a street urchin who is eventually rewarded for his pious behaviour with an inheritance (a precursor, perhaps, to Burnett's Little Lord Fauntleroy [1886]). We might say, then, that there is a trajectory here: with the approach of the fin de siècle, MacDonald's fiction for children increasingly focuses on boy protagonists.

50 Peter Pan, of course, epitomizes this title. While Barrie’s icon of eternal boyhood was famously inspired by the Llewellyn-Davies boys, Burnett’s memorable boy characters – Little Lord Fauntleroy, Colin Craven, and Dickon Sowerby – all owe their existence to the author’s two sons, Lionel and Vivien (whose mode of dress was adopted for the character of Fauntleroy). Similarly to MacDonald, Burnett’s charming little boys frequently upstage her female protagonists: we see this dynamic in the stage adaptation of A Little Princess, in which Donald Carmichael steals every scene in which he appears (his antics were “wisely curtailed” when Burnett re-wrote the play into a novel [Knoepflmacher Introduction ix]), while The Secret Garden (1911) begins by focusing on Mary Lennox (the narration is initially focalized through her perspective), but suddenly shifts in its latter half to her cousin Colin Craven.
Chapter 2

Problematic Progress: Pioneering the Boy’s Quest in Charles Kingsley’s The Water-Babies

Introduction: Spiritual quest-romance in Kingsley and Bunyan

While The Princess and the Goblin (1872), as we have seen, is informed by the female-influenced genre of fairytale, its sequel The Princess and Curdie (1882) signals the emergence of the masculine quest-romance; in contrast to the first volume, which focuses more or less equally on both child protagonists, the second volume concentrates solely on Curdie’s mental and spiritual development. In the first book, Irene’s spiritual growth eclipses Curdie’s; in the second book, Curdie must attempt to bridge this perceived “gulf” between himself and the princess in order to be worthy of her as a potential suitor and later husband (Goblin 176). While he opens the text by committing a grievous sin – shooting one of the grandmother’s white pigeons – he quickly becomes the grandmother’s closest ally and supporter by helping her to restore the kingdom of Gwyntystorm to its former glory. Curdie’s two-fold quest in the novel to restore the King’s household as well as to develop his own spirituality (in MacDonald’s terms, learning to look “behind the look” of things [“Word” 159]) anticipates how future writers of boy’s romances – particularly Stevenson and, to a certain degree, Kipling – will later attempt to blend religious didacticism with adventure in their own fiction.

Like the figure of the North Wind in MacDonald’s At the Back of the North Wind (1871), Irene’s great-great-grandmother becomes a personification of the divine, suggesting that MacDonald is approaching religious allegory in the two Princess books, despite the author’s own
claims to the contrary. MacDonald’s predecessor Charles Kingsley makes a similar effort to blend allegory with romance in *The Water-Babies* (1863), particularly in the representation of his three maternal fairies, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, and Mother Carey. With the help of these three figures, Tom the water-baby undergoes a gradual process of spiritual awakening, not unlike that which Curdie experiences in MacDonald’s text. As a dirty chimney-sweep, Tom is unable to recognize a picture of Christ hanging in Ellie’s bedroom, but after his physical transformation into a water-baby, he has learned Christian charity and forgiveness: by the end of the text, he has helped to instigate the conversion of his abusive former master, Grimes.

The allegorical underpinnings of MacDonald’s and Kingsley’s work suggests for J.S. Bratton in *The Impact of Victorian Children’s Fiction* that both writers were heavily influenced by the Evangelical tradition of early Victorian children’s literature. According to Bratton, the “didactic takeover” of fantasy in the first half of the nineteenth century – resulting in many tales about “magical transformations by moral fairies” – was “[b]olstered by the ever-present, justifying memory of Bunyan” (70). Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) became the model for Victorian Evangelical allegorists – particularly female writers like Charlotte Maria Tucker – who wished to blend romance with religious teaching in their work for children, a model that Kingsley adopts in *The Water-Babies* (1863).

That Kingsley and Tucker both share a common literary predecessor suggests, on the one hand, that nineteenth-century quest-romance partly originates out of the Evangelical movement in children’s literature. Although Kingsley attempts to distance his own work from that of his

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51 In his essay, “The Fantastic Imagination,” MacDonald claims, rather cryptically, that “a fairytale is not an allegory,” though “there may be allegory in it” (7).
didactic female contemporaries like Susan Bogert Warner (he parodies the titles of her best-selling novels in *The Water-Babies*), the spiritual trajectory of Kingsley’s hero Tom indicates that the author is equally indebted to the “host of evangelical conversion stories that were being produced for children in the mid-nineteenth-century” (Carpenter 38). On the other hand, Kingsley’s implicit support for Darwin and for the social implications behind his theory of evolution create a clash of value-systems in the text: while the fairies teach Tom to practice Christian charity and forbearance towards creatures who are weaker than himself, Kingsley's paternal narrator urges Tom to embody the principle of the survival-of-the-fittest in his interactions with the natural world. Religious allegory, in the form of the fairies’ parables or moral tales, and quest-romance, vocalized by the hyper-masculine narrator, ultimately threaten to disengage from one another in *The Water-Babies*.

In the previous chapter, I used my discussion of fairytale and romance in MacDonald to explore how genre is gendered in the nineteenth-century; in this chapter, I would like to continue to examine the implications of this gender/genre connection by turning my attentions to Kingsley. Like *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Water-Babies* is a hybrid text that attempts to reconcile two opposing traditions: the novel looks backward to the predominantly female Evangelical tradition of early nineteenth-century children’s literature, while at the same time it anticipates the thoroughly masculine – and, according to Stevenson, thoroughly “a-moral” – quest-romance that will predominate in the latter half of the century (“A Gossip on Romance” 54). By borrowing Bunyan’s prototype of the male quest, Kingsley attempts to introduce his predecessor’s masculine discourse or rhetoric (“manfully”; “play the man”) to a readership of young boys, providing a deliberate contrast with the heavily didactic, female-oriented fiction that had dominated Victorian children’s literature. Yet, as his trio of allegorical female fairies
suggests,\textsuperscript{52} \textit{The Water-Babies} is also clearly indebted to the Evangelical literature from which
Kingsley, as both author and paternal narrator, constantly attempts to distance his own writing.
In tracing these two different influences or threads throughout Kingsley’s text, I am proposing
that \textit{The Water-Babies} provides a crucial link between the Evangelical tradition in early
Victorian children’s literature and the later emergence of the male quest-romance, a genre that
will inherit this tension between religious didacticism and adventure-romance.

The uneasy pairing of religious allegory with romance in \textit{The Water-Babies} proves to be
as difficult for Kingsley to negotiate as it was for his predecessor, John Bunyan. Before
proceeding with my analysis of \textit{The Water-Babies}, I intend to demonstrate that, by adopting \textit{The
Pilgrim’s Progress} as his model text, Kingsley inherits this slippage between genres from
Bunyan, who adopts the conventions of popular chivalric romance in order to make his allegory
more palatable for his readers. Unfortunately, as Bunyan himself recognized and addressed in
his Apology to Part I, quest-romance repeatedly threatens to disengage from spiritual allegory,
resulting in two conflicting interpretations (as romance or as allegory), as well as a contradictory
set of codes governing male behaviour in \textit{The Pilgrim’s Progress}. By examining how these
competing readings work to problematize masculinity in Bunyan’s text, my aim is to lay the
groundwork for my discussion of Kingsley’s \textit{The Water-Babies} in which (as I will argue)
competing genres similarly complicate gender ideology.

\textsuperscript{52} In addition to the Christian principles embodied by Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby and Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid,
there is also Mother Carey, whose name (according to Richard Kelly) derives from the “Latin \textit{Mater Cara} or Italian
\textit{Madre Cara} (“dear mother”), an epithet of the Virgin Mary” (Introduction 26).
“snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets”: Reading Bunyan’s *Pilgrim* as romance

By incorporating romantic conventions into his spiritual text, Bunyan ensured the popularity of his work among younger readers. Although *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was not written expressly for children, its mixture of religious allegory and popular romance – both labeled as “childish” genres by the educators of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Lerer 13) – resulted in a landmark publication for the field of children’s literature. As Seth Lerer remarks, “*Pilgrim’s Progress* is children’s literature ... because its literary history is inextricably associated with the life of children” (97). By blending these two “childish” forms – religious allegory and “adventure narrative familiar from old folktales and romances” (Lerer 93) – Bunyan created a successful formula to which child readers have frequently responded with enthusiasm, particularly in the strictly Sabbatarian culture of the nineteenth century, in which there was a lack of entertaining religious-themed material for children.

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53 In her study of the impact of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* on American children’s literature, Ruth K. MacDonald posits that Bunyan conceived of a “naïve reader” who “might in fact be barely literate” while writing his text and adjusted his style accordingly (5). That this so-called “naïve reader” might in fact be a child is also suggested by Bunyan in the opening address to Part II, in which he writes that children will “[s]alute” his Pilgrim as “the only Stripling of the Day” (172, original emphasis).

54 Seth Lerer writes in *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History* (which includes a chapter on Bunyan and the Puritan tradition), that “[i]n many ways, the forms of children’s literature are distinctively pre-modern, as they sustain the techniques of allegory, moral fable, romance, and symbolism,” all narrative devices that have been subsequently “abandoned, even denigrated, by the post-Enlightenment theorists of literature and by modern practitioners of poetry and fiction” (14).

55 Although the immediate context of this remark is Lerer’s discussion of the opening address to the *Pilgrim’s Progress in Poesie* (1697), Lerer’s statement also provides, to my mind, an accurate summary of his stance on Bunyan.

56 Juliet Dusinberre writes that *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) had already “supplanted” *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in the popular imagination by the end of the nineteenth century, citing a Pall Mall Gazette poll of the best books for ten year olds in 1898, in which Carroll’s Alice placed first, Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* placed sixth, and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim* placed ninth (Gillian Avery originally cites this survey [137]). Nonetheless, I would argue that Dusinberre tends to undervalue Bunyan’s considerable impact on Victorian children, both real and fictional: it was read, for instance, by future children’s writers like Charlotte
In addition to its “accessible” language and “frequent illustrations” (32), Ruth K. MacDonald identifies the “adventure” in Bunyan’s text as holding a strong appeal for young readers (5), who “could simply skip over” its religious allegory if they chose to do so (32). That the allegory behind The Pilgrim’s Progress was in fact overlooked or ignored by children is supported by Maggie Tulliver’s reaction to the fiend Apollyon in The Mill on the Floss (1860): while she is aware that Apollyon is meant to be a portrait of the Devil, she remains morbidly fascinated and not in the least disturbed by Bunyan’s description of him (22). In The Wouldbegoods (1901), the Bastable children also overlook the religious significance of The Pilgrim’s Progress, focusing instead on its heroic picture of masculinity: the narrator Oswald Bastable relates that “we all wanted to be Mr. Greatheart, except H.O. who wanted to be the lions [whom Christian safely passes in order to get to the House Beautiful]” (32).

The Bastables’ fascination with Greatheart – and, to a certain degree, Maggie’s corresponding interest in Apollyon – suggest the lasting attraction of Bunyan’s romance in the nineteenth century. It is most certainly this particular appeal – the way in which Christian can be likened to an armed knight on a chivalric quest to the Celestial City, encountering supernatural creatures like giants, hobgoblins, and fiends in his path – that has contributed to Bunyan’s popularity among children. The romantic quest aspect of Christian’s journey is also what inspires Valiant-for-truth to follow Christian on pilgrimage in Part II of Bunyan’s text, and his

Mary Yonge, George MacDonald (who staged amateur productions of The Pilgrim’s Progress with his family), R.L. Stevenson, J.M. Barrie, and A.A. Milne, as well as by famous child characters like Huckleberry Finn, Maggie Tulliver, the March sisters, and the Bastable children in E. Nesbit’s The Wouldbegoods (1901). While the Alice books do initiate, as Dusinberre claims, a “secular pattern” in the field of children’s literature (62-3), the influence of The Pilgrim’s Progress on nineteenth-century writers of boys’ romances like Charles Kingsley indicates Bunyan’s persisting legacy in terms of both nineteenth-century literature in general, and nineteenth-century children’s literature in particular.
summary of Part I highlights the romantic aspects of Christian’s journey:

They [Valiant-for-truth’s parents] told me of the Slough of Despond, where Christian was well nigh smothered. They told me that there were archers standing ready in Beelzebub-Castle to shoot them that should knock at the Wicket-Gate for Entrance. They told me also of the Wood, and dark Mountains, of the Hill Difficulty, of the Lions, and also of the three Giants, Bloody-man, Maul, and Slay-Good. They said, moreover that there was a foul Fiend haunted the Valley of Humiliation, and that Christian was, by him, almost bereft of Life. Besides, said they, You must go over the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where the Hobgoblins are, where the Light is Darkness, where the Way is full of Snares, Pits, Traps, and Gins. They told me also of Giant-Despair, of Doubting-Castle, and of the Ruins that the Pilgrims met with here. Further, they said, I must go over the enchanted Ground, which was dangerous; And that after all this, I should find a River, over which I should find no Bridge, and that that River did lie betwixt me and the Celestial Country. (295-6, original emphasis)

Here Valiant-for-truth transforms his parents’ warning, which was mistakenly meant to discourage their son from following in Christian’s footsteps, into an enticing description of the obstacles that must be heroically vanquished (the three giants) or overcome (the Slough of Despond, the Hill Difficulty, the Valley of Humiliation) on pilgrimage, with no intimation of the religious significance of Christian’s journey. As Alison White remarks, Valiant-for-truth’s summary of the pilgrimage is entirely “folklorish. He has missed all the allegory, even as did countless thousands of child readers of Bunyan” (42).

The possibility of ignoring the allegory in his work is clearly something that Bunyan
himself was anxious to prevent. In “The Author’s Apology for his Book,” the envoi to Part I of his text, Bunyan addresses his problematic borrowing of conventions from chivalric romance, a genre that he himself admittedly read with enthusiasm as a child, in order to write an allegory about an individual’s journey towards spiritual salvation.\(^{57}\) He acknowledges that, like a fisherman, his strategy has been to use “snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets” in order to bait and “catch the fish” (5);\(^{58}\) however, he also promises that these so-called “fancies” will “stick like Burrs” in the reader’s mind and “may be to the helpless comforters” (9). Bunyan’s choice of language in his Apology, particularly the word “fancies,” also creates an appropriate response to the language directed against his pilgrim: as Christian embarks on his quest, his neighbour Obstinate charges him with being a “mis-led fantastical fello[w]” who “has take[n] a fancy by the end, [and is] wiser in [his] own eyes than seven men that can render a reason” (15-16). But Bunyan’s pilgrim is later vindicated when he is rewarded with the new appellation “Christian,” replacing his earlier identity as Graceless; in response to Obstinate’s accusation, Bunyan reaffirms Christian’s spiritual purpose as the ultimate goal of his journey.

### Christian’s vainglory, Bunyan’s problematic allegory

As with the author’s use of allegorical names throughout the text, Christian’s naming or renaming reinforces the religious meaning behind Bunyan’s work. But Christian’s undertaking is not simply the result of a religious calling or awakening. While the impetus for his journey is

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\(^{57}\) Although Bunyan does not refer to the romance genre by name in the first part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the criticism of his use of popular romantic tropes in an otherwise religious text prompted Bunyan to include the line, in “The Author’s Way of Sending forth His Second Part of The Pilgrim,” “But some love not the method of your first/Romance they count it; throw’t away as dust” (174). Bunyan’s response to this allegation is that while some readers will fail to appreciate his method, others will surely respond positively to it.

\(^{58}\) Bunyan’s reference to “snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets” (5) is similar to Valiant-for-truth’s description of the “Snares, Pits, Traps, and Gins” that Christian must face on his quest (296), further suggesting that Bunyan is alluding to romantic conventions in his apology.
ostensibly his desire to achieve salvation ("What shall I do to be saved?" [12, original emphasis]), there are competing motivations behind Christian’s pilgrimage. As the fiend Apollyon acknowledges, Christian is also motivated by his own personal desire for vainglory; he tells Christian that, “thou art inwardly desirous of vain glory in all thou sayest and doest” (63), and the truth of this statement is confirmed by Christian’s behaviour throughout Part I of Bunyan’s text. For instance, when Christian attempts to overtake his companion and fellow pilgrim Faithful in the road, Bunyan writes: “Then did Christian vain-gloriously smile, because he had gotten the start of his Brother, but not taking good heed to his feet, he suddenly stumbled and fell, and could not rise again, until Faithful came up to help him” (71, original emphasis). Christian’s inner craving for distinction manifests itself here as a sense of male-male competition with his “Brother” Faithful; however, Christian is quickly humbled after he falls in the road, only to be helped up by the companion whom he was so eager to outstrip.

Christian’s desire for vainglory problematizes the reading of Bunyan’s text as a straightforward religious allegory by complicating the hero’s motivation for embarking on pilgrimage. Rather than ascribing Christian’s overzealousness to his desire to achieve salvation, we as readers must instead consider that this behaviour indicates Christian’s longing for the sense of personal glory that a knight in shining armour embodies. That Bunyan’s pilgrim is intent on securing his own reputation is indicated by his reaction to the Interpreter’s example of the man who physically battles his way into heaven. When Christian sees that this man’s efforts are subsequently rewarded with an invitation to enter God’s house with the call “Come in, come in;/ Eternal Glory thou shalt win,” he interrupts the Interpreter’s ensuing explanation by telling

59 Once considered to be the eighth deadly sin, the noun “vainglory” is defined in the OED (1 a.) as “Glory that is vain, empty, or worthless; inordinate or unwarranted pride in one's accomplishments or qualities; disposition or tendency to exalt oneself unduly; idle boasting or vaunting.”
him, “I think verily I know the meaning of this,” and hastily expresses the urge to resume his journey (36, original emphasis). In this respect, Christian’s eagerness to win “Eternal Glory” for himself creates a conflict of genres in Bunyan’s text. While in a traditional chivalric romance, vainglory or the desire to secure personal fame is both the motivation for the quest as well as a contributing factor to its ultimate success (by encouraging a knight to perform heroically in order to secure his reputation), the religious nature of Christian’s journey demands that he credit his accomplishments to a higher power. As part of his spiritual “progress,” then, Christian must conquer his desire to distinguish himself with the realization that eternal glory is not truly his for the winning: although he can partake in this glory, it rightfully belongs to Christ as the result of his sacrifice on the cross.

Rather than striving for his own personal glory, Christian must come to recognize and accept that the very nature of his religious quest is self-abnegation: by crossing the River and delivering his body up to God, he must acknowledge God’s supreme glory in the operation of His divine plan. That Christian begins to relinquish personal glory in favour of divine glory is revealed in the course of his pilgrimage to the Celestial City. For instance, in a conversation with his companion Hopeful, Christian acknowledges that during his encounter with Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, the trio of thieves responsible for robbing Little-faith, he “found it hard work to quit myself like a man” and therefore cannot “boast of any Manhood,” attributing his success to the fact that he was clothed in the Armour of Proof “as God would have it” (133). By crediting his triumph to God in providing his “Foot[man]” (as he refers to himself) with the Armour of Proof (134), Christian demonstrates his recognition that this achievement is not his own personal victory but instead belongs rightfully to God, a significant breakthrough in his spiritual conversion.
By attributing his success to God in this instance, Christian has seemingly overcome his “one overruling defect,” his natural inclination for vainglory. This reading re-asserts the Pilgrim as an allegory, in that having seemingly overcome his sin, Christian is subsequently rewarded with acceptance into the Celestial City. And yet this interpretation is complicated by the problematic status of vainglory in Bunyan’s text. The conflict between Christian’s chivalric masculinity and his intended religious goal persists throughout the text, as indicated by his declaration that he cannot “boast of any Manhood” (133). Christian’s language here links his masculinity to the physical obstacles and challenges that he surmounts over the course of his journey – for instance, when he “manfully” resists Apollyon’s physical attacks (64). As such, by attributing his success against the thieves to God, Christian’s sense of his own manhood has been diminished; his spiritual victory results in a corresponding blow to his masculine pride, which is frequently registered in the text in terms of Christian’s ability to fight and conquer his enemies. Because vainglory (defined in part as “idle boasting or vaunting” by the OED) underlies Christian’s sense of his own manhood, Christian’s “overruling defect” also contributes, paradoxically, to the success of his spiritual pilgrimage, in that it provides him with the courage to face his opponents in battle.

The Pilgrim’s Progress ultimately presents a model of male behaviour that attempts to balance necessary courage with overconfidence. On the one hand, Bunyan’s ties to the chivalric romance genre emphasize the physical nature of his spiritual pilgrimage: his male pilgrims are required to bravely face their enemies in combat, and the sheer physical manpower of Bunyan’s triumvirate of male heroes, Christian, Great-heart, and Valiant-for-truth, is often necessary in

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60 As Charles Kingsley writes in the preface to an 1860 edition of The Pilgrim’s Progress, each of Bunyan’s pilgrims can be characterized by “some one overruling defect or virtue” (vi).
order to ensure that the weaker pilgrims successfully reach the Celestial City, a group which includes Christiana and Mercy, as well as men like Feeblemind, Despondency, and Ready-to-halt. On the other hand, this physical courage, if taken to an extreme, manifests itself in the pilgrims as an unattractive need to triumph over others out of sheer pride or vanity: the definition of vainglory. As such, the text demonstrates that strong men are equally capable of committing great errors on pilgrimage, particularly when they are motivated by a sense of vainglory: as Christian encourages Hopeful to take a shortcut that ultimately leads to the Giant Despair’s castle, Bunyan writes in his marginal notes that “Strong Christian may lead weak ones out of the way” (115). In this respect, the author emphasizes that Christian’s strength and courage – the very qualities that define and distinguish him as a man in Bunyan’s text – can alternatively function as both his greatest assets as well as his greatest liabilities on his journey to the Celestial City.

“be not extreme,/ In playing with the out-side of my dream”: The reception of The Pilgrim’s Progress as a romance

Neil Keeble writes, in reference to Part I of The Pilgrim’s Progress, that, “To be a Pilgrim is to be a man” (qtd in Pooley xxix); yet, as my analysis demonstrates, masculinity or its performance is always problematic in Bunyan’s text. To be a male pilgrim requires strength tempered by humility, a delicate balance that is particularly difficult for Christian to maintain with consistency throughout his journey. Bunyan’s conflicting genre commitments also problematize the performance of gender for his central pilgrim: because of the text’s religious message, Christian’s growing humility before God is a key indicator of his spiritual “progress,” and yet his

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61 Bunyan’s popular hymn, “All Who Would Valiant Be,” included in Part II, emphasizes both courage (“Who would true Valour see”) and physical strength (“His strength the more is:/ No lion can him fright,/ He’ll with a Giant fight”) as necessary qualities that a pilgrim must possess (297).
physical strength and courage are deemed laudable qualities in any true Christian knight. Bunyan’s ties to chivalric romance demand strong, heroic male characters; nonetheless, if we privilege the spiritual allegory at the core of the text (as the author himself ostensibly intended), we as readers cannot wholeheartedly celebrate Christian’s individual prowess, and are instead required to attribute the hero’s successful journey to God: the message that Christian and Hopeful reiterate by singing in unison, as the gates of the Celestial City close in upon them, ““Blessing, Honour, Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne”” (163).

Christian’s final words uphold the importance of divine glory, and yet the reception of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* suggests that readers take away a focus on individual fame and achievement from Bunyan’s text. Like Valiant-for-truth, who was inspired to go on pilgrimage after hearing of Christian’s famous exploits, readers – particularly child-readers, like Nesbit’s Bastable children – have focused on the high degree of personal glory achieved by characters like Christian and Great-heart in conquering and slaying the enemies they encounter on pilgrimage. That the Bastables choose to celebrate the physically strong and courageous heroes in the text, rather than Christiana and Mercy or the trio of physically weak male characters who are nevertheless successful in completing the pilgrimage, indicates that child-readers were reluctant to accept Bunyan’s central message that balances courage with overconfidence, and strength with humility. While the guides who encourage the troubled Christian on his journey – namely the Evangelist who directs Christian as he embarks on his pilgrimage and the Porter who teaches him with the use of religious emblems at the House of the Interpreter – are equally heroic, the importance of these religious figures is overshadowed by the chivalry of Christian

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62 Bunyan’s Apology to Part I characterizes the nature of his text as “a Truth within a Fable” (9), much as “Cabinets enclose the Gold” (6) or as “a Pearl may in a Toad’s-head dwell” (5); this “Truth” is the religious allegory at the heart of his text, which has been cloaked in “Fable” and “fancies” (romance).
and Great-heart: all of the young Bastables “wanted to be Mr. Greatheart,” but none, tellingly, express a similar desire to portray either of the religious guides or any of the less robust characters in Bunyan’s text (Nesbit 32).

The Bastables’ fascination with Great-heart indicates the persistent temptation to read *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as a romance while overlooking its spiritual allegory, a danger that Bunyan himself recognized and tried to circumvent. In the conclusion to Part I, the author warns his readers to “take heed/ Of mis-interpreting” and “be not extreme,/ In playing with the out-side of my dream,” suggesting his own awareness that readers would be attracted to the romance or the “out-side” of his dream, while overlooking the inside, the kernel of truth or “the substance of my matter” (165). By borrowing from chivalric romance, Bunyan himself recognized that he was entering into a gamble, one in which he risked losing his intended spiritual message at the expense of attracting a wider readership. And yet, despite the reactions of the Bastables and of other child readers, the enduring reputation of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as a text suitable for religious reading suggests the ultimate success of Bunyan’s venture: while children were entertained and amused by the romantic trappings of the *Pilgrim*, parents and Sunday school teachers appreciated it for its “didactic moral usefulness” (Hammond 99).

Like Susan Bogert Warner and other Evangelical writers dating from the mid-Victorian period, Charles Kingsley was seemingly eager to replicate the success of Bunyan’s formula among younger readers. However, while Christianity and nineteenth-century gender norms largely correspond with one another in Warner’s novel *The Wide, Wide World*, Kingsley is unable to reconcile religion with romance in *The Water-Babies*; in his attempt to balance allegory with the heroic masculine codes belonging to chivalric romance, Kingsley, like his predecessor Bunyan, risks losing the religious message at the core of his work. As in *The
Pilgrim’s Progress, this conflict between genres is ultimately registered in the text’s problematic gender ideology: similarly to Bunyan’s Christian, Kingsley’s hero Tom must negotiate between conflicting codes governing male behaviour, embodying both the Christian principles of kindness and forbearance, as well as the physical persistence and perseverance required for him to survive, first as a chimney sweep under an abusive master, and then later as a vulnerable water-baby in an unforgiving, social Darwinian ecosystem. This unresolved tension surrounding gender codes in The Water-Babies can be traced to Kingsley’s two-fold debt to both Bunyan and to nineteenth-century female Evangelical writers. Despite Kingsley’s caricature of Warner’s work as part of the fodder of “Waste-paper-land,” I aim to establish here that The Water-Babies is as indebted to the Evangelical-oriented literature produced by the author’s female contemporaries as it is to Bunyan’s pioneering of the male quest in The Pilgrim’s Progress. In the analysis that follows, I will begin to explore how this complicated dual inheritance is operating in Kingsley’s novel.

A sugared pill: The problem of genre in The Water-Babies

By examining Kingsley’s inheritance of female-authored didactic children’s literature, a tradition exemplified by Warner’s novel The Wide, Wide World, I am aligning myself with critics like Humphry Carpenter and Stephen Prickett who have puzzled over the generic complexity of The Water-Babies. This confusion arises in part from the novel’s doubled structure, which divides the text into two corresponding sections: the first chronicles Tom’s life as a chimney-sweep in

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63 Carpenter calls The Water-Babies “a prospectus for future genres of children’s fiction,” while Stephen Prickett argues that the novel deliberately makes “quite conscious use of opposing elements to produce a complex and highly organized artistic structure” (145).

64 Like the relationship between the two Parts of The Pilgrim’s Progress, the two halves of Kingsley’s novel also suggest the doubled or mirrored structure of the Bible – in other words, the echoing of events from the Old Testament in the New Testament. For a further analysis of Bunyan’s use of Biblical structure, see Michael Austin.
a setting that is recognizably Victorian England, while the second describes his rebirth – or possibly his afterlife – as a water-baby in an underwater landscape populated by both real and magical creatures. Although many, if not most, critics privilege the fantastic half of the novel, arguing that the text should be considered entirely as a work of fantasy, others have used Kingsley’s overt didacticism to consider The Water-Babies variously as a “transformation of the conduct book genre” (Webb 81), a form of animal fable (Cosslett Talking), and a catechetical paradigm (Hawley). While I am also interested in the element of fantasy in The Water-Babies, particularly as it manifests itself in Tom’s quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere, my focus in this chapter remains on the didactic inheritance of Kingsley’s work. By linking Kingsley to Bunyan and Warner, I wish to explore the didactic roots of Kingsley’s fantasy, which in its bridging of genres results in a pivotal text for the emergence of the boy’s quest-romance later in the century.

The uneasy blend of fantasy and religious didacticism that Kingsley pioneers in The Water-Babies presents a difficult balance for the author, as he himself recognized. Like Bunyan, Kingsley was similarly intent on preserving his religious message, and consequently attempted to direct readers’ interpretations of The Water-Babies. In a letter to his mentor F.D. Maurice, one of the leaders of the Christian Socialist movement to which he ascribed, the author chooses to highlight the moral or religious meaning of the text:

I have tried, in all sorts of queer ways, to make children and grown folks understand that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature; and that nobody knows anything about anything, in the sense in

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65 George MacDonald’s At the Back of the North Wind (1868), published five years after The Water-Babies, similarly alternates between the realistic setting of Victorian London and the fantastic setting of the land at the back of the North Wind, which may similarly stand in for a kind of afterlife.
which they may know God in Christ, and right and wrong. And if I have wrapped up my parable in seeming Tomfooleries, it is because so only could I get a pill swallowed by a generation who are not believing with anything like their whole heart, in the living God. (qtd in Prickett 140)

Here, Kingsley seems to dismiss the strong fantasy element in his work; in his own words, *The Water-Babies* is merely a glorified religious parable wrapped in “seeming Tomfooleries,” a sentiment which is echoed towards the end of the text when Kingsley abruptly asks the reader, “And now, my dear little man, what should we learn from this parable?” (230).

But the author’s intended message in *The Water-Babies* is, as Carpenter writes, full of “contradictions and intellectual muddles” (38): despite Kingsley’s characterization of his work as a sugared pill in his letter to Maurice, in the text itself the author frequently reminds his readers that, as the very last sentence reads, “this is all a fairy tale, and only fun and pretence; and, therefore, you are not to believe a word of it, even if it is true” (232). Given the specific nature of the relationship the two men shared – Kingsley considered himself to be Maurice’s disciple – it is not surprising that Kingsley chooses to emphasize the religious subtext of his text in the letter to his “Master,” as he reportedly referred to Maurice. In the text, however, there are moments in which Kingsley refuses to pin an explicit message onto his fairytale as, for instance, when he claims that the novel is “only fun and pretence ... even if it is true.” Like Dickens, who in “Frauds on the Fairies” (1853) compares the teetotalism in George Cruikshank’s fairytales to “the famous definition of a weed; a thing growing up in a wrong place” (97), Kingsley also

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66 Prickett also questions Kingsley’s “throwaway reference to the parable as a ‘pill’” in his letter to Maurice, arguing that the fact that “Tom’s name itself is derived from ‘Tom-foolery’” indicates that we should question the sincerity of Kingsley’s claim (140).
seems uncomfortable with the marriage of fairytale or fantasy and didacticism that his text attempts to create.

Kingsley’s ambivalent attitude to fairytale throughout *The Water-Babies*, embracing some of its conventions while rejecting others, is also connected to this uneasy union between fairytale and didacticism in the text. The tales told by the fairies or “fairy” tales that appear in *The Water-Babies* contain no element of the fantastic, but instead resemble parables or short moral tales used by Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby in order to teach their young charges about right and wrong: as Tom observes, the fairies’ stories are all about “good children ... who did what they did not like, and took trouble for other people, and worked to feed their little brothers and sisters, instead of caring only for their play” (168). The explicit didacticism of these tales as well as their origin from within the feminine sphere – the water-babies generally listen to the tales while clinging to the fairies or sitting in their laps – suggest the underlying reason for Kingsley’s discomfort. While in *Glaucus* (1855), Kingsley describes fairytales as being “manful and rational” and therefore “good stuff for tiny muscular Christians,” in *The Water-Babies*, fairytales more closely resemble the “sugared slough of sentimental poetry” and fiction that weaken Tom and render him effeminate (15). By resisting these tales as posing a risk to his protagonist’s manly “progress,” Kingsley paradoxically attempts to disavow the tradition of female sentimental and religious-minded literature on which his own work is

67 Despite subtitling his novel “A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby” and opening accordingly with the familiar phrase “Once upon a time,” Kingsley, like George MacDonald in *The Princess and Curdie*, ultimately eschews the genre’s traditional happily-ever-after ending, refusing to marry Tom and Ellie at the end of the novel because, as he teases the reader, “[d]on’t you know that no one ever marries in a fairy tale, under the rank of a prince or a princess?” (230).

68 These tales of perfectly well-behaved boys and girls suggest the accounts of child prophets and prodigies popular in the Puritan tradition of children’s literature, such as the stories featured in James Janeway’s *A Token for Children* (1672): one of Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby’s tales, for instance, is “about a holy child in old times, who was martyred by the heathen because it would not worship idols” (168).
The “Narrow Narrow World”: Warner and the Evangelical tradition

Kingsley’s borrowing from Bunyan affords *The Water-Babies* with a mixed inheritance, effectively linking his work to both male and female literary traditions. On the one hand, Kingsley adopts Bunyan’s gendered quest as the prototype for his own protagonist’s journey, choosing to send Tom far away from the protective maternal enclave of St. Brandan’s isle in order to prove his masculinity. On the other hand, this connection to the Puritan tradition also strengthens Kingsley’s ties to the female Evangelical writers, whose work also takes its inspiration from *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Yet, like Nathaniel Hawthorne who expressed his contempt for female writers as “a d_____d mob of scribbling women,” Kingsley was also keen to distance his fiction from that of his female contemporaries (qtd in Kelly “Appendix F” 255). In *The Water-Babies*, this disavowal specifically takes the form of satire: on his journey to the Other-End-of-the-World, Tom encounters Waste-paper-land, where he sees

all the little people in the world, writing all the little books in the world, about all the other little people in the world; probably because they had no great people to write about: and if the names of the books were not Squeeky, nor the Pumplighter, nor the Narrow Narrow World, nor the Hills of the Chattermuch, nor the Children’s Twaddeday, why then they were something else. (204-5)

Here Kingsley parodies the titles of popular female-authored American bestsellers of the 1850s, including three novels authored by Susan Bogert Warner, originally titled *Queechy* (1852), *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), and *The Hills of Shatemuc* (1856), and one by Maria Susanna Cummins entitled *The Lamplighter* (1854). As the author’s tone indicates, these sentimental novels, written by “little people” about other “little people,” should naturally be of no concern to

partially based.
Kingsley’s hero Tom, whose life will naturally be lived on a much larger scale by virtue of his gender: in contrast to the “Narrow Narrow” world of petty domestic concerns, Tom expresses a desire at the beginning of the text to get beyond the confines of the little stream in Vendale, to “get out into the wide wide world, and enjoy all the wonderful sights of which he was sure it was full” (101).

But despite the proclaimed narrowness of Warner’s fictional world in contrast to his own, Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* shares a similar religious ideology with the sentimental fiction produced by his female contemporaries, particularly Warner’s bestselling novel *The Wide, Wide World*. In response to the mid nineteenth-century Evangelical revival, which prioritized eternal salvation over earthly pleasure, both Kingsley’s and Warner’s texts can be characterized as conversion narratives that use *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in order to signal their protagonists’ respective degrees of spiritual progress. While the scope and setting of this progress assumes radically different forms in each text in accordance with nineteenth-century gender norms – Tom is sent on a quest to “‘the world’s end’” (177), while Ellen Montgomery, the heroine of *The Wide, Wide World*, remains perpetually confined within the domestic sphere – Bunyan’s text plays a pivotal role in terms of structuring the spiritual conversion of both Kingsley’s and Warner’s protagonists, who are both encouraged to resign themselves to God and, in so doing, to “sloug[h] off” their “unregenerate sel[ves]” (Tompkins *Sensational* 182).69

For Warner’s protagonist Ellen Montgomery, religious conversion is a difficult and painful process. Separated from her beloved mother as a result of her illness and forced to live

69 Tompkins is referring here to the “loss of self” or “psychological death” experienced by Ellen Montgomery as she learns to resign her own will to that of a higher power (182). But this description could equally refer to Tom’s “sloughing off” of the “sooty old shell” that represents his former self after he becomes a water-baby and begins the process of Christian conversion (Kingsley 83).
with her uncaring aunt Fortune Emerson, Ellen must essentially replace this close maternal bond by forging an intimate relationship with God. That this conversion ultimately coincides with Ellen receiving news of her mother’s death is not surprising, given her admission earlier in the text that she “love[s] [her mother] a great deal better” than Christ, and therefore “‘cannot be one of his children,’” according to Mrs. Montgomery (Warner 38). Her mother’s later death ultimately enables Ellen to devote herself more wholly to God and to learn the importance of submission to His will; in her mother’s absence, “[Ellen] began to cling more to that one unchangeable friend from whose love neither life nor death can sever those that believe in him” (347). The importance of submission to the divine will – including Ellen’s acceptance of her mother’s death because “‘all is done in love and shall work good for you’” even “‘if we cannot often see how’” (349), as Ellen’s adopted “brother” John Humphreys tells her – was familiar to Warner’s readers: as Tompkins writes, “[the doctrine of submission] belonged to the ideology of the evangelical reform movement that had molded the consciousness of the nation in the years before the Civil War” (“Afterword” 593).

Just as *The Pilgrim’s Progress* fuels Tom’s quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere in *The Water-Babies*, Bunyan’s text similarly plays a key role in Ellen’s process of becoming a Christian. The book ultimately triggers Ellen’s spiritual conversion: after receiving it as a gift from John, an aspiring clergyman who becomes her spiritual mentor, Ellen is able both to accept her mother’s death and to recognize the changed nature of her relationship with Christ. When she reads together with John the scene in which Christian lays down his burden, receiving in return a mark upon his forehead that John deems “‘the mark of God’s children,’” Ellen is suddenly convinced of the change that has taken place within her; “[falling] upon her knees in a perfect agony of weeping,” Ellen is suddenly overwhelmed by the epiphany that she too has been marked by God because she has finally grown to love him and to strive to keep his
commandments (351, 352). The realization that she has become one of God’s children also, paradoxically, reinforces the close bond between Ellen and her deceased mother. Although Mrs. Montgomery had previously indicated that Ellen’s overpowering love for her was precluding her ability to love Christ, Ellen’s recognition that she has been converted to the Christian faith in fulfillment of her mother’s wish creates “a link of communion between her mother and her that was wanting before,” “a dear something in common, though one had in the mean while removed to heaven, and the other was still a lingerer on the earth” (352).

Just as she does with her mother, Ellen plays a similarly subordinate role in her relationship with John Humphreys, reflecting the way in which the doctrine of submission that Warner’s text promotes is clearly gendered. The strict obedience that John consistently requires of Ellen as her surrogate brother/father mirrors that which God requires of his children according to John’s teachings: he tells Ellen, in response to her mother’s death, that “‘If you are his child, all is done in love and shall work good for you’” (349). The fact that John is not only Ellen’s surrogate brother but also her future husband suggests that John is training Ellen, consciously or unconsciously, to show him the deference that he will expect from his future wife. In Warner’s final, unpublished chapter to the novel (printed in the 1987 edition featuring an afterword by Tompkins), Ellen’s childlike state of dependency on John is shown to persist into their married life. The authority implicit in her role as “‘steward’” of the household (as she is appointed by her husband) is belied by her constant reliance on her husband’s judgment in order to guide her thoughts and behaviour: as she tells John herself, “‘You will tell me if I do anything wrong, and it will be just like old times. How I have longed for those old times!’” (583). Religious ideology and gender ideology are mutually supportive in *The Wide, Wide World*: as both a woman and a Christian, Ellen is encouraged to submit herself to patriarchal authority.
Rather than encouraging Ellen to strive beyond the unfortunate circumstances that have been dealt to her, particularly the necessity of growing up among unpleasant and uncaring relatives, the repeated message offered up to Ellen by her spiritual guardians, including John and his sister Alice, is to “submit” or reconcile herself to her current situation. The text’s opening scene effectively introduces the reader to the “narrow” domestic setting in which Ellen is expected to pass the majority of her time both as a child and later (as we see in the concluding chapter) as a woman: left alone in the house with her ailing mother, Ellen turns her attentions to the view outside her window, watching the lamplighter’s progress as he makes his way down the street. The “restricted focus” of this scene, as Jane Tompkins writes, not only confines the reader in “the dark parlor with Ellen” so that the minute details of the character’s experiences become the “all-engrossing features of the reader’s world,” it also highlights Ellen’s “vulnerability” (*Sensational Designs* 174). “[F]orced to live within the boundaries authority prescribes and constantly under the pressure of a hostile supervision,” Ellen’s sequestered existence “becomes almost too painful to bear” for the reader (174).

Ellen’s frequently meagre surroundings – her bedroom in her aunt’s house is “very bare of furniture,” with only a dressing-table, a pier-table, two chairs, and a bed (102) – reflect what Tompkins has argued is the text’s preoccupation with “self-suppression”: “[o]ver and over again the heroine must overcome the impulse to rebel and justify herself, must throw herself on the mercy of the Lord and ask his help in forgiving those who have wronged her” (176). Though this is a difficult process fraught with recurrent setbacks, in reflection of the Puritan philosophy that “life ... [is] a continuing spiritual contest between conversion and backsliding” (Demers 54), Ellen’s ultimate success results in an “empty[ing] of self” or a “loss of self” (Tompkins *Sensational* 182). Unlike Tom, who is encouraged to go out on a quest “and see the world, if he intended ever to be a man” (Kingsley 170), Ellen grows to embody “the opposite of self-
realization” in that she no longer exists for herself but for other people (182). By the end of Warner’s text, Ellen has successfully learned to imitate her friend and guide Alice Humphreys, whose household role is to “supp[l]y what was wanting everywhere” like the “transparent glaz[e]” used by painters to coat their pictures; in her role as steward over the “interior arrangements of the household,” Ellen resembles the nineteenth-century “Angel in the House” or ideal wife who constantly attends to her husband’s needs (Warner 582).

Because of the rigid domestic setting to which Warner confines her heroine, Tompkins argues that, contrary to long-standing criticism of female-authored sentimental fiction from this period, The Wide, Wide World is not “escapist” (Sensational 175). While the work produced by Warner’s male contemporaries, like Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), frequently presents the possibility of “freedom and autonomy that goes beyond the bounds of the wildest romance,” Ellen’s age and gender prevent her from breaking free of her guardians’ control (175). While Tom and Huck are able to break away from the restrictions of domesticity, as embodied by Aunt Polly, the Widow Douglas, and Miss Watson, Ellen is “never for a moment out of the power of her guardians”: without the possibility of escape, Ellen must finally reconcile herself to her repressive home life with the help of her religious faith (175).

Because Kingsley’s text simultaneously looks backward to the female-authored sentimental tradition exemplified by Warner (1850), as well as forward to late nineteenth-century male-authored novels of escapism and adventure like Twain’s bestsellers, The Water-Babies (1863) is positioned somewhere between these two traditions. On the one hand, Kingsley shares with Twain a strong desire for escape from “feminine plots” (Kidd 60), borrowing Bunyan’s model of the male quest so that Tom can grow into his manhood independently from the three
maternal fairies. On the other hand, Tom’s behaviour at the outset of the text is clearly in need of reform: like Ellen Montgomery in *The Wide, Wide World*, Tom must be converted to the Christian faith before he can prove himself “fit to ... be a man” on his journey to the Other-end-of-Nowhere (Kingsley 229). This mixed attitude toward religious instruction is conveyed by Kingsley’s masculine narrator, who encourages his hero to retain the qualities that the fairies wish to eliminate in Tom: namely, his boisterousness and “pluck.” By attempting to balance adventure with religious instruction in this way, Kingsley’s text pioneers the American tradition of the “Bad Boy” novel, in which authors like Twain attempt to liberate their protagonists from the confining forces of femininity and didacticism.

Reforming a bad boy: Kingsley and the Evangelical tradition

Tom’s behaviour modification through the fairies’ teachings and punishments resembles Miss Watson’s and the Widow Douglas’ efforts to “sivilize” Huckleberry Finn in Twain’s novel, effectively linking *The Water-Babies* to the genre of the Bad Boy novel as explored by Kenneth Kidd in *Making American Boys*. While Kidd considers this genre – initiated by the publication of Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1869) – as an American phenomenon arising out of the post-Civil War era, there are striking similarities between Kingsley’s work and that of these American writers. Like the mothering that Tom experiences in St. Brandan’s isle, for instance, early childhood is depicted in the work of these Bad Boy novelists as a period of “feminine” dependency that male children will happily soon outgrow. This “pervasive fantasy” that “men become masculine only after an initial feminine stage” is wholeheartedly embraced by Kingsley’s fellow countrymen Charles Dickens, John Ruskin, and Lewis Carroll, for whom the “male myth” of a lost girlhood serves as a means to “reconnect with [their] own lost sel[ves],” as Catherine Robson has explored (3). Kingsley, however, aligns himself with his American
counterparts by only reluctantly accepting this early feminine stage, regarding this period of Tom’s water-baby-hood with both impatience and anxiety. Much like the new “respectable” clothes purchased by the Widow Douglas for her charge Huck Finn, which cause him to “sweat and sweat and feel all cramped up” (Twain 1), the feminine was “imagined as a stage to be suffered through and then surpassed” by novelists like Twain and Aldrich, as well as by Kingsley (Kidd 59).

In *The Water-Babies* specifically, Tom’s maturation into a “great man of science” is dependent upon his initial feminine re-education at the hands of the three maternal fairies (229). Through their teachings, particularly the lesson of treating other creatures with kindness and respect, the fairies begin to counteract and to reverse the negative influence of Tom’s previous life with Grimes, who has molded his charge into a “bad boy.” While the fairies promote Christian charity and kindness, Grimes’ rough handling indirectly teaches Tom to impose his own will on the weak and vulnerable: after enduring his master’s physical punishments, Tom anticipates “the fine times coming” when “he would have apprentices, one, two, three ... [and] would bully them, and knock them about, just as his master did to him” (44). Despite the narrator’s assurance that after his “sweet sleep” Tom has entirely forgotten his previous life, including Grimes’ harsh treatment, Tom seems to model his former master’s cruelty in his own interactions with the natural world after his rebirth as a water-baby by, for instance, disrupting the caddis-fly during her transformation (an echo of his intrusion on Ellie in her little white bedroom) and chasing a “pool full of little trout” (90-1). Although the narrator concedes that

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70 Tom’s bad behaviour clashes with Kingsley’s chapter epigraphs, including selections from Wordsworth and Coleridge, that emphasize childhood purity. For instance, the epigraph to Chapter 6 is taken from Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” (1807), in which the poet writes “Thou little child, yet glorious in the might/ Of heaven-born freedom on thy Being’s height” (qtd. in Kingsley 160). This vision of childhood innocence contrasts ironically with Tom’s behaviour in this particular chapter in which,
this desire to “hun[t] and tormen[t] creatures for mere sport” may in fact be part of a little boy’s nature, he also asserts that “whether it is nature or not, little boys can help it, and must help it” (90). Tom’s bad behaviour must therefore undergo a process of modification in order to keep him in line with the Christian principles outlined and embodied by the fairies, “Be done by as you did” and “Do as you would be done by,” a necessary step in the gradual process of his physical and moral evolution.71

Kingsley’s account of Tom’s gradual transformation from a boy who has never “heard of God, or of Christ” (Kingsley 43-44) into a stalwart Christian soldier resembles a “host of evangelical conversion stories that were being produced for children in the mid-nineteenth century,” including Warner’s The Wide, Wide World (Carpenter 38). Like Ellen Montgomery, Tom must learn to regulate his behaviour, but while Warner’s heroine must curb her excessively “feminine” emotions – she is frequently urged to staunch her tears – Tom must check his “naturally” boyish urge to bully creatures who are weaker than himself. Before he can embark on a quest to prove his masculinity, he must first abide by the narrator’s instructions – “little boys can help it, and must help it” – by demonstrating that he can repress his more “savage” instincts to “hun[t] and tormen[t] creatures” (90). In this respect, Tom’s initial feminine re-education hints at the feminine “ethic of submission” and self-suppression behind Ellen’s

71 Tom’s propensity to tease and bully his fellow creatures, coupled with the narrator’s assertion that “little boys can help it, and must help it” (90), indicates Kingsley’s debt to Bunyan and to the Puritans, for whom “backsliding” was a necessary part of the conversion process (Demers 54): the narrator is similarly encouraging Tom to closely monitor his own actions to keep his behaviour in line with Christian principles.
transformation in Warner’s text (Tompkins “Afterword” 585).72

Like Ellen’s perpetual effort to “‘compose [her]self’” throughout The Wide, Wide World (Warner 12-13), the process of behaviour modification is a continuous struggle for Tom, resulting both in repeated lapses and in consequent punishments dealt out by the fairies. And yet, despite the fact that both authors adopt a similar narrative pattern of transgression, repentance, and conversion common in Evangelical-oriented children’s fiction, Kingsley specifically targets Warner’s novel for critique in The Water-Babies in his depiction of Waste-paper-land. This caricature reveals both a grudging respect as well as a disdain for the “didacticism and domesticity” promoted in the best-selling, female-authored fiction of the 1850s and 1860s, a sense of ambivalence common among Kingsley’s male contemporaries.73 As Kidd writes, the attitude of the so-called Bad Boy novelists toward female religious and sentimental fiction was decidedly mixed: while frequently borrowing many of the same conventions, such as the motif of the “conversion” story, these writers also paradoxically “saw themselves as rebellious, as challenging the tales of pious children authored by women such as Susan Bogert Warner, Fanny Fern, Maria Cummins, and Harriet Beecher Stowe” (Kidd 61). Kingsley

72 Both Kingsley’s and Warner’s work demonstrates the dangerous consequences when boys and men act upon their seemingly “natural” urge to bully and dominate. According to Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, Warner’s text presents “several examples of men in whom gendered attributes have become distorted and dangerous,” including the clerk Mr. Saunders, Ellen’s father Mr. Montgomery and her Uncle Lindsay, who “embody tyrannical authoritarianism, cruelty, vindictiveness and insensitivity, qualities which they activate to render women helpless” (48). Even Ellen’s spiritual guardian and beloved “brother,” John Humphreys, is not exempt: like the horse that he beats into submission with his whip, John “achieves his control over Ellen as much by authoritarianism as by kindness” (49).

73 Nathaniel Hawthorne’s grievance with the “d____d mob of scribbling women” who have occupied the “public taste” with their “trash” followed the success of novels like The Lamplighter and The Wide, Wide World (qtd in Kelly “Appendix F” 255). Warner’s and Cummins’ novels were bestsellers in the 1850s just as Hawthorne and Kingsley were beginning to emerge on the literary scene: The Scarlet Letter was published in 1850, while Kingsley’s first novel Alton Locke was published in 1849. This time frame suggests that we might perhaps attribute Hawthorne’s and Kingsley’s contempt to resentment and envy at the success of these women writers in the literary marketplace.
employs a similar strategy by both adopting and disavowing the traditions of female sentimental fiction in *The Water-Babies*. As much as Kingsley’s caricature of Waste-paper-land indicates his eagerness to separate his own work from the “trash” (according to Nathaniel Hawthorne) produced by female novelists like Warner and Cummins, the maternal influence of the fairies – as well as their didactic and religious-themed parables – position his own writing in dangerously close proximity to this so-called “sugared slough” (Kingsley *Glaucus* 15).

The narrator’s anxiety: Introducing the quest-romance

Like the Bad Boy novelists, Kingsley seems willing to accept that Tom must first pass through a stage of “feminine” dependency on the fairies before embarking on his masculine quest. In accordance with the theory of recapitulation – the idea that each individual, in growing from babyhood to adulthood, was destined to repeat the process of human evolution from savagery to civilization – Tom is likened by the old Irishwoman (in actuality the Queen of the Fairies) to a “savage,” and Kingsley’s text is concerned with Tom’s evolution from being “like the beasts which perish” to a worthy man of industry (70): a considerable section of the novel is accordingly devoted to the time that Tom spends among the fairies in St. Brendan’s isle, which curtails his brutish treatment of his fellow creatures. But while Tom requires proper mothering, the actual practice of this mothering – when he is laid in the “softest place of all” and repeatedly kissed and cuddled (158) – creates anxiety for the narrator. The prospect of androgyny – of uniting “masculine energy with feminine unselfishness” – is both, as Claudia

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74 This behaviour modification is in keeping with nineteenth-century separate spheres ideology, in which “the male, who is begrimed by the world, needs to be cleansed through the female” (Reynolds *Girls* 81). The fairies cleanse Tom from the influence of Grimes, suggesting that proper mothering must necessarily come before proper fathering: we can see this also in Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, when Miss Watson attempts to reverse the negative impact of “Pap” on Huck’s behaviour (her influence is later superseded by Jim, who in some ways becomes a male role model for Huck).
Nelson writes, “entranc[ing] and terrif[ying], offering a solution to all masculine problems but potentially creating new ones,” including very real worries about effeminacy and the possibility of degeneration (Boys 153).

Despite the important period of rejuvenation and healing that Tom spends among the fairies in St. Brandan’s isle, Kingsley’s comments, in his role as the intrusive narrator of the novel, suggest his discomfort with the potentially damaging effect that too much coddling will have on his protagonist. The narrator voices this anxiety, for instance, when Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby sings about a lost doll at the request of a gathering of ostensibly male water-babies. Following her song about the “prettiest doll in the world” Kingsley (as narrator) exclaims “What a silly song for a fairy to sing! And what silly water-babies to be quite delighted at it!” (159), indicating that he is both puzzled and perturbed by the fact that his “rows and regiments” of water-babies – least of all his own stalwart hero Tom – are pleased by Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby’s song choice (159). That Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid relates to Tom the cautionary tale of the Doasyoulikes and proposes that he start on his quest to the-Other-end-of-

75 Kingsley’s particular fear of the degeneration of the male species in The Water-Babies is suggested by his reference to “the still stranger degradation of some cousins of [the common goose-barnacle], of which one hardly likes to talk, so shocking and ugly it is” (82). Lila Marz Harper argues that this reference is a “knowing comment on the unmentionable sexual reduction of the male barnacle” (134): as Darwin’s friend Henslow remarked to him in a letter, in some genera the male barnacles “become parasitic in the sack of the female, & thus fixed & half embedded in the flesh of their wives they pass their whole lives & can never move again” (qtd in Harper 134). Henslow’s account of the male barnacles “fixed & half embedded in the flesh of their wives” recalls Kingsley’s description of Tom being cuddled and nearly smothered against Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby’s breast.

76 The gender of the water-babies is ambiguous: they are sometimes female, like the little girls that Tom glimpses in a flash of lightening in the stream at Vendale, and sometimes male, as they are depicted in Joseph Noel Paton’s and Linley Sambourne’s illustrations. More often, however, the water-babies simply remain gender-neutral: Kingsley frequently uses the pronoun “it” in his text and the female illustrators of Kingsley’s novel post-1906 (when the novel came out of copyright), including Margaret Tarrant, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Mabel Lucie Attwell, imagine the water-babies as cherub-like, without any genitalia. These “sentimental” illustrations featuring Kewpie doll-like water-babies contrast sharply with Sambourne’s wood-cuts for the 1886 edition of the text, in which Tom is masculine and distinctly muscular (Kelly “A Note on the Text and Illustrations” 37). For more information on the visual depiction of the water-babies, see Alderson’s and Kelly’s notes on the illustrations in their respective editions of Kingsley’s text, as well as Mary Ison’s essay specifically on illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith.
Nowhere within a few pages of this episode suggests that the fairies, like the narrator, have recognized the finitude of Tom’s stay in St. Brendan’s isle, and that Tom has now surpassed this initial “feminine” stage of his childhood/water-baby-hood.

Mrs. Bedoneyasyoudid’s assertion that Tom must leave the “nursery” if he is “ever to be a man” indicates her awareness of his impending physical maturity (170). Having passed seven years among the fairies, Tom is presumably no longer a small boy: at the beginning of Chapter Seven, when Tom declares that he is “ready to be off, if it’s to the world’s end” (177), Linley Sambourne’s illustration depicts Tom as a muscular adolescent. Like the narrator who praises his protagonist as a “brave, determined little English bull-dog” for venturing beyond the safe confines of the little stream in Vendale and discovering the sea, Mrs. Bedoneyasyoudid’s language suggests Bunyan’s diction (“play the man,” “manfully”) in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*: in this respect, Kingsley echoes his predecessor in using language and diction to connect masculinity to the genre of quest-romance (114).

In proposing that Tom undertake this quest-journey, Mrs. Bedoneyasyoudid emphasizes that “he must go all alone by himself, and see with his own eyes, and smell with his own nose, and make his own bed, and lie on it, and burn his own fingers if he put them into the fire” (170). Here Mrs. Bedoneyasyoudid suggests that, as part of Tom’s development from boy to man, he must evolve beyond the parables and tales with explicit morals previously used to dictate his behaviour, and begin instead to direct his own course of action: for instance, the fairy refuses to

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77 Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* similarly adopts Bunyan’s “masculine” diction: for instance, as Ellen returns to her aunt after a prolonged stay with the Humphreys, she makes “a manful effort ... to stifle the tears that were choking her” (354). Curiously, though, Warner employs Bunyan’s gendered language to express the novel’s feminine “ethic of submission”: Ellen must “manfully” stifle her tears and reconcile herself to her sequestered life with her unpleasant relative.
provide Tom with directions to Shiny Wall, the first step on his long journey, reiterating her point that, “Little boys must take the trouble to find out things for themselves, or they will never grow to be men” (178). In this way, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid’s message to Tom mirrors the relationship between Kingsley’s paternal narrator and the child-reader or “little man” whom he addresses throughout the text. For instance, after recounting Tom’s long-awaited reunion with his fellow water-babies after he frees a lobster from a trap, the narrator directs his reader to “read this story nine times over, and then think for yourself” in order to connect Tom’s good deed with his eventual reward because “[i]t is not good for little boys to be told everything, and never to be forced to use their own wits” (145).

Rather than encouraging Tom to remain in St. Brandan’s isle and to dutifully follow her lessons, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid instead begins to praise Tom for demonstrating the courage to abandon this narrow sphere in favour of the outside world: when Tom tells the fairy that he is “ready to be off, if it’s to the world’s end,” Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid replies, “Ah! that is a brave, good boy” (177), and when he returns successfully from his quest, she asserts that he is now fit to go home with Ellie on Sundays, having “won his spurs in the great battle” (229). Like the narrator, who encourages his protagonist’s sense of adventure and initiative when (for instance) he leaves the safety of the stream in Vendale behind in order to discover the ocean, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid also begins to praise and reward Tom for his demonstrations of pluck,

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78 These two different voices – the female fairies and the male narrator – have previously been quite distinct from one another: while the fairies adopt what Barbara Wall has characterized as the condescending tones of the governess or Sunday-school teacher, the narrator, though at times equally preachy, flirts with addressing both the boy in the text (Tom) and the boys outside the text (his readers) as soon-to-be equals: the narrator’s audience is composed of “British boy[s]” (65) who will soon be transformed into “true English [men]” (231), and Kingsley’s paternal narrator attempts to guide them through this transition.

79 Tom’s rescue of the lobster ostensibly demonstrates that he has learned not to torment creatures who are weaker than himself (although he has a few minor slip-ups later on in the text); having learned his lesson, Tom’s reward comes in the form of a much-anticipated reunion with his fellow water-babies.
rather than for his sense of duty and obedience. That Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and the narrator present a unified voice near the end of the text – both forcing Tom to become more independent by making him think for himself without external moral guidance – suggests the larger movement in Kingsley’s text away from the explicit didacticism of Evangelical-oriented children’s literature and towards the quest-romance model.

“they ate, and ate, and ate each other”: Darwinism versus Christianity in Kingsley’s underwater world

Like Ellen Montgomery in The Wide, Wide World, Bunyan’s female pilgrims are similarly encouraged to “‘keep [...] at home’” or to limit their influence to the domestic sphere (184-5). While Christiana and Mercy do ultimately follow in Christian’s footsteps by seeking the Celestial City, their physical and moral “progress” is constantly mediated by the male protector-figures who surround them on their journey: Great-heart protects them from the two “ill-favoured” ones who embody the threat of physical and sexual violence (Bunyan 196), and the figure of the Interpreter instructs the women by using simple emblems “‘because you are women, and they are easy for you,’” for example, the sheep who takes her death quietly (203). Mirroring John Humphrey’s role as Ellen Montgomery’s spiritual guide in Warner’s novel, the Interpreter’s speech suggests that religious instruction is necessarily gendered: while girls and women require direct teaching supervised by male religious mentors urging them to confine themselves to the domestic sphere, boys and men must pursue knowledge on their own terms by

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80 The narrator’s commendation of Tom’s pluck also signals Kingsley’s participation in the quest-romance tradition, in which “pluck” and “plucky” are markers of the highest praise: Stevenson’s boy-heroes, including Jim Hawkins and David Balfour, and Kipling’s Kimball O’Hara will similarly be praised for their pluckiness. By echoing the narrator in her praise of Tom as well as urging him on his quest, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid resembles the nurturing female figures, namely “mothers and teachers,” who predominate in the Bad Boy novel: Kidd writes that these women become “conduits of male development and homosocial bonding,” enabling “the transition from boyhood to manhood” by “triangulating and safeguarding male-male relations” (61).
venturing out into the “wide world.”

In *The Water-Babies*, Kingsley echoes this gendered learning set out in Bunyan’s text. While the parables that the fairies use to instruct Tom resemble the “‘easy’” emblems shown to Christiana and Mercy at the House of the Interpreter, the structure of Kingsley’s text implies that this initial “feminine” education must give way to a more masculine approach as Tom matures. Like Christian, who becomes impatient with the Interpreter’s emblems (“‘I think verily I know the meaning of this’”) and is eager to proceed with his journey, Tom must similarly abandon the fairies and their teachings. The fairies’ parables are gradually superseded by a quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere, where Tom will put the Christian tenets he has learned in his time with the fairies into practice by “‘help[ing] somebody [he] do[es] not like,’” namely his former master Grimes (167). That Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is echoing the narrator by similarly encouraging Tom to embark on a quest suggests that Kingsley is attempting to reconcile the conventions of female-authored sentimental and religious fiction with the quest-romance tradition exemplified by Bunyan: Tom’s final journey, in which he will ensure his own salvation (like Ellie, he will be able to “go home” on Sundays) by helping fellow bad boy Grimes on his own path to redemption, transforms the action and adventure featured in the first section of Kingsley’s novel, like Tom’s escape from Harthover, into a quest with a defined religious goal.

And yet, like the slippage in Bunyan’s text between spiritual allegory and romance, Kingsley is not entirely successful in uniting the two traditions upon which *The Water-Babies* draws. Like Christian’s vainglory, which, as I have previously argued, disturbs an allegorical reading of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the question of Tom’s pluck is at the centre of this conflict between genres. While the narrator frequently praises Tom for his demonstrations of pluck both prior to his transformation into a water-baby and during his final quest, this pluckiness develops
in Tom as a consequence of his former life with Grimes, particularly in the way that the apprentice sweep learns to stand up “manfully” to his master’s frequent beatings (44). But although Grimes’ physical abuse inspires Tom’s pluckiness, it also prompts him to imitate his former master by bullying creatures weaker than himself, thereby disobeying the fairies’ teachings. Just as Christian’s desire for vainglory alternately motivates and threatens to undo his spiritual “progress,” Tom needs pluck in order to conduct himself like a “brave English lad” (192), and yet, when this pluck is misdirected in the form of teasing and bullying, Kingsley’s hero frequently transgresses the moral mandates that he has been taught to uphold as a water-baby.

Like Bunyan’s protagonist then, Tom is required to maintain a fine balance: he must partly regress in order to recuperate the pluckiness that he learnt during his time with Grimes, a quality that he requires in order to successfully complete his quest, but he must not regress so far backward as to forget the fairies’ lessons on the tenets of Christianity, such as exhibiting charity and kindness to the weak and vulnerable. Reconciling these meek Christian virtues with the vigorous physicality on which his survival depends understandably proves to be a difficult task for Tom, particularly considering the inherent set of contradictions in the value-system of Kingsley’s underwater landscape. Although Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby encourage Tom to be kind to his fellow creatures, the creatures who are bigger and stronger than Tom naturally want to prey upon him: the underwater ecosystem into which Tom is reborn as a water-baby accordingly suggests the social Darwinian catch-phrase of the survival-of-the-fittest. Tom sees this struggle for survival firsthand in his travels to the

81 The Darwinian subtext of Kingsley’s novel is clearly evoked in Linley Sambourne’s realistic and naturalistic illustrations for the 1886 edition of the novel, the most popular and widely circulated edition of Kingsley’s text in
north during his quest, where he spies a “great codbank”:

cod lay below in tens of thousands, and gobbled shellfish all day long; and the blue sharks roved above in hundreds, and gobbled them when they came up. So they ate, and ate, and ate each other, as they had done since the making of the world. (180)

This continuous, uninterrupted cycle of predation of larger species eating smaller species is also suggested in Tom’s encounter with the otter, who enlightens the water-baby about his place in the food chain of the stream: with her “wicked laugh,” she tells him that “[the salmon] will eat you, and we will eat them,” describing for his benefit the way in which she and her kinfolk “‘bite out their soft throats and suck their sweet juice … and then throw them away, and go and catch another’” (99).

This is the harsh environment into which Tom is unexpectedly thrust as a weak and vulnerable water-baby, who is only 3.87902 inches in length, as the narrator stipulates (76). But while Tom’s life is frequently threatened – for instance, when he encounters a school of “great trout” who “rus[h] out on [him], thinking him to be good to eat” – he is encouraged by the fairies to resist the desire to retaliate in kind by helping, not harming, his fellow creatures, as, for instance, when he helps the lobster to escape from the trap (103). The fairies’ message, however,
conflicts with the values that Tom learns through his life with Grimes.\(^{82}\) Just as his former master repeatedly “knocks” Tom down, Tom in turn vents his anger upon creatures who cannot retaliate against him: we see this, for instance, when Tom and his companions “bow[1] stones at the horses’ legs as they trotted by, which ... was excellent fun” (44). In this respect, Tom’s life “in a great town in the North country” as a lower-class chimney sweep anticipates his rebirth as a water-baby, in which he is once again at the bottom of the food chain in an environment that encourages the survival of the physically strong and powerful (43).

That he is constantly surrounded by creatures who are bigger and stronger than he is suggests that Tom will naturally have to defend himself against these predators, thereby breaking the fairies’ stipulation that he must “be a good boy, and do as you would be done by” – despite the fact that Grimes and other “cruel masters” have not, as Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid observes, followed this same principle (157). Kingsley attempts to resolve this potential contradiction of the laws of his underwater landscape through the fairies’ frequent interventions on Tom’s behalf. The first of these is, of course, Tom’s transformation into a water-baby: rather than drowning in the stream, Tom, one of the “Malthusian mass,” is rescued by the fairies, a move which, as Gillian Beer writes, “makes the fantasy a critique” of the social realism that pervades the first half of the text (133). Even after his rebirth, however, Tom continues to be vulnerable, thereby requiring the fairies to act as his perpetual guides: “without his seeing their fair faces, or feeling their gentle hands” (110), the fairies are “close to him always, shutting the sailors’ eyes lest they

\(^{82}\) The author’s repeated references linking the public schools to physical punishment suggest a possible critique of the education system operating in Kingsley’s text: while the narrator stipulates that Tom is knocked down “as a young gentlemen used to be taught at public schools,” Kingsley later writes (in Tom’s escape from Harthover) that, “the birches birched him as soundly as if he had been a nobleman at Eton, and over the face too (which is not fair swishing, as all brave boys will agree)” (58). That Tom learns to bear his beatings from Grimes “manfully” suggests that Tom obeys his superior just as a young public-school boy would follow the orders of his prefect or instructor.
should see him, and turning him aside from millraces, and sewer-mouths, and all foul and
dangerous things” (113), including the trout who think Tom “good to eat” and whom the fairies
accordingly “scol[d] for daring to meddle with a water-baby” (103).

A lesson learned? The outcome of Tom’s quest
Because Kingsley’s novel is ostensibly a “fairy tale” according to the author’s subtitle and
therefore grounded in fantasy, the trout “sulkily” abandon their prey, and Tom is saved, once
again, from the threat of predation (103). However, by essentially intervening in nature’s life
cycle and removing the water-babies from the stream’s food chain, Kingsley once again
highlights the conflict of values that underpins his text. Critics like Lila Marz Harper and Tess
Cosslett have chosen to focus on how Kingsley successfully re-interprets Darwin’s findings to
suit his own didactic purposes, enabling his readers “to have it both ways and maintain a sense of
divinely led morality while still accepting evolution” (Harper 138). But while the parable of
the Doasyoulikes – a nation of men who devolve into apes as a result of their own indolence –
essentially transforms evolution (and devolution) into a question of morality, there are still
necessary complications involved in the author’s attempts to reconcile Christianity with
Darwinism, and we see Tom struggle to reconcile these two value-systems in The Water-Babies.
It is not surprising that Tom has such difficulty in learning the fairies’ lesson about “torment[ing] dumb creatures” (90); the principles of Christian charity and forbearance conflict both with
Tom’s former life as a chimney sweep, as well as with the reality of Kingsley’s underwater
world, in which Tom’s chances for survival would certainly be slim, were it not for the fairies’
timely interventions.

83 See, for instance, Harper’s essay “Children’s Literature, Science and Faith: The Water-Babies” and Tess
Cosslett’s chapter on “Parables and Fairy-tales” in Talking Animals in British Children’s Fiction, 1786-1914.
Kingsley makes some attempt to resolve these contradictions in Tom’s final journey to the Other-end-of-Nowhere, which provides the author with one last opportunity to reinforce the religious implications of his protagonist’s transformation over the course of the text. Like Bunyan’s Christian, Tom is questing for both masculinity and spirituality at once: as much as Tom’s final journey involves proving himself as a man – Margaret Duffy characterizes him as a “questing penis” (283) who is finally given the long-awaited opportunity to see the “wide wide world” and to “so[w] [his] wild oats” (Kingsley 114) – Kingsley also prioritizes the religious or spiritual focus of his quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere. In this way, the author attempts to redress the novel’s frequent and persistent focus, according to Norman Vance, on manly “rage” and “pluck” at the expense of some of the “gentler Christian virtues” (qtd in Fasick 107), making the repentance and redemption of fellow bad boy/prodigal son Grimes the end goal of Tom’s quest; John C. Hawley writes that, “[t]he true test of his [Tom’s] conversion, in Kingsley's mind, is his ability to accept his former enemy as a brother, as one who merits Tom's forgiveness” (119-20).

For Hawley, this pivotal scene between Tom and Grimes affirms that *The Water-Babies* promotes brotherly reconciliation and Christian forgiveness. And yet I would argue that Kingsley’s preoccupation with the superiority or inferiority of species in his text – in Darwinian terms, their relative degrees of “fitness” – has the effect of denying, rather than reinforcing, any claim for interspecies cooperation or sense of brotherhood in this scene. The author even seems to parody this message in the story of the Doasyoulikes, in which the last specimen of their race who has devolved into an ape is shot and killed after attempting to repeat the popular abolitionist slogan “‘Am I not a man and a brother?’” which comes out only as gibberish (175). Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid’s parable effectively denies the Doasyoulikes any claim to brotherhood: once
an inferior race, as suggested by their profound idleness, they have now become an inferior species that is incapable of speech.

Kingsley’s account of the Doasyoulikes asserts the impossibility of acknowledging any sort of brotherhood in certain instances, including, I would argue, the relationship between Tom and the degenerative Grimes. Grimes’ inferiority to the other male characters, including Tom as well as the upstanding squire Sir John Harthover, is apparent from the outset of the text: while his apprentice at least expresses a desire to be “clean,” Grimes, as his name indicates, prefers to remain “dirty,” and bathes his head in the stream near Harthover House not “‘for cleanliness … but for coolness. I’d be ashamed to want washing every week or so, like any smutty collier-lad’” (49). The reversal in their positions when the two are reunited at the end of the text – former master-sweep Grimes is now stuck up a chimney, while his old apprentice Tom is now the only one with the power to come to his aid – serves to reinforce Tom’s innate superiority to Grimes.

That Grimes chooses this moment of reunion with his former apprentice to comment on the dramatic change in their power dynamic also suggests that this scene is not simply one of Christian forgiveness: he calls Tom a “‘spiteful little atomy,’” and asks if he has “come here to laugh [at him]’” (222). While Grimes later demonstrates more kindness toward Tom, calling him “‘a good-natured forgiving little chap’” (224), there is less a sense of brotherly love here than that of a strong social hierarchy: Tom has effectively become Grimes’ social and moral superior, which the new title of “gentleman,” bestowed on him by one of the policeman’s truncheons, evokes. Although Tom’s conversation with Grimes in this scene ostensibly leads to the master-sweep’s repentance in that he finally expresses regret for his former behaviour, Tom himself seems curiously passive in this interaction. As Fasick notes, Tom’s offers of help are “to no avail” (108): although he pulls and tugs at the bricks of Grimes’ chimney, Tom cannot free
his former master from his self-inflicted punishment, as Grimes himself recognizes when he says, “‘Foul I would be, and foul I am ... It’s all my own fault’” (225). In the end, Grimes’ “transformation does not depend on Tom” (108): only the news of his mother’s death can precipitate Grimes’ repentance, enabling his transfer to a lesser form of punishment.

While Kingsley emphasizes the didacticism of his work in his letter to F.D. Maurice, the encounter between Tom and Grimes at the Other-end-of-Nowhere fails to communicate the author’s religious objective in writing *The Water-Babies*. In contrast to the typical formula of the Evangelical conversion story, neither Grimes nor Tom, the two bad boys of Kingsley’s text, ultimately achieve salvation. Grimes’ repentance is only the first step in what will surely be a lengthy journey toward this spiritual goal: after liberating himself from his imprisoning chimney with his own tears, the Irishwoman gives him the task of sweeping out the crater of Etna, where he will be “[taught] his business” by “some very steady men working out their time there” (226). “[T]each him his business” has the sense of retribution and of putting Grimes in his place, suggesting an extended period of punishment (though the nature of this punishment has shifted from imprisonment to hard labour).

Like the journey that surely lies ahead for Grimes, Tom’s progress toward salvation over the course of *The Water-Babies* has been prolonged. But although Tom has fulfilled his task to “‘help somebody [he] do[es] not like’” (167), there is still a suggestion that he has not fully redeemed himself at the end of the text. Is there a connection between Tom’s passivity in his encounter with Grimes – a scene that “fails to show any dramatic change” in his character (Fasick 108) – and the ending of Kingsley’s novel, in which he becomes a “great man of science” but is only allowed to go home with Ellie on Sundays and “sometimes on week-days, too” (229)? That Tom is not rewarded with marriage to his companion Ellie also seems strange,
given the close bond they share prior to Tom’s quest (she becomes his tutor for the duration of Tom’s seven-year stay in St. Brandan’s isle): there is still the lingering sense that Tom is unworthy of Ellie on both a spiritual as well as a social level.\(^{84}\)

**Conclusion: The Water-Babies and the future of the boy’s book**

As Part I of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* draws to a conclusion, Christian finally reaches the Celestial City and achieves salvation: the text ends just as the gates close on Christian and his companion Hopeful in the Celestial City and the narrator consequently awakens from his dream. Following Bunyan’s model, Warner similarly rewards her heroine Ellen Montgomery for abiding by her “ethic of submission” at the end of *The Wide, Wide World* (Tompkins “Afterword” 585): after spending a difficult adolescence with relatives in Scotland, Ellen finally returns to the home of her adoptive brother as his wife and spiritual helpmeet. In contrast to these two models, the hint of Tom’s unworthiness at the end of *The Water-Babies* complicates the notion of his spiritual “progress” over the course of Kingsley’s text. Like Bunyan, Kingsley attempts to adapt the secular genre of quest-romance in order to address a specific religious goal, but while his predecessor manages for the most part to unite romance with allegory – Christian overcomes his vain-glory in order to achieve eternal glory – Tom’s adventurous quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere does not lead unequivocally to his spiritual gain, as the mixed tone of Kingsley’s ending suggests. In his attempts to distance his work from the Evangelical conversion stories produced by his female contemporaries like Warner, Kingsley disturbs the allegorical reading of

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\(^{84}\) While Tom’s upward mobility is considerable – he is transformed from a lower-class chimney-sweep to a thoroughly middle-class “man of science” by the end of Kingsley’s text – he is still not in the same social rank as Ellie, the daughter of the squire Sir John Harthover. This ongoing class discourse can be traced throughout the text, arguably from the moment in which Tom first recognizes that he is “dirty” in Ellie’s little white bedroom: Kelly compares this scene to the moment in Dickens’ novel *Great Expectations* (1860-1) when “the beautiful Estella makes Pip aware of his country speech, rough hands, and dirty nails. Like Tom, Pip sees himself in a new light, and his shame and anger drive him towards becoming a gentleman” (Introduction 18).
his text as chronicling a boy’s gradual progress from sin to salvation by refusing to reward his hero with domesticity in the form of marriage to Ellie.

Despite the fairies’ religious teachings and their attempts to modify some of his more negative “male” attributes, Tom is essentially unchanged by his adventures: as Claudia Nelson writes, Tom “remains as thoroughly masculine as a young Tom Brown in scuba gear” throughout the novel (Boys 154). Nelson’s comparison is fitting given that both Kingsley and Thomas Hughes were proponents of Muscular Christianity, linking vigorous masculinity to Christian activism; just as Tom’s physical development reflects his moral development as he evolves from a water-baby into a gentleman, Tom Brown is similarly encouraged to build himself up physically on the playing fields as well as spiritually through daily prayer. As we have seen in Kingsley’s novel, Hughes presents these Muscular Christian ideals as a delicate balance: like Tom the water-baby, Tom Brown must learn to police his own behaviour when his boisterousness leads him to disobey school rules.

For both Toms, the culmination of this physical and moral development is serving the Empire, effectively tying Muscular Christianity to the imperialist project. Both Kingsley and Hughes present this connection in the form of what Mary-Louise Pratt characterizes as the “monarch-of-all-I-survey” scene, a feature of nineteenth-century British travel writing. Tom’s survey of Vendale and the surrounding English countryside in The Water-Babies – a sight that, as the narrator remarks to his reader, “ought to make you proud of being a British boy” (65) – echoes the opening of Tom Brown’s Schooldays (1857), in which Hughes provides an extended tour of the “lanes and woods and fields” where his hero was born, urging “young England” to “know more of your own birth-places” (6). Both authors offer up “estheticized” landscapes rich in “adjectival modifiers” (Pratt 204): Kingsley describes Tom’s view as “grey crag, grey down,
grey stair, grey moor, walled up to heaven” (64), while Hughes’ novel begins with fifteen pages describing “the Vale of White Horse” (5) as a “place to open a man’s soul and make him prophesy, as he looks down on that great Vale spread out as the garden of the Lord before him” (9). Both Kingsley and Hughes use religious language (“walled up to heaven,” “the garden of the Lord”) in order to reinforce the link between Muscular Christianity and imperialism: the omniscient gaze of the third-person narrator in both textual examples suggests a “relation of mastery” over the landscape that is sanctioned by God (Pratt 205).

These landscape descriptions, with their “vivid imperial rhetoric” meant to stir up British patriotism as well as their specific male-male form of address, suggest that these writers are pioneering what will become the most popular genre for boys in the late nineteenth century: the adventure romance or quest-romance (Pratt 201). Kingsley’s text particularly suggests the literary landscape that male writers and male readers will soon claim as their own. Like Jules Verne’s Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (1870), The Water-Babies represents yet another nineteenth-century attempt to re-create romance by exploring new frontiers, and Tom’s (after)life as a water-baby enables him to act out his creator’s fantasy of navigating the largely

85 As Kimberley Reynolds writes, “the boys’ adventure story appealed so strongly to adults that books in this genre were frequently and enthusiastically read by men.” As such, the adventure story was only “considered to be good if it trespassed into the adult domain of literary quality” (Girls 26). Because of the genre’s “sophisticated use of the notion of dual readership,” there are “references and literary devices” in these texts that are meant to be appreciated by the adult and not the child-reader (26): we see this dual address in Kingsley, for instance, in his many “references to topical mid-nineteenth-century scientific, social reform and educational debates” (Wallace 177) as well as his use of the Rabelaisian list (see Kelly Introduction 19-20). For a further analysis of Kingsley’s “complicated interpellation” in The Water-Babies, see Wallace.

86 Verne is one of the authors who Humphry Carpenter ties to Kingsley’s work, alongside Stevenson and John Buchan (seen in Tom’s adventurous escape from Harthover) and C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien (seen in Tom’s quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere): he argues that The Water-Babies becomes “a prospectus for future genres of children’s fiction” and “a plan of things to come” for the future of the boys’ book (38).
uncharted territory of the ocean depths. Kingsley’s eagerness to explore the unexplored also introduces an imperialist subtext operating in the author’s work: Tom is likened to “a brave English lad, whose business is to go out and see all the world” (192) in his final quest to the Other-end-of-Nowhere, and the fact that he is spared from death in order to undertake this journey suggests the fate of other lower-class boys who, as Kingsley argued, must be protected from disease in order to maintain British colonies overseas.

If *The Water-Babies* were essentially a religious tract, Tom, having recognized the error of his ways and consequently worked to reform his transgressive behaviour, would surely be rewarded with the “joyful death” of a child martyr (Demers 55). Tom’s death in the stream, however, only signals the beginning of his underwater quest, and though his adventures are ostensibly of a religious nature, they are also equally focused on “fun and pretence” (232). Kingsley’s text ultimately functions as a lynch pin, connecting two otherwise disparate traditions; like Bunyan and Warner, Kingsley is concerned with providing a remedy or a “pill” for doubting or disbelieving children (qtd in Prickett 140), and yet Tom’s final journey to the “world’s end” (177), with its focus on adventure and its imperialist subtext, links *The Water-Babies* to the late nineteenth-century boy’s romance, which prioritizes entertainment over

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87 Like Captain Nemo in his submarine *Nautilus*, or the mythic Greek fisherman Glaucus who eats a plant that enables him to breathe underwater, Kingsley’s ultimate fantasy was “to walk into the water without drowning and see what is under it,” hence his fascination with fellow naturalist Philip Gosse’s invention, the aquarium (*Glaucus* contains instructions on how to build a small jar-aquarium), as well as his fondness for accompanying Gosse on deep-sea dredging expeditions (Merrill 226, 224-25).

88 Kingsley argues in his “First Sermon on the Cholera” (1849) that England’s surplus population of young people – namely lower-class boys resembling Tom prior to his rebirth as a water-baby – should be put to work in maintaining British colonies overseas: he re-asserts this view in *The Water-Babies* when he writes that lower-class children ought to be spared from dying “by fever, and cholera, and measles, and scarlatina, and nasty complaints which no one has any business to have, and which no one will have some day, when folks have common sense” (150).

89 As with Bunyan’s phrase “play the man” (subsequently borrowed by Kingsley and other nineteenth-century writers), “the world’s end” becomes part of the discourse of the masculine quest-romance, suggesting that
religious didacticism (232). By borrowing Bunyan’s model of the quest and yet moving away from his overtly religious intentions, Kingsley begins to articulate the primarily secular and thoroughly masculine genre of quest-romance brought to popularity by Stevenson and Kipling. As we will see in subsequent chapters, these writers follow Kingsley’s lead in adapting Bunyan’s model to fit a nineteenth-century imperialist context, gradually transforming quest-romance into what Stevenson calls a thoroughly “a-moral” genre (“A Gossip on Romance” 54).

nineteenth-century romance is on a perpetual search for undiscovered territory: see, for instance, William Morris’ *The Well at the World’s End* (1896) and Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), in which the lama’s river is finally discovered at the “world’s end” (300).
Chapter 3

“And I opened my plot to him”: Kidnapping Romance in Robert Louis Stevenson’s David Balfour Novels

Introduction: Not a “pawn in someone else’s game”

Like Kingsley, who attempts to distance The Water-Babies from the “sugared slough” produced by his female contemporaries, Robert Louis Stevenson works to establish the boy’s book as its own genre, making a clear distinction between his fiction and early nineteenth-century children’s literature with its Evangelical overtones (Glaucus 15). Alongside G.A. Henty and other figures who wrote explicitly for boys, Stevenson delivered up the “old romance, retold” in order to “please” the “wiser youngsters of to-day” (“To the Hesitating Purchaser,” Treasure Island), presenting his work as a form of escapism: his confessed purpose in the dedication to Kidnapped (1886), for instance, is to temporarily “steal some young gentleman’s attention from his Ovid ... and pack him to bed with some engaging images to mingle with his dreams” (3). As a cog in what Annette Federico calls the “machinery of the boys’ magazine,” however, Stevenson was required to conform to the mandate of publications aiming to both instruct and delight (117).

Like The Boy’s Own Paper (1879-1967), a weekly serial initiated by the Religious Tract Society as an antidote to the luridly violent and extremely popular penny dreadfuls, the juvenile magazines in which Stevenson’s romances first appeared operated with a similarly didactic intent (Noakes 154): Young Folks (1871-97), subtitled A Boys’ and Girls’ Paper of Instructive and Entertaining Literature, first published Treasure Island (1881-82), The Black Arrow (1883), and

90 For a further discussion of the relationship between nineteenth-century boys’ magazines and the penny dreadfuls, see Troy Boone’s chapter “Improving Penny Fiction: The ‘Ticklish Work’ of Treasure Island” in Youth of Darkest England (2005). Using the serialization of Stevenson’s romance as his case study, Boone examines how late-Victorian improving penny fictions sought to eradicate class conflict by “dispersing middle-class values in the form of imperialist sentiment” to a (predominately) lower-class readership (66, original emphasis).
Kidnapped (1886), while Atalanta (1887-98), a British monthly magazine for girls, published Catriona (1893).  

On the surface, Stevenson seems to conform to the didactic nature of these publications by scattering religious language throughout his fiction, as, for instance, when Jim Hawkins advises the pirate Israel Hands to atone for his sins by “go[ing] to [his] prayers, like a Christian man” in Treasure Island (138). And yet, as Marah Gubar has recently argued, Stevenson frequently “parod[ies] and subversively undercut[s]” the evangelical rhetoric of his romance in its single-volume edition (published in 1883), often by highlighting the hypocrisy of characters like Ben Gunn (who tells Jim that he is “‘back on piety’” [81]) and even his young protagonist (Gubar 79). Just after urging Hands to repent, for instance, Jim commits what Joseph Kestner calls his “supreme transgression in the text” by killing the pirate, albeit in self-defense (32). While Stevenson minimizes Jim’s agency by suggesting that the murder was an accident, Jim’s

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91 The publication of Catriona – a romance written explicitly “within the boys’ book construct” (Federico 117) – in a magazine intended for girls is somewhat puzzling, though not unprecedented. As a forum which “attempted to show its readers ... that girls’ fiction ... included that belonging to the high-status portions of the adult and boys’ canon” (Reynolds Girls 114), Atalanta serialized fiction from Stevenson and Haggard, and counted Thomas Hughes and Andrew Lang among its contributors. With its editorial policy of attracting “high-status serials,” Federico argues that the magazine’s editorial policy “endorse[d] ... literature with a masculine point of view,” while implicitly “trivializ[ing] girls’ fiction as low-status literature” (117).

92 As Emma Letley outlines in her introduction to the 1998 Oxford edition, Stevenson wrote the serial version of Treasure Island with one eye to “‘the fond parent’” (vii), standardizing the language in accordance with Mrs. Molesworth’s advice to children’s authors to keep their writing “‘terse and clear’” (xii), and omitting “blasphemous” references that were later included in the book version (published by the secular house Cassell’s), like “The Evil One” and “The Devil” (xii). Another indication that Stevenson’s text became less didactic after it was freed from the “social production” of the nineteenth-century children’s magazine market is the author’s effort to undermine Ben Gunn’s supposed piety (Federico 115). The irony behind these new details that Stevenson provides about Gunn’s religious life – as a youth, for instance, he could “‘rattle off [his] catechism that fast, as you couldn’t tell one word from another’” (81) – suggests the author’s effort to distance his work from the sincere religious discourse featured in many boys’ serials.

93 Jim admits that “both my pistols went off,” but he also protests “I scarce can say that it [the firing of the guns] was by my own volition, and I am sure it was without a conscious aim” (142). While denying his guilty intent, Jim’s deliberately vague description – “I scarce can say,” “I am sure it was” – also refuses to completely deny his agency in Hands’ murder.
cold observation that Hands “‘was food for fish in the very place where he had designed my slaughter’” (143) suggests a lack of remorse betraying his intent to kill in this encounter. As Lisa Honaker argues, Jim is effectively “stripped of conscience” in his struggle with Hands, an event which “marks the zenith of Jim’s performance as a late-century boy hero”: a figure who is typically “defined by action” rather than moral purpose (42).

By frequently undermining a potential religious or allegorical reading of his work, Stevenson differentiates the late nineteenth-century boy’s quest-romance from the overtly didactic literature for children earlier in the century, as well as from the romances of his predecessors in the field of boy’s fiction. In particular, the morally ambiguous behaviour of Stevenson’s protagonist Jim Hawkins distinguishes him from the clear-cut and upright protagonists who dominate the fiction of writers like Frederick Marryat, W.H.G. Kingston, R.M. Ballantyne, and G.A. Henty. In Ballantyne’s The Coral Island (1858), for instance, the ethics of Ballantyne’s trio of heroes, Ralph Rover, Jack Martin and Peterkin Gay, are never questioned. In order to justify the brutal and bloody killing in which his characters participate, Ballantyne dehumanizes their victims as savage cannibals and “incarnate fiends” who “looked more like demons than human beings,” according to Rover (196). By contrast, Stevenson, as Naomi J. Wood has outlined, “actively deconstruct[s] binaries in favour of a far more ambiguous aesthetic” in Treasure Island, particularly by refusing to clearly distinguish the crew of the Hispaniola from its passengers (Wood “Gold” 61). Because Stevenson effectively blurs the division between “gentlemen born” and “gentlemen of fortune,” we as readers are unable to dismiss Jim’s murder of Hands, whether intentional or unintentional, as a straightforward case of good prevailing over evil, thereby complicating our understanding of Jim as an upstanding
character worthy of emulation.94

The equivocal morality that critics like Gubar and Wood have recognized in *Treasure Island* is carried over into the author’s second romance for boys *Kidnapped* (1886), as well as its sequel *Catriona* (1893). Like Jim Hawkins, David Balfour is frequently forced into circumstances that require him to compromise his moral code in order to ensure his survival. For instance, in addition to killing and wounding members of the *Covenant’s* crew during the battle of the round-house, David also witnesses Captain Hoseason’s bullying of the cabin-boy Ransome, and yet keeps silent out of fear for his own safety. By contravening the firm principles of “a good Kirk-going, Lowland Scot” that he professes to hold at the beginning of *Kidnapped*, David works to destabilize the religious subtext introduced by the figure of Reverend Campbell at the outset of David’s quest for his inheritance (Letley Introduction to *Kidnapped and Catriona* xvi-xvii). Gifting his young charge with a Bible to see him “‘into a better land,’” the Reverend’s religious rhetoric suggests that of the Evangelist in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*: he counsels David to “‘show [him]self as nice, as circumspect, as quick at the conception, and as slow of speech as any,’” and to “‘honour’” and “‘obey [the] laird,’” David’s uncle Ebenezer Balfour (9).95

94 As Gubar notes, Stevenson also deliberately upsets the imperialist rhetoric that forms the backbone of texts like *The Coral Island* by “tak[ing] up the damning adjectives Ballantyne and company use to denigrate ‘savages’ and appl[ying] them to his white characters.” For instance, when Jim Hawkins initially mistakes the marooned Ben Gunn for a bestial “cannibal,” Stevenson “suggests that whites occupy the position of moral depravity when action takes place on islands,” in direct contrast to the sanctification of violence against natives in Ballantyne’s text (77-8).

95 Stevenson reintroduces an Evangelical tenor to his romance in the figure of Mr. Henderland, who appears midway through *Kidnapped*. After inquiring into David’s “state of mind toward God,” Henderland succeeds in bringing the formerly “puffed up” hero to tears (115); the implication here is that David recognizes his own failure to follow the Reverend Campbell’s advice (or that which is outlined in the Reverend’s “little Bible” [10]) and is consequently feeling remorse. In the overall scheme of the novel, however, this moment of sudden repentance on David’s part is decidedly out of place, perhaps because its invention was at the request of the author’s father Thomas Stevenson, a staunch Calvinist. As Letley outlines, the elder Stevenson suggested that “‘a scene of religion’ be included in
Like Tom in *The Water-Babies*, David also sets out with his passport (in the form of the Reverend’s letter of introduction to his uncle) as well as his “bundle on [his] staff’s end” in the vein of Christian embarking for the Celestial City (*Kidnapped* 11). But while the success of Tom’s quest is measured in religious terms—namely, the fact that he is able to elicit Grimes’ repentance—David’s goal is purely material: his desire is to seek out his inheritance and to establish himself as a gentleman. The financial objective of his quest, coupled with his longing for social mobility, arguably position David closer to the prototypical adventure hero, Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe (1719), than the deeply pious characters featured in other boy’s romances, such as Marryat’s *Masterman Ready* (1841) or Kingston’s *Peter the Whaler* (1851). Like Ready and Peter, Crusoe claims to have experienced a spiritual re-birth over the course of his journey, and his speech is accordingly replete with religious rhetoric: for instance, the gratitude that he expresses at being “miraculously saved” from both death and eternal damnation in the wake of the shipwreck that claimed the lives of his fellow crewmates (54). In Defoe’s narrative, however, the word “saved” also appears in a decidedly less pious framework, as Crusoe “saves” the various goods that have washed up on shore and prevents them from being swallowed up again by the sea. This language of acquisition and collection, as well as Crusoe’s obvious glee in preserving these material items, is what sets Defoe’s text apart from the more religious-oriented nineteenth-century boy’s romances that it subsequently inspired. By invoking

*Kidnapped*” in January 1886, after his son had already completed sixteen chapters of the romance (Introduction to *Kidnapped and Catriona* ix).

96 At the “place of deliverance,” Christian is simultaneously freed of his burden and awarded with a scroll that functions as a passport to the Celestial City; Tom the water-baby is similarly awarded with a passport to the Other-end-of-Nowhere by Mother Carey when he reaches Shiny Wall. Like David Balfour’s letter of introduction, the packet of papers that Kim carries with him— including a letter from his father and his birth certificate—also arguably functions as a kind of passport, ushering him into his new life at boarding school as a spy and sahib-in-training.
Defoe’s more secular model of the quest and of the male quester, Stevenson is able to distance his work from that of his contemporaries, who use page-turning romance in order to promote Evangelical values such as subjugation to God and renunciation of the self.⁹⁷

For Kingsley and his predecessor Bunyan, these values are intrinsic to their collective vision of the male quest: Tom’s journey to the Other-end-of-Nowhere and Christian’s pilgrimage to the Celestial City are meant to transform them into proper Christian gentlemen. For Stevenson and Defoe, however, the spiritual aspect of the quest seems to be less important than the material rewards that it offers. Like David who sets out on his journey with the prospect of his inheritance before him, Crusoe is similarly motivated to go “adventuring” in order to provide for himself “being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade” (5). In doing so, however, Crusoe is defying patriarchal authority, renouncing his father’s as well as God’s blessing; unable to contain his restlessness – what J. Paul Hunter calls his dilectum delictum or “commanding sin” (131) – Crusoe disregards his father’s “prophetick” warning that “God would not bless [him]” should he choose to go to sea (Defoe 7). And yet, while his twenty-eight year seclusion on a desert island can and has been interpreted as a form of punishment for this commanding sin, Defoe’s hero is also lucratively rewarded because of his disobedience: when he is finally “delivered” from his island paradise, he finds himself the beneficiary of God’s grace as well as a substantial fortune from the Brazilian plantations that he acquired during his overseas travels.

⁹⁷ A born-again Christian who recounts the process of his conversion, the old sailor Ready repeatedly urges members of the Seagrave family, whom he has taken under his wing, to renounce themselves to God’s will: as their ship founders, for instance, he reminds them that “We must put our trust in a merciful God ... who will dispose of us as he thinks fit” (23). In Kingston’s novel (his first publication for boys), the titular character Peter experiences a religious awakening over the course of the journey: when he returns home at the end of the novel, he tells his father that he has come back “infinitely richer” despite his lack of material wealth because he has “learned to fear God, to worship Him in his works, and to trust to His infinite mercy” (213).
The financial nature of Crusoe’s reward, as well as the fact that it results from his former disobedience, complicates the readings offered up by Hunter and G.A. Starr who distinguish “a familiar Christian pattern of disobedience-punishment-repentance-deliverance” in Defoe’s narrative that is common in Puritan literature (Hunter 19). For these critics, Crusoe’s religious awakening is genuine, although they acknowledge that it is “by no means instantaneous” and not without its “spiritual lapses” post-conversion (Starr 112; Hunter 175). For Ian Watt and an opposing camp of critics, however, Crusoe’s not infrequent “lapses” of faith – including the crisis that he experiences after he discovers the footprint on his beach98 – undermine the sincerity of his newfound piety, amounting to little more than “Sunday religion” (Rise of the Novel 81).

Watt observes that Crusoe’s “commanding sin” can conversely be seen as his greatest asset because it enables his pursuit of wealth: Crusoe ultimately “does very well out of” his filial disobedience and impulse to wander and thus “sets out for further journeys without any fear that he may be flouting Providence” (Watt 80).99

That Defoe’s protagonist eventually profits by way of his travels – despite being faced with shipwrecks and other ominous “token[s]” that he was not meant “to be a seafaring man” (14) – indicates Robinson Crusoe’s significant departure from Puritan literary tradition,

98 Hunter writes that this event causes Defoe’s hero to temporarily “lose his spiritual foothold” (181): in the immediate wake of the footprint’s discovery, Crusoe remarks that “my fear banish’d all my religious hope, all that former confidence in God, which was founded upon such wonderful experience as I had had of his goodness” (123), and that his daily prayers are no longer inspired by a feeling of “sedate calmness and resignation of soul” but are instead performed “under great affliction and pressure of mind … and in expectation every night of being murther’d and devour’d before morning” by the cannibals whom he dreads encountering (129-30).

99 The recognition that Crusoe ultimately “does very well out of” his transgressive behaviour has become a critical commonplace in Defoe scholarship. For Leopold Damrosch, the “story fails to sustain the motif of the prodigal” because “[f]ar from punishing the prodigal Crusoe for disobedience, the novel seems to reward him for enduring a mysterious test” (188). Hal Gladfelder similarly observes that just as Crusoe is punished “repeatedly [and] providentially” for his crimes, he is “just as providentially and extravagantly rewarded” with 5,000 pounds in cash, another 1,000 pounds annually from his Brazilian estate, and “a flourishing island colony of his own” (71).
particularly as it is exemplified in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. While Christian must forsake his home and his family in order to reach the Celestial City, Crusoe’s deliverance seemingly occurs in spite of his unrelenting focus on materialism. Rather than rebuke this greed as a character flaw, however, Defoe’s narrative seems to revel in Crusoe’s single-minded acquisitiveness, from his endless accumulation and cataloguing of shipwrecked goods to his remarkable ability to turn a profit by selling his companion Xury for “60 Pieces of Eight” (28). By prioritizing material gain at the expense of its spiritual counterpart in *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe begins to distance his work from the Puritan values that had informed both his family background as well as his more instructive writings. In so doing, Defoe aligns his first work of prose fiction more closely with the Romantic pattern of the “ques[t] to re-beget one’s own self,” establishing an influential prototype for the future writers of nineteenth-century children’s literature (Bloom qtd in Damrosch 196).

Like Defoe’s enterprising protagonist, the questers of Victorian boy’s fiction are full of pluck but dubiously pious. Stevenson’s David Balfour, in particular, shares Crusoe’s cunning and resourcefulness, qualities that in time lead to a successful outcome in his quest for his inheritance. Just as Crusoe’s eventual reward comes in defiance of his father’s warning, David’s

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100 While Xury helped Crusoe to “procur[e] [his] own” freedom, Crusoe sells Xury’s liberty on the condition (ironically) that he will be set free “in ten years, if he turn[s] Christian” (29). Crusoe subsequently regrets his decision, though his regret is not due to a sudden pang of conscience but rather a desperate need of slave labour to work his newly-purchased plantations: “now I found more than before, I had done wrong in parting with my boy Xury” (29-30, original emphasis).

101 Defoe wrote a series of conduct books beginning with *The Family Instructor* (1715), published four years before *Robinson Crusoe*, the first of his fictional autobiographical narratives.

102 Martin Green similarly observes that *Robinson Crusoe* is “basically a romance” in that it follows the three main stages of the genre “according to Frye’s scheme: a journey, a crucial struggle (in this case Crusoe’s struggle with the inertial forces of nature), and an exaltation of the hero” (*Dreams* 82).
frequent failure to conform to the Reverend’s moral and religious guidance is what ultimately guarantees the success of his quest. Rather than “‘honour’” and “‘obey [the] laird’” (9), David follows the strategy of Kipling’s protagonist in the story “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” by paying Ebenezer Balfour back “full tale” (283). With the help of Alan Breck Stewart, David re-writes Ebenezer’s kidnapping plot, forcing his uncle to reveal his culpability and to relinquish the inheritance that he has hitherto withheld from his nephew. It is in this sense that I have entitled this chapter “kidnapping” romance (defined in the OED as “to snatch, seize”): by refusing to honour and obey Ebenezer in accordance with the fifth Commandment, David is cleverly taking control of the plot(s) that have previously sought to victimize him.

Through his self-conscious awareness of fictional conventions – particularly his ability to reimagine himself as a character worthy of both admiration and sympathy – David proves himself to be a capable hero and therefore a worthy successor to Defoe’s Crusoe, in spite of the fact that Kidnapped and Catriona are somewhat unconventional boy’s romances. As David Daiches observes, Stevenson’s David Balfour novels diverge from “the pattern of the adventure as originally laid down in Treasure Island,” and yet David shows himself to be “a more active hero ... than the hero of any other of Stevenson’s adventure stories,” particularly in Catriona (86). By considering David Balfour in the light of an “active hero,” as evidenced by his growing capacity as a storyteller over the course of his narrative, my aim is to complicate the image of the passive and “impotent” hero that is so frequently reflected in critical commentary on Stevenson (Kiely 98). Robert Kiely, for instance, describes David as “one of the most inactive and inept heroes in the noncomic literature of adventure” who “spends most of the novel not being able to do what he wants to” (98), and Oliver Buckton similarly writes that David’s captivity on Earraid represents a constant “deferral of David’s progress, a kind of textual limbo” that, he argues, is “symptomatic of the novel as a whole” (144).
Yet, by characterizing David as an “inactive and inept” hero (Kiely 98) and the victim of his own “arrested development” (Sandison 193), Kiely and Sandison are echoing David’s self-representation as a simple, country-bred lad, a facade that is actually a deliberate attempt on the part of David the narrator to mislead his readership. In his first encounter with Catriona, for instance, David apologizes for his social gaffe (listening in on a private conversation) by resorting to this persona, claiming that he has “‘no skill of city manners ... Take me for a country lad’” (Catriona 231). This caricature of “poor Davie,” however, does not match up with David’s increasingly calculating and manipulative behaviour over the course of his narrative, behaviour that reflects Stevenson’s views on the “a-moral” nature of the romance genre (“A Gossip on Romance” 54). While he might initially resemble a passive, inactive hero in the tradition of Scott’s Waverley, David emerges in the finale of Kidnapped and in the ensuing volume Catriona as a master manipulator. After falling victim to his uncle’s kidnapping scheme, David increasingly learns to take control of the narrative action, becoming an expert tale-teller in order to secure his representation as what Cluny Macpherson calls “‘a very pretty gentleman’” (Kidnapped 169). Despite his choice to preserve the outward appearance of middle-class respectability at the expense of a romantic legacy, David arguably embodies the “appealing autonomy of the plucky boy adventurer” to a far greater degree than Stevenson’s other cabin-boys (Gubar 69). While Ransome and Jim Hawkins become “pawns” in adult games that are

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103 In his influential study The Hero of The Waverley Novels, Alexander Welsh borrows the words of Nigel Olifaunt (The Fortunes of Nigel [1822]), who refers to himself deprecatingly as “‘a thing never acting but perpetually acted upon,’” in order to characterize the typical male protagonist featured in Scott’s fiction (qtd in Welsh 22). Like Stevenson’s David Balfour, who finds himself unexpectedly kidnapped into the romance plot, Scott’s heroes are also largely “victim[s] at the mercy of good and bad agents alike,” as Welsh writes (28). Incapable of being “leader[s] of men,” Waverley and his literary descendants are “passive hero[s]” who frequently rely on others in order to engineer their escape from dangerous situations, just as David depends on his new alliance with Alan in order to break away from the Covenant’s crew. Yet, mirroring the typical resolution of Scott’s novels, Stevenson ultimately rewards his protagonist: like the Waverley hero, David “does not remain a victim and he receives the heroine and the property in the end” (Welsh 28).
beyond their control, David evolves in terms of his increasing ability to weave in and out of the plot(s) that seek to entrap him: he becomes the ideal hero of the boy’s romance because of his ability to manipulate the romance plot itself.

David Balfour: Stevenson’s “a-moral” hero of romance

With his capacity for manipulation, David presents a striking contrast with other models of male heroism, particularly those featured in Henty’s romances for boys. Whereas Henty uses the ideal “mould” presented by his heroes – men whom Guy Arnold characterizes as manly, straightforward, and honest, among other worthy attributes – as a vehicle to “convey the moral content of his stories” (31), Stevenson offers up an alternative to this mould in the form of the shrewd and self-seeking David Balfour. The increasingly deceptive behaviour that David demonstrates over the course of *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* is in keeping with Stevenson’s characterization of romance as “a-moral” in his writings on the genre (54). Although Stevenson does stipulate in “The Morality of the Profession of Letters” (1881) that literature should be “honest” and “useful,” both “points in which honour and morality are concerned” (41), in “A Gossip on Romance” (published the following year in 1882), the author seems to make an exception for the genre that Andrew Lang would later credit him with “restor[ing]” (“Realism and Romance” 690). While “[d]rama is the poetry of conduct,” Stevenson declares that romance is “the poetry of circumstance” and therefore exempt from considerations of “proper”

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104 There is a puzzling contradiction between Stevenson’s claim in “Morality” – that he and other writers “have it in our power either to do great harm or great good” by striving “merely to please” or to “instruct” (43) – and his assertion in “Gossip” that a “vast deal in life,” as well as in literature, is necessarily “a-moral” (54). While this inconsistency may reflect a natural shift in Stevenson’s views over time, it also points to the difficulty and potential danger involved in reading the author’s fiction through his essays on writer’s craft. Gubar explores the negative implications of such a reading at some length in her discussion of *Treasure Island*. She writes that, “Stevenson’s intensely self-deprecating stance has had a chilling effect on critical accounts of *Treasure Island*”: the author’s own dismissal of the novel as “a little book about a quest for buried treasure” (“Humble” 196) is reflected accordingly in critical assessments that “*Treasure Island* is a very simple book” (Kiely 68).
behaviour (54). For Stevenson, the focus of the genre is “not upon what a man shall choose to
do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience,
but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure”
(54). According to the author himself, then, David Balfour’s occasional “slips and hesitations”
of conscience are irrelevant to him as a writer of boy’s romances. Rather than agonize over the
morality of his protagonist’s choices, then, Stevenson’s focus remains on David’s ability to
secure his upward mobility at any cost and in the face of the constant threat that his involvement
in the Appin murder poses to his reputation.

On the one hand, David’s willingness to prioritize his good standing in society over his
sense of right and wrong indicates Stevenson’s departure from Henty as well as other writers of
boy’s romances. On the other hand, David’s ability to manipulate the plots that seek to entangle
him, thereby controlling his own representation, ironically suggests a degree of pluck equal or
even superior to that of other heroes of boy’s literature. While David’s conduct as the
protagonist of his adventure is often less than morally upstanding, his apprenticeship in romance
over the course of *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* enables him to portray himself as either the hero or
the victim of his own tale, depending on what will best work to his advantage. As a protagonist
turned narrator of romance, David is able to use his metafictional awareness of the genre’s
conventions for his own gain, particularly in his role as retrospective narrator. In chronicling his
extended romance, David takes control of the genre into which he is unexpectedly plunged as a
“lad of sixteen years of age, the son of a poor country dominie in the Forest of Ettrick” (8).

By introducing himself to his audience in the guise of a naive young hero, David is able
to conceal his more mature status as the narrator of his own tale; only at the end of *Catriona* do
we learn that David has evolved from a “lad” into a lawyer and a landed gentleman who is
narrating the tale of his romantic youth in order to entertain his two children. Though David the narrator remains something of a “shadowy figure” (MacLachlan 27), what we can safely determine – that David is now a mature man, with children who are presumably old enough to appreciate his convoluted narrative – contrasts expressly with the young and frequently helpless protagonist with whom we have come to identify as readers over the course of his adventures. By creating the false impression that his retrospective narrator is the same boy to whom we are introduced at the beginning of *Kidnapped* (8), David is more truly the “masquerading adult” that Fiona McCulloch sees in Stevenson’s other famous boy-hero, Jim Hawkins (75). McCulloch has characterized Jim as a “predatory performer” who “plays double as adult narrator and boy character” (75), and yet his vivid and recurrent nightmares of “that accursed island” suggest that only a short interval of time has passed since his return to England (190). Though his age is “harder to pin down” than David’s (Sutton 39-40), Jim’s posture of childlike defenselessness, coupled with the fact that he is manipulated by “a parade of adult storytellers,” points to his immaturity (Gubar 82).

While Jim continues to be paralyzed by “the sharp voice of Captain Flint ... ringing in [his] ears” even after his voyage to Treasure Island (190), David uses the combined advantages of maturity and hindsight in order to maintain control over his tale. In his ability to preserve the illusion of “poor Davie” (as narrator) and to use this caricature in order to manipulate others over

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105 Stevenson’s refusal to specify Jim’s age in the 1883 single-volume publication has resulted in a wide range of critical opinions about the hero and subsequent narrator of *Treasure Island*; while Kiely and Daiches write under the assumption that Jim is a child narrator, in part because of Jim’s given age as a protagonist in the serial (fourteen years old), Barbara Wall claims, like McCulloch, that “Jim writes as an adult looking back on his boyhood” (Sutton 39-40).

106 Chief among this “parade” of storytellers identified by Gubar are Long John Silver and Dr. Livesey, the commissioner and co-narrator of Jim’s tale (Gubar 82). As Juliet Dusinberre observes, “Stevenson only allows Jim temporary control over his own narrative,” a story that is in fact “told by two voices”: Jim’s voice is displaced by that of Dr. Livesey, who takes over the narration for the span of three chapters (Dusinberre 82).
the course of his adventures (as protagonist), David demonstrates a degree of cunning and control over his narrative equal to that of Long John Silver, whose very “character is to plot” (Honaker 46). Like the silver-tongued sea-cook, with his friendly invitations to “‘come and have a yarn with John,’” David Balfour also takes pleasure in the act of narration (Treasure Island 54). Whereas Jim reluctantly “take[s] up [his] pen” in order to oblige Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey (3), David “likes to re-write his story,” frequently reminding the reader that his is “a self-consciously constructed narrative,” similar to Stevenson himself in his capacity as author (Letley Introduction to Kidnapped and Catriona xvi).

As a future lawyer and public man, it is not surprising that David remains hyper-aware of his self-representation throughout Kidnapped and Catriona. And yet the recurrent characterization of David as a “passive” hero fails to acknowledge the high degree of control that he exhibits in carefully crafting his public image, both as the protagonist and as the narrator of his own tale. That critics have largely accepted the caricature of “poor Davie” without question only proves David’s triumph in creating and maintaining this self-representation: by emphasizing his vulnerability and passivity over the course of his adventures, David is able to both minimize his agency and appearance of guilt in the affair of the Appin murder, as well as invent a compelling rags-to-riches narrative in which a naive “‘lad’” evolves into a calculating young man in the process of coming into his inheritance.

Up to this point, I have outlined David’s prowess as the retrospective narrator of his own tale. In order to explore how David gradually assumes this position of authority, however, I must backtrack to the beginning of Kidnapped and David’s initial self-presentation as a “countrified” lad who is unexpectedly co-opted into the role of a romantic hero. While his Gothic descriptions of his surroundings as well as the recognition that he is in the midst of a
“story like some ballad” suggest a degree of familiarity with romance (*Kidnapped* 26), David is initially less knowledgeable about the conventions of quest-romance than other protagonists like Jim Hawkins, whose fantasy of “mountaintop mastery” evokes the passage in *Robinson Crusoe* in which the protagonist surveys his island “with a secret kind of pleasure … to think that this was all my own, that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly, and had a right of possession” (Gubar 75; Defoe 80). Unlike Ballantyne’s heroes, who are veritable encyclopedias of knowledge about the natural world, David is ill-prepared to find himself “shipwrecked”: his ignorance of tidal patterns leads him to spend several days starving and in isolation on the islet of Earraid while “a sea-bred boy would not have stayed a day” (*Kidnapped* 99).

But although Jim Hawkins and the trio of protagonists in *The Coral Island* are more astute readers of boyhood romance, it is David who evolves from a position of powerlessness to one of power across *Kidnapped* and its sequel *Catriona*. While Jim’s “essential passivity and vulnerability” around adult authority figures suggests a resemblance to Silver’s parrot Captain Flint, a “haunting symbol of voicelessness” in Stevenson’s text (Gubar 70, 90), David Balfour becomes an equal match for the adults who seek to control or manipulate him, attending to James More’s “swaggering talk … as [he] might to the babbling of a parrot” (*Catriona* 448). How David is able to achieve this transformation from helpless hero to masterful narrator – primarily by learning to manipulate the conventions of romance to his own advantage – will be my focus in the remainder of this chapter.

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107 In *The Coral Island*, Jack, Ralph, and Peterkin similarly appraise “their” desert island in a scene that evokes Mary Louise Pratt’s description of the “monarch-of-all-I-survey scene,” which indicates a “relation of mastery” between (boy) explorer and conquered landscape (Pratt 205). “[G]azing [their] fill” of the prospect before them from their hilltop perch, Ralph and his companions imagine the lush valley as a “garden of flowers” filled with resources like bread-fruit trees and cocoa-nut palms, all of which are implicitly theirs for the taking (Ballantyne 54).
“I felt I was lost”: David at sea in an unfamiliar genre

David’s dismay upon his arrival at the House of Shaws mirrors Jim Hawkins’ increasing disenchantment over the course of *Treasure Island* as “every single aspect of [his] fantasy fails to come true” (Gubar 74); although he gleefully anticipates climbing “that tall hill they call the Spyglass, and ... enjoy[ing] the most wonderful and changing prospects” (Stevenson 37), Jim “never gets to enjoy a moment of monarchic mastery” during his stay on the island (Gubar 75). But while Jim and the rest of the cabin party are largely motivated by the prospect of adventure on the high seas – as the Squire enthuses, “‘Hang the treasure! It’s the glory of the sea that has turned my head’” (39) – David is doubly disappointed in his new surroundings because he is completely unprepared for romance. Highlighting the fact that he is “an unromantic hero [thrust into] a romantic situation,” David arrives in the bustling city of Edinburgh with his “country habit” and an accompanying air of bewilderment (W.W. Robson “On *Kidnapped*” 96). Like Dickens’ semi-autobiographical hero Pip, with his “coarse hands and common boots,” who hopes that his association with Miss Havisham will broaden his social horizons, David has similarly “great expectations” in regards to his auspicious meeting with his uncle (Dickens *Great Expectations* 62): he leaves home with the anticipation that his relative will introduce him into high society, establishing him in a traditional career like “‘the law, or the meenistry, or maybe the army,’” as Ebenezer Balfour (Esq.) initially promises his nephew (22). David’s genre expectations, however, lead him astray: while anticipating the “clink of teaspoons” – the sound which characterizes the novel of society for Stevenson (“Gossip” 57) – David is met with only “dead silence” at his uncle’s house apart from the stirrings of bats, suggesting just how unprepared he is to discover himself unwittingly entangled in a romantic ballad.

David’s sense of helplessness at suddenly finding himself the hero of a romance is
reinforced by his first impression of the “drear[y]” estate that he expects to inherit (14-15). With “bats fl[y]ing] in and out like doves out of a dovecot” and “uncompleted masonry,” including the unfinished staircase where he narrowly avoids plunging to his death, the “ruin” of the House of Shaws functions as what W.W. Robson calls a “genre-signal” in Stevenson’s text, whereby the author indicates that he is veering into the territory of Gothic romance (“On Kidnapped” 94). While Ebenezer Balfour protests that he is “‘nae warlock to find a fortune for [David] in the bottom of a parritch bowl,’” it is clear that despite his continuous struggle to “ge[t] the upper hand of [his] uncle” (23), David truly feels himself to be at Ebenezer’s mercy in the midst of these unfamiliar and frightening surroundings, like a “mouse” being “stealthily observed” by a “cat” (26). Just as Treasure Island opens in the “Gothic” mode (Gibson 13), with its description of a “monstrous kind of a creature” (the one-legged pirate Billy Bones) who continues to “haun[t]” the narrator Jim on “stormy nights” (5), Stevenson also uses Gothic tropes at the beginning of Kidnapped (and later Catriona) to highlight David’s fear and vulnerability. Like

108 The first of these genre-signals in Kidnapped, according to W.W. Robson, is the figure of Jennet Clouston, the “dark, sour-looking” woman who curses Ebenezer Balfour and his estate in “a kind of eldritch sing-song” (14); similar to the role of the prophetess Meg Merrilies in Walter Scott’s novel Guy Mannering (1815), Jennet functions as a “wayside omen” in Stevenson’s novel (“On Kidnapped” 94). Though Robson only briefly addresses Catriona, I would argue that the sequel to David’s adventures also opens in the Gothic vein: the “weird old wife” who offers to “‘spae’” David’s fortune, coupled with the sight of “a gibbet and two men hanging in chains,” serves as “an illustration of [David’s] fears,” just as he is deciding to turn himself in as a wanted man in the Appin murder (Stevenson 245).

Like Robson, who explains these Gothic genre-signals as indications of the “old kind of romance” operating in Stevenson’s work (94), my aim in introducing the Gothic here is not to confuse or complicate my primary focus on quest-romance in this chapter, but instead to reflect Stevenson’s own fluid consideration of the romance genre. In the David Balfour novels specifically, “romance” includes elements of the Gothic (as Robson has demonstrated), as well as of ballad and epic: for instance, after hearing his client’s tale, Rankeillor likens David to “‘a hero in a ballad’” and his account to “‘a great epic’” (189, 203). That his lawyer declares David’s behaviour to be worthy of these apppellations is puzzling, particularly considering the critical reception of David as a reluctant hero (see my discussion of Kiely and Sandison on page 118-9), as well as Stevenson’s failure to explain how he is using these generic terms and how these genres are in turn affiliated with romance. I would suggest, however, that this silence can partly be attributed to the apparent discord between the elder David’s narration (the version of events that comprise Kidnapped and its sequel) and that of his younger counterpart; without bearing witness to the latter’s version of events, in which the teenage David has ostensibly convinced his listener of his unfalteringly heroic conduct, it is difficult to understand just what exactly is ballad or epic-like about David’s behaviour, and why Rankeillor (and Stevenson) are choosing to invoke these similar-but-distinct genres within the larger quest-romance framework of David’s adventures.
the defenseless young heroine of a Gothic romance, David is rendered helpless by the unfamiliar kidnapping plot into which he is unexpectedly thrust by his uncle. For “all the shapes and pictures that [he] sat and gazed at” in his uncle’s fire, David is given no hint of his future troubles: “there was never a ship, never a seaman with a hairy cap, never a big bludgeon for my silly head, or the least sign of all those tribulations that were ripe to fall on me” (33).

Just as Silver exploits Jim’s desire for power and glory by using him as a pawn in his own quest for supremacy, David similarly proves to be an easy target for the scheming adults around him, in particular his uncle Ebenezer and Captain Hoseason. As the orphaned “son of a poor country dominie,” David’s purpose in seeking out the House of Shaws is all too apparent to his uncle. With his “little darting glances” at David’s “home-spun stockings” (20), Ebenezer quickly interprets his nephew’s desire for upward mobility and temporarily secures his confidence by claiming that he will “do the right by [his] brother’s son” (28). By playing on his nephew’s lofty expectations and comparative inexperience, Ebenezer easily manipulates David by directing him to the unfinished staircase in search of “papers” that will authenticate his birthright (28). And despite his increased wariness of his uncle following this incident, David is conned by Ebenezer once again as his uncle engages his desire for wealth: on the pretext of a meeting in town to address David’s inheritance with his lawyer, Ebenezer tricks his

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109 As I discuss in more detail later in this chapter (beginning on page 148), David’s stereotypically feminine position of passivity in these Gothic moments suggests that Stevenson is introducing his protagonist as the model of a new brand of masculinity, one in which cleverness and resourcefulness are prized more highly than the swordsmanship and derring-do that Alan Breck Stewart exhibits. For more on gender in the David Balfour novels, especially the reversal between the feminized David and the “bloodthirsty” Catriona who “should have been a man child” (Catriona 300), see Federico.

110 In contrast to the blow to the head that, for Joseph Kestner, signals Harvey Cheyne’s “re-birth into manhood” (34) in Kipling’s Captains Courageous (1897), the “thunderbolt [that] seemed to strike [David]” only indirectly results in his maturity (44). Unlike Harvey, David is not initiated into the masculine sphere by bonding with a ship’s crew, but his stay aboard the Covenant does result in his first encounter with Alan, who becomes a kind of role model for him in the text.
nephew into accompanying him on a matter of business with Captain Hoseason, thereby precipitating David’s kidnapping and further unseen “tribulations” (33).

Given David’s apparent desire for the respect that will come with inheriting Ebenezer’s estate as well as for the corresponding increase in his finances, it is not surprising that David is duped by his uncle’s kidnapping plot, which hinges on Captain Hoseason’s feigned attitude of respect and camaraderie towards him. Like Long John Silver, who wins Jim’s loyalty by convincing him that he is “smarter, braver, and more powerful” than the members of Silver’s own pirate crew (Gubar 84-5), the Captain ingratiates himself with David by calling him “‘Sir’” and inviting him to “‘make the better friends’” by “‘drink[ing] a bowl with [him]’” before the Covenant leaves port (43). In spite of his reluctance to “put [himself] in jeopardy,” David’s eagerness to explore the inside of the ship, coupled with Hoseason’s disarming demeanour, finally persuade him to venture aboard; in contrast to his own self-representation as a naïve country boy, Hoseason’s “air of grave equality” is, as David himself admits, “very flattering to a young lad” (43).

This false appearance of solidarity traps David into a position of powerlessness aboard the Covenant: with the realization that he has been betrayed by the Captain, David declares that he “felt [he] was lost” (44). By ensnaring David with promises of equality and then using him at his pleasure, Hoseason treats his new hostage similarly to the “poor child” Ransome, who is alternately beaten by the first mate Mr. Shuan and laughed at by the crew as he dances and sings after a night of drinking (51). That David is “ashamed to look at [Ransome]” during his periods of drunken helplessness indicates that David sees his own lack of power and influence unflatteringly reflected back upon him through this “half-grown boy in sea clothes” (34). Buckton suggests that Ransome functions “as a surrogate for David” – the “‘ransom’ that must
be paid to secure [David’s] release” from captivity (130) – while Sandison similarly argues that he is David’s “Doppelgänger” (184) and a “terrifying reflection of what David fears might yet turn out to be the truth about himself” (183): namely that for all his bravado, particularly in the battle of the round-house, David is merely attempting to be ‘manly’ like Ransome and is in fact ‘little better than a child’ (33).

Having “recognize[d] the shallowness of the superboy pose” as embodied by Ransome, David shrinks from perceiving a similar attitude in himself and is accordingly quick to distance himself from the Covenant’s cabin-boy (Federico 121). Despite their close proximity in age and their shared rank aboard ship,\(^\text{111}\) as well as the fact that the two young men are frequently “thrown” together for company (see p.36 and 41), David repeatedly characterizes Ransome as childlike. These piteous references to Ransome’s immaturity – “poor soul” (35), “my poor cabin-boy” (37), “poor moon-calf” (37), “poor creature” (50), “poor child” (51) – suggest David’s corresponding attempts to assert his own capability and manliness: two qualities that his circumstances (being kidnapped) and his own fabricated caricature of “poor Davie” have worked to undermine.

Taking control: Kidnapping the romance plot

While Ransome and Jim remain essentially in the position of children pretending to be grown-ups – the former is “more like a silly schoolboy than a man,” as David recognizes (36) – David deliberately crafts his self-representation as the wide-eyed country-bred ingénue in order to achieve his own ends. By using this persona as the foundation on which to build his “rags-to-

\(^{111}\) In a conversation with David, Ransome reveals that he “had followed the sea since he was nine, but could not say how old he was, as he had lost his reckoning” (36). Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that David and Ransome are close in age because the former succeeds the latter to the station of cabin-boy aboard the Covenant: this is the lowest rank and is typically held by the youngest member(s) of a ship’s crew.
riches” tale, David is borrowing an image that is first presented to him by the Reverend Campbell at the outset of his journey. It is the Reverend who reminds his young charge that, “‘though gentle born, ye have had a country rearing,’” a statement that seems to reflect David’s own self-image (*Kidnapped* 9). David narrates in retrospect, “My heart was beating hard at this great prospect opening before [me]” (8): his first glimpse of Edinburgh’s skyline “br[ings] [his] country heart into [his] mouth,” and forces him to recognize the disjunct between “the greatness of the place to which I was bound” and “the plainness of [his] appearance, in [his] country habit, and that all dusty from the road” (12).

As a grown man speaking from his empowered position as narrator, David appears to have accepted this “countrified” representation of himself; the figure of the country-bred “lad” becomes a useful literary device for the elder David, enabling him to plot his narrative as a rags-to-riches trajectory that sees the underdog eventually rewarded. As the sixteen-year old protagonist of his tale, however, “Davie” initially resents this “countrified” image of himself when it is reflected back at him “as a man may look in a mirror” (152); he revels in being presented as the rightful “‘Laird of Shaws, Mr. David Balfour,’” as Alan introduces him to Cluny (163), and not as the “halfling boy” to which he is likened by his companion in the battle of the round-house (75). He is also naturally displeased with the “miserable figure” that he cuts in the bill for his arrest – a “lad” in “ragged” and “homespun” clothes with “no beard” – in contrast to Alan, who is characterized as an “active man” decked in fine clothes (152). And yet, the younger David gradually learns that, rather than unsuccessfully imitating Alan’s heroic stature, projecting the guise of Alan’s immature sidekick is the more surefire method toward gaining the social prestige to which he aspires.
By embracing his outward appearance of weakness and vulnerability, David is ultimately able to take control of the plot: he escapes from the romance into which he has been unexpectedly “kidnapped,” and finally claims his inheritance, the goal that he establishes for himself at the beginning of his narrative. Rather than repeatedly aspiring—and failing—to evolve into the type of adventure hero that Alan naturally embodies, David comes to appreciate that an alliance with this powerful figure of masculinity will equally suit his purpose. When David perceives Captain Hoseason’s desire to secure his allegiance with the ship’s crew against Alan, David feigns compliance and then promptly befriends the “‘wild Hielandman,’” fighting alongside him in the battle of the round-house against the “treacherous, greedy, bloody men that [he] sailed with” (62). By refusing to respond to Captain Hoseason’s flattery—he observes dryly that he “had never been so be-Davided since [he] came on board” (62)—David manages to escape from his uncle’s plot to sell him into slavery in the Carolinas, proving that he is just as capable of taking the plot into his own hands as his adult captors.

It is in the wake of the Appin murder, however, that David truly perfects this caricature of “poor Davie,” using his weakness and youth to maintain his friendship and alliance with Alan. When their rising tensions over Alan’s gambling culminate in a vehement argument, David, who is so tired that he is ready to “swoo[n] where [he] [stands],” uses his physical incapacity in order to win Alan’s forgiveness (178). Recognizing that he is in danger of permanently alienating his “doughty friend,” David strategizes that “where an apology was vain, a mere cry for help might bring Alan back to my side” (178). Though he denies that his plea is an act, protesting that he “ha[s] no need to pretend,” his delivery “in a weeping voice that would have melted a heart of stone” suggests the opposite: that this is in fact a deliberate and calculated performance (178). David also creates this impression with his atypical use of the Highland Scots dialect: he tells
Alan that if he “‘cannae’” help him he “‘must just die’” (178). By reinforcing their bond, which he does by adopting Alan’s language and by stressing his dependency on the Highlander, David is able to achieve his desired result: Alan effectively takes all of the blame upon himself for the quarrel, declaring that he “‘couldnae remember’” that David “‘were just a bairn’” and asking for his forgiveness (178).

That Alan is immediately recalled to himself with this pitiful reminder of his companion’s youth and comparative weakness suggests the effectiveness of David’s strategy to deliberately portray himself as the “country Johnnie Raw” (34). While he is never entirely comfortable with this image of himself as the “passive” hero – he is “in bitter dudgeon at being called a Jacobite and treated like a child” in a later scheme initiated by Alan – he also recognizes that this representation will move him closer to the ultimate goal of claiming his inheritance (191). For instance, the “picture” that David and Alan calculatingly present to the maid at a public change-house of a “poor, sick, overwrought lad and his most tender comrade” inspires their sympathetic female listener to lend them a row-boat, guaranteeing them safe passage into the city of Edinburgh for a consultation with Rankeillor the lawyer (192). The success of Alan’s “‘bit of play-acting’” in this instance reinforces for David the practicality of reflecting back to others what they wish to see in him. By accurately discerning the serving-maid’s maternal impulse toward David – a woman who will later assume the role of nanny to David and Catriona’s two children (Catriona 488) – Alan is able to temporarily safeguard both his own life as well as that of his companion. As Barry Menikoff points out, Alan’s discourse in this scene,  

112 David’s growing ability to code-switch between his own dialect and that of Alan and the other Highlanders – even engaging in full conversations in this “other” language in Catriona (see the beginning of Chapter XIX) – can be tied to his problematic political status. As a self-proclaimed Whig whose loyalties are to the Jacobite Alan, David increasingly flip-flops between both dialects in order to negotiate his precarious position as “‘Mr. Betwixt-and-Between’” (61).
which transforms David into a poor, friendless lad with “but three shillings left in this wide world” (194), suggests a “parody of sentimental fiction” deliberately calculated to “tu[g] at the listener’s heart” and persuade the girl to help them (xlii).

Playing the hero: “And I opened my plot to him”

Following in the footsteps of his mentor Alan, David proves himself to be an equally capable storyteller in his exchange with Rankeillor, a scene that represents the culmination of David’s apprenticeship in tale-telling over the course of *Kidnapped*. Just as Alan scrutinizes David before they approach the serving-maid, concluding that his companion has “‘a fine, hang-dog, rag-and-tatter […] kind of a look’” suited to his “‘purpose,’” David chooses not to clean up his appearance before directly approaching the lawyer upon his arrival in Edinburgh (191). By deliberately presenting himself in “a pickle of rags and dirt” (198), David is already molding Rankeillor into a sympathetic listener: the lawyer is “so much struck” with the pitiful sight of David that he “[comes] straight up to [him] and asked [him] what [he] did” while David is still wandering in the street “like a dog that has lost its master” (198). With “no grounds to stand upon,” David’s pathetic appearance is deliberately calculated in order to substantiate his identity, as well as to support his dramatic story of kidnapping at the hands of his uncle (197).

Though Stevenson does not provide us with the version of events that David specifically relates to the lawyer, we as readers are given hints as to the substance of his tale: most notably, Rankeillor’s reception of David’s account as “‘a great epic, a great Odyssey […] You must tell it, sir, in a sound Latinity when your scholarship is riper’” (203). Rankeillor’s enthusiastic response indicates that David has successfully tailored his tale to fit his audience, mirroring Alan’s earlier effort to win over the serving-maid. Just as his companion presents a pathetic “picture” in order to appeal to feminine sympathy (192), David perceives Rankeillor’s appreciation for the classics
– his speech is punctuated with Latin quotations – and exploits it in order to entertain the lawyer as well as to gain his respect and trust. In displaying his knowledge of the great classical epics – he prefaces his tale by proposing to “‘do as Horace says’” and carry his listener “‘in medias res’” (199) – David suggests that he is a born gentleman, despite what the Reverend calls his “‘country rearing’” at the hands of his father, a poor “‘dominie’” or schoolmaster (9). Although young David was presumably educated in a village schoolhouse, his understanding of the classics indicates his father’s secret noble upbringing, as well as his own suitability to inherit his uncle’s title and estate.  

By presenting himself through his education as a model gentleman and worthy heir to the estate of Shaws, David gains Rankeillor’s approval, as David himself shrewdly notes: after referencing Horace, David writes that the lawyer “nodded as if he was well-pleased” and he later confesses that he prefers Latin to English as “‘the stronger tongue’” (199, 203).

At the same time, the overtones of Homer’s “‘great Odyssey’” in David’s tale elevate his “‘wanderings’” into a heroic register that Rankeillor also finds attractive (203). That this is a deliberate and calculated construction on David’s part is indicated by the clear disjunct between the tale that we have experienced as readers and the narrative that David presents to his lawyer. Whereas elsewhere in the text David effectively plays up his passivity in order to gain a

113 Prior to David’s journey, the Reverend Campbell enlightens his charge about his father’s lineage, a history which had hitherto been concealed from him; he tells David that he is in fact one of the “‘Balfours of Shaws: an ancient, honest, reputable house, peradventure in these latter days decayed.’” That David’s father received some degree of classical education as a result of his upbringing is further indicated by Campbell, who claims that Alexander Balfour “‘was a man of learning as befitted his position’”; lacking “‘the manner or the speech of a common dominie,’” Alexander mingled easily with other “‘well-kenned gentlemen’” and members of the gentry, who all “‘had pleasure in his society,’” according to Campbell (8). As such, the classical knowledge that David displays in this exchange with Rankeillor has presumably been passed down from father to son.
sympathetic audience, Rankeillor’s response suggests the opposite: that David’s conduct throughout his adventures has been entirely befitting of a “hero in a ballad” (189). Whether or not the lawyer’s interpretation is the result of his classical leanings or if it simply reflects David’s particular colouring of his tale is never made explicit. However, Rankeillor’s declaration that David possesses “a singular aptitude” both for “getting into false positions” and “upon the whole for behaving well in them” suggests that David has modified his account in order to present himself in a flattering light for the lawyer’s benefit (203). In the version that David relates to his own children (and to which we as readers have also been witnesses), there are several instances in which David’s course of action has been less than upstanding, including his failure to defend Ransome as well as his decision to flee from the scene of the Appin murder (thus seemingly compounding his guilt). But curiously, despite these examples of David’s frequently cowardly and morally circumspect behaviour, Rankeillor praises his client’s decorum, suggesting that David has biased his tale in order to represent himself in a heroic light.

By deliberately playing into Rankeillor’s genre expectations, David establishes himself as a master manipulator in this scene, presenting himself as both a steady gentleman and as an ideal hero of romance. Even as he preserves an air of genteel respectability with his classical learning, David is also able to re-cast himself as the hero of the romance plot rather than its victim. Although the stalwart Alan has embodied the romantic hero throughout their adventures, David seems unwilling to present himself as the hero’s sidekick in his “official” account to Rankeillor:

114 After his kidnapping, David tells his “whole story” to the officer of the Covenant Mr. Riach, who subsequently declares that “it was like a ballad” (51). This phrase closely echoes David’s earlier comment that his narrative is “like some ballad” (26), suggesting that Riach has indiscriminately adopted David’s piteous tale of being disinherited by his uncle. Another sympathetic listener is the old man who recognizes David as “the lad with the silver button” and who hears out his tale of being stranded on the isle of Earraid “with nothing but gravity and pity,” according to David himself (101, 102): again, the listener’s reaction mirrors David’s own feelings of self-pity.
he pictures himself “knocking at Mr. Rankeillor’s door to claim [his] inheritance, like a hero in a ballad” (189), and adjusts his tale accordingly, matching his conduct to this heroic persona that he has fabricated. With the power that comes from reclaiming his tale in the role of narrator, David finally proves himself to be in control of his representation as “‘Mr. Betwixt-and-Between’” a position that he has struggled to negotiate throughout his adventures (61). The tinge of romantic lawlessness that David acquires by proxy from his association with the Jacobite Alan lends him a manly air without compromising his credibility: he remains throughout his adventures as steadfast and “as good a Whig as Mr Campbell could make [him]” (61).

With both Alan’s help and that of his newfound ally Rankeillor, David is able to revenge himself upon his uncle; after Rankeillor outlines the difficulty of supporting his story without testimony from witnesses, David devises a scheme that will enable him to finally claim his long-awaited inheritance, and “open[s] [his] plot” to the lawyer (208). When Alan presents himself at the door of the House of Shaws, asserting that David has been kidnapped for a second time by a gang of Highlandmen and demanding further ransom money, Ebenezer’s plan to have his nephew kidnapped and sold into slavery in the Carolinas is gradually revealed. By presenting himself as the victim of yet another kidnapping through Alan’s capable storytelling – he offers to “‘set [the tale] to a tune and sing it’” to Ebenezer (212) – David is able to bring his “ballad” full circle, using his uncle’s own plot against him. Though he initially describes himself as a poor, plain, and helpless “lad,” David’s decisive course of action following his arrival on Rankeillor’s doorstep proves that he has outgrown this self-representation as Kidnapped draws to a conclusion. After coming into his fortune as well as turning the tables on his uncle, David proves that he has come into his own, both as a gentleman and as a romantic narrator.
An “unblemished” young gentleman: David’s self-representation in *Catriona*

David’s narrative triumph at the end of *Kidnapped* signifies his newfound authority as a teller of tales, a status that he cements over the course of *Catriona*. As Stevenson’s original serial title *David Balfour* indicates, this sequel represents David’s true coming-of-age. No longer the unwitting victim of adult machinations, David begins *Catriona* with hopes for a fresh start, after achieving the position in high society to which he has long aspired. While but “[t]wo days before,” David had arrived at Rankeillor’s doorstep “like a beggarman by the wayside, clad in rags, brought down to [his] last shillings” and with a “condemned traitor” as his companion, he embarks on the second volume of his adventures by being “served heir” to his new “position in life”: that of a “landed laird” with a bank porter to carry his gold (227). This status, however, comes with a price: as a newly established landholder with a reputation to uphold, David’s “betwixt-and-between” political standing proves to be increasingly difficult for him to negotiate. Determined at the beginning of the novel “to be done at once with ... the whole Jacobitical side of [his] business” (229), David becomes increasingly reluctant to testify in the Appin murder and thereby adopt the character of a so-called “‘turbulent, fractious fellow’” in order to assert James Stewart’s innocence (362).

Following his initial introduction (in the form of a letter composed by Charles Stewart the writer) as a “young gentleman of unblemished descent and good estate” whose “political principles are all that [the Lord Advocate Prestongrange] can desire” (248-9), David is ultimately

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115 *Catriona*’s title is misleading in that it falsely emphasizes the agency of Stevenson’s heroine, as I discuss in my first chapter. Given the focus of my dissertation on nineteenth-century British children’s literature, however, I have chosen to refer to Stevenson’s text by the title under which it was first novelized and continues to be recognized in the U.K. (see Federico fn. 9 p. 131).
forced to choose between risking this public reputation and clearing his conscience. That David opts for the former at the expense of the latter suggests that he has once again compromised his values as a “Kirk-going” lad, values that he is occasionally given to preaching over the course of *Kidnapped* (Letley Introduction to *Kidnapped and Catriona* xvi-xvii).\(^{116}\) By choosing to contain his eyewitness testimony within a legal document known as a memorial,\(^{117}\) rather than unveiling it before the public at the Appin trial, David abets the Lord Advocate Prestongrange’s effort to scapegoat James for the murder of Colin Roy Campbell – a murder in which James was not in any way complicit, as David knows firsthand.

The significance of David’s memorial, then, is two-fold: on one hand, it represents a betrayal both of Alan’s kinsman James and of David’s own moral code, but on the other hand, it also points to his growing skill as a storyteller. In carefully selecting the audience (Prestongrange) as well as the ideal format in which to offer up his testimony, David is able to predetermine the outcome of his own tale, choosing “‘life, wine, [and] women’” over “‘a rope ... and a gibbet’” (270). While this choice excludes David from the role of the adventure hero embodied by Alan, it also clearly differentiates him from Stevenson’s other young protagonists, who are ultimately unable to “acquire any real power, authority, or agency” (Gubar 91). While their lack of control over the romance plot ensures that Jim and Ransome remain perpetually ...

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\(^{116}\) While he is far from a model Christian, David shares a certain air of “hypercritical piety” with Henty’s heroes: he is similarly given to preaching, although he is less likely to practice these tenets than Henty’s exemplary protagonists (Arnold 36). For instance, David’s craving for vengeance against his uncle – he confesses at one point that “it would be a fine consummation to take the upper hand, and drive him like a herd of sheep” (33) – contrasts with his tone of moral high-handedness in a later discussion with Alan, when he lectures his companion that “Christianity forbids revenge” (84). Although he never physically lashes out against his uncle, this fantasy of avenging himself suggests that David struggles to circumscribe his behaviour according to Christian dictates.

\(^{117}\) A memorial is defined in legal terminology in the OED as: “A statement of facts forming the basis of or expressed in the form of a petition or remonstrance to a person in authority, a government, etc.” (5 b.) and “A statement of facts drawn up to be submitted to the Lord Ordinary in the Court of Session preliminary to a hearing” (5 c.).
stuck in childhood, David matures over the course of his tale through his apprenticeship in romantic conventions: first as a keen listener and opportunist in the wake of Black Andie’s tale of Tod Lapraik and then later as a collaborator alongside James Stewart’s legal team in composing his memorial. In his ability to mould himself into the figure of the ideal middle-class gentleman through his own storytelling, David truly shows himself in *Catriona* to be “the master of his own destiny rather than someone acted upon by forces beyond his control” (Daiches 86-7).

Balancing public and private representations: “landed laird” or “great hero of the good”? 

As we have witnessed in *Kidnapped*, David proves to be increasingly masterful at crafting his own public image, presenting himself variously as a hero and as a victim in order to achieve a desired impact on his audience. In *Catriona*, David once again attempts to manage his paradoxical self-representation, in which “[t]he note of self-pity mingles with the heroic” (Daiches 92). By “repeatedly call[ing] attention to his own maturation” – or, more accurately, his lack thereof – David continues to play the victim to an even greater degree than in *Kidnapped*, according to Federico (124). When Catrina finds herself stranded in Holland without any money, for instance, David takes it upon himself to be her protector, despite confessing to her that he is “‘too young to be your friend’” and “‘too young to advise you’” (422). David’s convincing assertion of his own youth and immaturity is what ultimately preserves his life following James More’s arrival in Holland. After James discovers that David and Catrina are living under the same roof as “brother and sister,” his perception that David is “‘a very young man’” who is therefore incapable of “‘understand[ing] the significance of the step’” that he took with Catrina is what finally induces James to forgive David and show him mercy (439): he had decided either to “‘cut [David’s] throat” or to arrange a match between the pair in order to preserve his daughter’s honour (453).
That David is “‘too young’” to be Catriona’s protector, as both he and James allege, once again works to his advantage (422). And yet, David’s constant assertions that he has “‘yet to learn, and know, and prove [himself] a man’” (278) suggest the calculated stance of “‘the hero pretending to be the weakling’” for Daiches (92). In private conversation with Catriona, for instance, David reveals a completely different aspect of his personality by regaling his sweetheart with tales of his romantic adventures in *Kidnapped*. By relating his version of the battle in the round-house, in which he nonchalantly claims to have killed two men, David works to impress Catriona, a “‘bloodthirsty maid’” (according to David) who wishes she were a “‘man-child’” (300-301). While maintaining the public image of a stable and politically conservative young man in accordance with Charles Stewart’s description, David is able to depict himself in private as a hero worthy of his prospective love-interest’s admiration and affection. Catriona’s image of David as “‘a great hero of the good’” despite being “‘a boy not much older than [her]self’” is confirmed after she hears his initial oral re-telling of *Kidnapped* (281): she subsequently declares that he is “‘a hero, surely, and I never would have thought that same!’” (282).

Ironically, however, David must purposely distance himself from any hint of the romantic Jacobite that Catriona finds so attractive in him in order to secure a future with his sweetheart.

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118 For a staunch young man who rejects revenge as un-Christian (*Kidnapped* 83-4), David is curiously proud of the two murders that he commits during this battle, insisting that Alan’s ballad is “something less than just” to his role in the conflict (*Kidnapped* 71).

119 In response to her demand to “‘hear the whole’” of his adventures, David initially claims to have told Catriona “all [of the narrative of *Kidnapped*] much as I have written it,” solely omitting his low opinion of her father (282). However, it becomes clear later on that David also left out his description of the “battle in the brig” from his earlier account (301). Only after Catriona declares her desire to “‘pick up a sword or give one good blow’” is she able to “dr[aw] from” David the story “which [he] had omitted from [his] first account of [his] affairs,” suggesting that David’s sudden disclosure is an attempt to impress Catriona by appealing to what he calls her “‘bloodthirsty’” tastes (300-301).
While his “official” account to Rankeillor suggests that David can preserve a trace of this radicalism without forfeiting his standing as the “laird” of Shaws, in *Catriona* David is increasingly forced to recognize the serious threat that his private entanglements with Alan and Catriona pose to his public reputation. By pursuing his efforts to testify at the Appin trial – a move that will fully air his private life out in the public – David will only receive “‘a rope to [his] craig, and a gibbet to clatter [his] bones on, and the lousiest, lowest story to hand down to [his] namesakes in the future’” according to Simon Fraser, a former clan chief who is now “currying favour with the Government” (267-8). Fraser’s warning here effectively plays on David’s dread of facing criminal punishment (symbolized by the gibbet he encounters as he contemplates surrendering to Prestongrange), as well as his anxiety about preserving his character, even for posterity. Although David is ultimately never prosecuted for his suspected involvement in the Appin murder, Fraser’s “‘stage play’” completely “unman[s]” David, prompting him to suppress his Jacobitical past as a means toward securing his own safety (270).

In response to this two-fold threat to both his life and his posthumous reputation, David demonstrates an impressive ability to manipulate the plots that seek to contain and silence him, shown in two critical instances in Stevenson’s text. The first of these pivotal moments occurs in the wake of his second kidnapping on the Bass rock, a strategic move orchestrated by Prestongrange in order to silence David’s testimony. As he does with the House of Shaws in *Kidnapped*, Stevenson invokes the Gothic here to signal David’s lack of control over his circumstances, particularly in the forbidding “black, broken buildings” of the Bass rock prison (331). As he approaches the Bass, David re-experiences the vulnerability that he once felt aboard the *Covenant*, recalling “poor” Ransome’s account of the “‘twenty-pounders’”: “unhappy criminals” and innocent victims who are transported overseas (*Kidnapped* 38). Echoing David’s feeling of powerlessness is the gothic tale of demonic possession related by his captor Black
Andie, in which Tod Lapraik’s bodiless spirit dances with the “joy o’ hell” out on the Bass (345). Whereas elsewhere in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona* David assumes the empowering role of storyteller, Buckton remarks that this role is temporarily “suspended” whilst David is in prison, where he instead becomes the audience to his captors’ tales (205).

But even as this gothic atmosphere suggests his helplessness without a “second Alan” to come to his rescue, David still cleverly manages to engineer his escape from this second kidnapping (*Catriona* 330). Unlike his time as a hostage aboard the *Covenant*, where he is largely either unconscious or sobbing “in the belly of that unlucky ship” (*Kidnapped* 45), David never ceases to plot his escape from the Bass, even using the unfavourable reception of Andie’s interpolated tale as the key to securing his own freedom. After a quarrel breaks out between Andie and David’s Highland captors regarding the source of his “queer” story of Tod Lapraik (339), David quickly sides with the Lowlander against the Gregara, despite the fact that both he and Andie are “without weapons” and outnumbered “three to two” (347). By boldly allying himself with Andie in this way, David is able to wrest back control of his situation, ensuring his captor’s loyalty as well as his own escape from captivity: Andie’s resulting feelings of “gratitude” ultimately secure David’s freedom from prison a day early, enabling him finally to present himself at James Stewart’s trial (347).

In spite of his seemingly passive role as listener, David successfully manipulates the outcome of Andie’s narrative performance by creating a partnership with him. Like the bond that he impetuously forms with Alan aboard the *Covenant* – he places his hand on Alan’s shoulder “by no choice of [his], but as if by compulsion” (*Kidnapped* 63) – David protests that “there was no time to think” and that he came to Andie’s aid “before [he] knew what [he] was doing” (*Catriona* 347). These seemingly unpremeditated alliances, however, are in fact the
result of deliberate strategy on David’s part: the relationships that David forms with these strong, dominant male figures “as if by compulsion” are intended to remedy his position of powerlessness. By acting both impulsively and selfishly in these instances, David’s behaviour contrasts expressly with that of Henty’s paragons of masculine virtue, who react “almost mechanically” as Lisle Bullen says in *Through Three Campaigns* (1904) while performing acts of selflessness (qtd in Arnold 37). In *With Kitchener in the Soudan* (1903), for instance, Gregory Hilliard’s chivalrous nature leads him to jump into a river to save a drowning woman “[w]ith scarcely a thought of what he was doing” (120). By contrast, David’s impulsive alliances suggest his instinctive cunning and inherently self-seeking nature; seizing the conflicted reception of the tale of Tod Lapraik as an opportunity to reprise an active role in his own narrative, David rejects the role of the “missing witness” – a “label of absence and impotence” – that is forced upon him when he is sequestered on the Bass (Buckton 204).  

### Not a “turbulent, factious fellow”: David’s memorial

Following his pivotal role in the outcome of Andie’s tale, David next displays his impressive grasp of narrative authority through the written testimony that he produces in the Appin trial. By “exploit[ing]” the “model of powerful narration” exemplified for him by Andie (Buckton 205-6), David is able to use this testimony, in the form of a legal document known as a memorial, in order to direct the conclusion of his narrative. In private consultation with James Stewart’s defense attorneys, David once again adopts the role of storyteller: as a preamble to his testimony

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120 In *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* (2014), Bradley Deane links this impulsivity to the rise of “hypermasculinity” in tandem with imperialist expansion: at a time in which militarism and powerful physicality were prized, Deane writes that, “instinct and spontaneity could be valued over painstaking deliberation, and impulse and irrationality taken for passionate male authenticity” (7). In spite of his lack of physical prowess, then, David Balfour, with his impulsivity and conformity to the imperialist status quo, suggests a new brand of nineteenth-century masculine heroism, a subject that I explore further in my conclusion.
about the murder, David relates a “short narration of [his] seizure and captivity” on the Bass rock for the defense team. Stewart the writer enthusiastically declares it “‘a tale to make the world ring with!’” proposing that they use David’s evidence in order to “‘fling [dirt]’” on the prosecution’s case (358-59), and the rest of James’ defense team agrees to adopt this strategy: if “‘[p]roperly handled and carefully redd out,’” David’s narrative of his confinement on the Bass will work to discredit the “‘whole administration of justice, from its highest officer downward,’” according to Mr. Miller (360).

However, in spite of the eagerness of James’ attorneys, who hope to achieve a symbolic victory in the “battle between savage clans” with the support of his testimony (357), David thinks himself “‘extremely hazarded’” by the prospect of testifying in person: he complains that “‘it would be a pity for [him] to ingrain upon himself the character of a turbulent, factious fellow before he was yet twenty’” (362). Rather than unveiling his Jacobite leanings in court, a move that he recognizes would prove devastating to his future legal career, David collaborates with James’ lawyers in order to draft a written document based on his oral testimony, which concludes “‘with a forcible appeal to the King’s mercy on behalf of James’” (363). By enabling him to avoid any dangerous “‘extremes’” in his self-representation that might cost him his ambitions, David’s compromised approach works to his benefit, notwithstanding his protests that he is still “‘a good deal sacrificed, and rather represented in the light of a firebrand of a fellow’” by James’ lawyers in the memorial (363).

In attempting to distance himself from the romantic “‘firebrand’” that Alan embodies, David accordingly aligns himself with other reluctantly “betwixt-and-between” figures like Stewart the writer, who feel compelled to dance “‘when the clan pipes’” (he and Alan are distant kin) but who also recognize the necessity of preserving their public reputations as upstanding
Whiggish gentlemen (240). Although he frequently represents his kinfolk in court, Stewart the writer confesses to David that he resents being “‘whistle[d] in’” in this way and is fearful of the ensuing “‘black mark on [his] chara’ter’” as a result of his clan loyalty, an anxiety that David shares as he contemplates testifying in the Appin murder (241). Torn between defending an innocent man and maintaining his own good name, David chooses the path that will lead him to his ultimate goal of becoming a gentleman-lawyer. By virtually concealing his radical and potentially self-damaging testimony about crossing the Highland line within his memorial, David, a.k.a. “‘Mr Betwixt-and-Between,’” finally asserts himself as a Whig and not a Jacobite (Kidnapped 61).

Like the “‘epic’” tale that he recounts to Rankeillor in Kidnapped, David’s memorial represents a narrative triumph in Catriona, although the purposes behind these two narratives are markedly different. While the former is crafted expressly to entertain the lawyer by playing up the heroism of David’s exploits, the latter works to suppress David’s romantic and Jacobitical leanings, functioning as a “strategy of containment” in Stevenson’s text. As Fredric Jameson has demonstrated, this device functions ideologically in the nineteenth-century novel by “allow[ing] what can be thought to seem internally coherent in its own terms while repressing the unthinkable ... which lies beyond its boundaries” (53). By enclosing within its silent pages the account of David’s transgressive romance in Kidnapped, which sees him drinking a toast to “The Restoration” in Cluny’s Cage among other “unthinkable” matters (163), David privately uses the

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121 Buckton also uses Jameson’s theory in relation to Stevenson’s David Balfour novels, arguing that Kidnapped “fails as a strategy of containment” because it cannot reconcile the “Jacobite political plot” with the “bourgeois inheritance plot,” while Catriona presents a half-hearted resolution in the form of the matrimonial union between Highlander (Catriona) and Lowlander (David) (187). While Buckton maintains that the marriage plot is “only a compensatory form of closure” following “the failure of [David’s] political ideals” (207), I am arguing conversely here that the memorial becomes David’s active political effort to conceal his own romantic Jacobitism (comprising the narrative of Kidnapped) within a conservative Whig exterior.
memorial to alleviate his conscience while still publicly cultivating his reputation as a conventional and moderate gentleman.

If he were to formally present his testimony before the court, David recognizes that his new standing in society would be placed in jeopardy. Instead, David chooses to entrust the responsibility bound up in his memorial – namely, whether or not to intervene in James’ sentencing – to Prestongrange, a man who David already knows is eager to hold James accountable for Colin Roy Campbell’s murder. It is not surprising, then, that David’s memorial is never properly “‘redd out’” in court: David relates that, “[t]here was never the least word heard of the memorial” and the public remained “none the wiser” for its existence, though he admits that “Prestongrange and the Lord President may have heard of it ... on the deafest sides of their heads” and “kept it to themselves” (392). That the memorial proves to be ineffective, both in terms of exonerating James and in discrediting the justice system, prompts Buckton to conclude that the “empowering view of the consequences of storytelling is never realized” in Catriona; with the apparent failure of his memorial as a political tool, David is ultimately “rendered helpless” to affect the course of historical events (206).

But to suggest, as Buckton does, that David is powerless based on his inability to prevent James’ execution is arguably to misread the inherently selfish purpose behind David’s memorial. While he regrets that “poor James of the Glens was duly hanged” (392), David creates the memorial not in order to spare James, who would have been arguably better served by David’s appearance in court, but instead to save his own skin. Unwilling to risk his own upward mobility, David chooses to put forward his evidence in the more discreet “‘private method’” that pleases the Lord Advocate, rather than offering it up as a “‘dripping roast’” for the Parliamentary House to feast upon (364). This strategy, which preserves David’s ties to a man who could
potentially further his legal career, prompts even the Lord Advocate’s admiration: he concedes that “‘the bar is the true scene for your talents’” (366).

Through the presentation of his testimony, David has the power to shape the outcome of the Appin trial. Although David subsequently blames the failure of the memorial on Prestongrange, characterizing him as one of the “villains of that horrid plot” to hang James (393), the decision to suppress his testimony rather than having it publicly “‘redd out’” in court rests entirely in David’s hands. As a result, David is at the very least partly responsible for his compromised and ultimately unsuccessful approach to help James, which he himself recognizes is doomed to failure. By surrendering his memorial directly to the Lord Advocate – a man who has announced to David his intention to hush up the Appin affair to prevent another “‘disturbance in the Highlands’” like the “‘year ‘45’” (257-8) – David is clearly aware that he is sacrificing an innocent man in order to safe-guard his own well-being and career prospects.122 David rightly identifies Prestongrange’s offer to “br[ing] [him] into society” as a strategic “‘countercheck to the memorial’”: his “presence in [Prestongrange’s] house” as a welcome guest is meant to “draw out the whole pungency” of his written testimony accusing the Lord Advocate of corruption (365-6). But rather than forfeit his chances of “be[ing] called to the bar,” where he wisely recognizes that Prestongrange’s “countenance” would prove “invaluable,” David accepts the Lord Advocate’s invitation, being only “a little concerned in conscience” that in doing so he has compromised both James Stewart as well as his own moral scruples (366-7).

122 As Buckton notes, the “miscarriage of justice” resulting in James More’s execution “benefits” David by conveniently “exculpat[ing] both Alan and himself from criminal charges” (190). After James “becomes the chief suspect,” David’s “implication in the crime is mysteriously waived,” but his testimony in the memorial (had it been disclosed to the public) may have backfired by suggesting his own guilty involvement in the murder. Buckton presents this dilemma in the form of a rhetorical question: “‘to what extent is a witness of historical events [David’s role in Kidnapped and Catriona] implicated in those events and their outcomes?’” (189).
Buckton suggests that David’s “storytelling” is “his only compensation for a lack of direct political influence” in Catriona (189). Conversely, I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this chapter that storytelling itself becomes a form of direct political influence in the David Balfour novels. In tailoring the narrative of his adventures to fit his audience – whether it be Catriona, Rankeillor, or a higher legal authority – David is able to maintain an appearance of innocence while secretly directing the plot in order to further his own ends. By compartmentalizing his testimony in the form of the memorial, for instance, David is finally able to pursue the “plain, quiet, private path” that he has been “ambitious to walk in” from the outset of Kidnapped, when he pictures himself inheriting his uncle’s estate and becoming the rightful “laird” of Shaws (Catriona 392, 393). The second half of the novel – in which David travels to Holland with Catriona in order to further his education as well as woo his future bride – is not a “compensatory form of closure” for his “political disillusionment” (Buckton 207), but rather the fulfillment of his greater life plan: earlier in Catriona, David confesses his desire to “swim clear of the Appin murder” and “be able to enjoy and improve [his] fortunes,” as well as “devote some hours of [his] life to courting Catriona” (Catriona 309). By choosing a private rather than a public reception for his memorial, David effectively secures this imagined future for himself, as we see in the ending of Catriona when a more seasoned and mature David – a lawyer and married father of two children – is revealed to be the narrator of his own carefully crafted tale.

Conclusion: A new brand of romantic hero

In cultivating a thoroughly middle-class career path, David seems to acknowledge that he can never truly fit the mould of the adventure hero, despite his efforts to convince Rankeillor otherwise in Kidnapped. Unlike the swashbuckling Alan Breck Stewart, for instance, David has never been taught to use a sword due to what he calls “the fault of [his] upbringing” (Catriona
288), and his ineptitude as a fighter is fully revealed at the end of *Catriona*; when David intervenes in the final showdown between Alan and James More, he unintentionally wounds his betrothed, who declares, in a revealing gender-reversal, that David “‘has made a man of [her] now’” (483). If, as Federico has outlined, the sword does function as a “metaphor for manhood” in *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, then it is clear from this interaction that David’s “‘clumsy’ swordplay cannot equal the vigorous displays of masculinity in which Alan engages his blade” (124).123

And yet, Stevenson’s affection for his protagonist (“‘I love my Davy’”), coupled with his refusal to satisfy the public’s desire for “‘more Alan’” in *Catriona*,124 suggests that the author was intent on presenting David, and not Alan, as the central hero with whom young readers could identify (qtd in Buckton 130, 147).125 For this reason, my focus throughout this chapter has been on the heroic qualities that Stevenson presents to his readership through the model of David Balfour. Rather than glorifying David’s skill with a sword, Stevenson instead highlights his protagonist’s cleverness and resourcefulness, qualities that align him with the crafty romantic hero Robinson Crusoe. While David never demonstrates the physical prowess that Jim Hawkins exemplifies when he pilots the Hispaniola “back into the island harbor almost single-handedly” (Gubar 70), his mastery of the plot in his dual role as protagonist and narrator contrasts expressly

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123 Contrast David’s impotence with a sword – he is disarmed of his “humiliated weapon” three times in a duel in *Catriona* (286) – with Alan’s glorious performance in the siege of the round-house in *Kidnapped*: with his sword “flash[ing] like quicksilver” (70) and “running blood to the hilt,” David describes Alan as so “swelled with triumph and fallen into so fine an attitude, that he looked to be invincible” (67-8).

124 In a letter to Sidney Colvin (a friend and advisor who edited the author’s letters after his death), Stevenson wrote petulantly that “‘they [his readers] want more Alan. Well, they can’t get it’” (qtd in Buckton 147).

125 As Alexander Welsh remarks, Stevenson is the “most convinced advocate of the association of reader and hero” (36-7), citing his essay “A Gossip on Romance,” in which Stevenson relates that the hero is pushed aside in the act of reading romance and “we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in the fresh experience”: he concludes that “when the reader consciously plays at being hero, the scene is a good scene” (61).
with Stevenson’s other famous boy-hero. Ultimately then, David’s inability to man a weapon is immaterial: he accomplishes his quest – becoming the rightful laird of Shaws – by virtue of his storytelling or word play, and not his sword-play.  

Just as Stevenson’s boy-reader will inevitably return to his “Ovid” and to the “tasks” of the school-room, David is similarly destined to return to quotidian society after being so felicitously “carr[ied] ... into the Highlands” (3). By settling down to his life as a gentleman-lawyer as we see in the conclusion to Catriona, David proves to be successful at reintegrating himself into the conservative social order – a thoroughly conventional ending to David’s transgressive romance. Like one of Henty’s or Scott’s protagonists, David ultimately becomes a model citizen of the society with which he was once so firmly at odds.  

The unconventional means by which David achieves this socially desirable end, however, sets Stevenson’s work apart from that of his predecessors. Rather than waiting for others to take

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126 That Stevenson fails to establish his hero as the exemplary fighter indicates the “a-moral” tone at the heart of his philosophy of romance (“Gossip” 54). David’s lack of enthusiasm and ability when it comes to physical combat suggests that Stevenson is turning away from the late-nineteenth century “boy’s book construct,” in which morality is typically “linked to power and conveyed through violence” (Federico 117, 116). As such, I align myself with Federico, who examines how Stevenson’s frequently comical representations of violence in Kidnapped and Catriona “undercut the ideological apparatus in which [his] texts appeared” (118-9).

127 Despite the frequently transgressive nature of their romantic exploits, Scott’s protagonists are returned to conventional social order as their adventures draw to a close: like David Balfour, Edward Waverley similarly escapes retribution for his Jacobite sympathies, and is subsequently returned home to England to marry the conventional as opposed to the romantic heroine (Rose Bradwardine, not Flora MacIvor). The “distinct Henty formula,” as outlined by Jeffrey Richards, also culminates with the protagonist “retir[ing] to England” following his adventures overseas, frequently “to marry and settle down as a prosperous landowner” (75): in With Kitchener in the Soudan (1903), for instance, the foreign-born Gregory Hilliard travels to England in order to claim his inheritance (he discovers his noble pedigree when he comes across his father’s diaries).
action like the “passive” Waverley hero, David uses underhand and morally questionable methods in order to secure his goals: the “social ideal” that he appears to embody actually rests on the decision to conceal his evidence of government corruption contained within his memorial from the public (24). In this way, David conflates the terms “gentleman born” and “gentleman of fortune,” underlining Wood’s argument, in relation to Treasure Island, that Stevenson entirely destabilizes this binary: before rightfully inheriting his social position as “laird” of Shaws (following Ebenezer’s death toward the end of Catriona), David has already exemplified behaviour worthy of any gentleman of fortune, even the cunning Long John Silver.

But, as Stevenson protests in “A Gossip on Romance,” the morality of his protagonist’s behaviour is irrelevant to him as a romance writer. This indifference to the question of right or honourable conduct is played out in the David Balfour novels, in which despite his alternating lapses and pangs of conscience, David is rewarded with marriage in addition to his long-awaited title and estate, while the upstanding Alan is increasingly banished from Stevenson’s plot. In Catrina, Alan’s particular brand of heroism – namely, his undying loyalty to the Highland cause – works to his disadvantage by resulting in a removal from his country and, consequently, from David’s narrative. After he escapes to France to avoid prosecution in the Appin murder, Alan is noticeably absent from Kidnapped’s sequel, and is effectively replaced by a “female substitute” in the form of Catriona Drummond, a character who embodies Alan’s “qualities of the active Highlander” despite having little opportunity to demonstrate these qualities in Stevenson’s narrative (Buckton 138).

That David’s fortunes wax just as Alan’s begin to wane indicates that Stevenson is making room for a new brand of romantic hero. Alan’s disappearance from Catrina suggests what I would argue is an increasing investment on Stevenson’s part in romantic heroes who do
not subscribe to traditional chivalric codes. We see this, for instance, in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), a novel that falls between *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Catriona* (1893), in which Stevenson ridicules Alan’s commitment to upholding his honour at any cost. In a brief cameo appearance in the novel, Alan and the titular character James Durie unexpectedly meet following the failure of the 1745 Jacobite uprising, an encounter that results in an exchange of “[v]ery uncivil expressions,” with Alan ultimately “call[ing] upon the master to alight and have it out” (34). Presumably reluctant to face his companion’s skilled swordsmanship, James alternatively suggests a race, and Alan foolishly rushes to oblige him, despite being at a flagrant disadvantage. While James “claps spurs to his horse,” his companion Francis Burke recalls that Alan ran after us, a childish thing to do, for more than a mile; and I could not help laughing as I looked back at last and saw him on a hill holding his hand to his side and nearly burst with running. (34)

By mocking Alan’s display of braggadocio here – ironically from the perspective of the “Chevalier” Burke, who is himself given to romantic outbursts – Stevenson indirectly validates the deceptive method by which James overcomes his opponent. Although Burke declares that the “‘jest ... smells a trifle cowardly’” (34), James’ ploy cunningly uses Alan’s own sense of pride and personal honour against him: the Master’s duplicity and apparent cowardice will ultimately be kept silent because, as he tells Burke, “‘Alan Breck is too vain a man to narrate any such story of himself’” (35).

That James Durie prevails over Alan in this encounter – a man who is highly manipulative and whom the family servant (and principal narrator) Mackellar frequently compares to the Devil – suggests Stevenson’s lack of faith in the forthright adventure hero pioneered by his literary predecessors, a skepticism that is also arguably reflected in the
character of David Balfour. While Alan is fully committed to upholding his moral code, declaring “‘vengeance!’” against the Campbells at great personal cost to himself (Kidnapped 83), David represents an entirely different definition of heroism by constantly shifting loyalties between Whig and Jacobite in order to secure his own well-being, as well as by ultimately allying himself with a society that he comes to recognize is corrupt. Despite the disenchanted “lesson in Realpolitik” that he receives over the course of his extended narrative, David continues to pursue his prospective career as a lawyer, thereby indirectly backing the fraudulent legal system headed by Prestongrange (Sandison 205). By washing his hands of the Appin murder rather than challenging the government corruption that he witnesses during the trial (as his role-model Alan surely would), David Balfour suggests the rise of a more shrewd and calculating “hero” who works to obtain his own upward mobility, even if it comes at the expense of others – most notably, James Stewart.

David’s increasing duplicity over the course of Kidnapped and its sequel parallels Robinson Crusoe’s growth in Defoe’s novel, as outlined by John Richetti. In response to James Joyce’s criticism of Defoe’s hero as “‘the true prototype of the British colonist,’” Richetti stresses that the author does not simply offer up this prototype “as a given,” but instead traces his protagonist’s “painful and slow acquisition” of this identity across the text (xxviii). By recording the “development of that imperial personality in Crusoe” as a gradual progression (xxviii), Defoe illustrates the insidious power of imperialism as a corruptive mechanism, a strategy that Stevenson similarly adopts in the David Balfour novels. While David never becomes a model “‘British colonist,’” he does arguably develop something of the “imperial personality” that we see reflected in Robinson Crusoe. Despite his ongoing flirtation with the Highland line in both texts, David’s “allegiance ... is firmly to one side,” and the choices that he makes in Catriona
substantiate this commitment (Welsh 62). By hushing up his testimony, David becomes complicit in Prestongrange’s efforts to scapegoat James, thereby giving the Campbells their anticipated retribution in order to prevent another Highland uprising (258).

David’s role in James’ scapegoating aligns him with imperial agents like the Campbells and Prestongrange: “civilised” Highlanders (according to the latter) who are actively working in the name of the “King’s service” to suppress their fellow countrymen and, consequently, to support the English domination of Scotland (Catriona 257). As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, Kipling similarly records the transformation of his romantic heroes into agents of Empire in the Mowgli stories (1893-5) and Kim (1901). Like David Balfour, both Mowgli and Kim essentially betray their romantic connections – namely, Mowgli’s ties to the jungle and its inhabitants and Kim’s love for the lama – in order to secure their rise through the imperial ranks. Reflecting Marlow’s declaration in Lord Jim (1900) that “‘nobody is good enough’” (292), both Stevenson’s and Kipling’s writings indicate a growing cynicism in relation to the romance genre and its capacity to fulfill its own ideals.

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128 Regarding the Waverley hero, Welsh stipulates that, “He may tour the dark, wild Highlands but never negotiate between that world and the achieved order of his own world. For him the Highland line is an ideal but rigid moral barrier that he cannot violate, though he may have pleasurable glimpses of the other side” (62).
Chapter 4
To the World’s End: Kipling and the Never-Ending Quest for Romance in the Mowgli Stories and *Kim*

Introduction: Kipling and fin de siècle imperial romance

For David Balfour, quest-romance culminates in matrimony and a comfortable middle-class existence, just as it did for his precursor Tom the water-baby. From being “the son of a poor country dominie” with few economic prospects, David realizes his ambition of becoming a lawyer and marries his sweetheart Catriona Drummond (*Kidnapped* 8); as his two-volume tale draws to a conclusion, the reader can almost picture David in the company of his two young children, sitting beside the fire and perhaps smoking a pipe, recounting the romantic adventures of his by-gone youth while bolstered by the security and leisure that middle-age and upward mobility have afforded him. As I have examined in the previous chapter, however, David is only able to achieve this lifestyle by sacrificing his morality and his integrity, the result of his decision to overlook the government corruption that he witnesses in action during the Appin murder trial. By colluding with Prestongrange’s efforts to conceal his memorial – and thereby condemning an innocent man to death – David has effectively betrayed the romantic idealism that is at the heart of the quest-romance genre.

This betrayal of romance suggests a link between David Balfour and Rudyard Kipling’s famous boy-heroes, my focus in this chapter. Like Stevenson’s protagonist, both Mowgli and Kim are similarly rewarded as a result of their work supporting the imperialist system: married and the father of a newborn, as revealed in the finale of the story “In the Rukh” (1893), Mowgli’s unprecedented knowledge of the jungle and his desire to serve his superior, the “sahib” Gisborne, results in his new position as a forest ranger, while Kim, who at the end of Kipling’s novel
(1901) is still only fifteen with a “moustache that was just beginning” (219), is already fulfilling a grown man’s position in the Great Game by virtue of his skill at espionage. This dedication to serving Empire, however, ultimately results in a betrayal of romance in Kipling’s work: Mowgli uses his bond with his former wolf “brothers” in order to secure his occupation as a forest ranger, and Kim sacrifices his relationship with the lama when it conflicts with his burgeoning career as a government-appointed spy. In their shared dedication to serving Empire, even if it means severing their connections to romance, Kipling’s protagonists bear a telling resemblance to David Balfour, who forfeits his romantic past as well as his close ties with Alan in order to protect his future legal career.

By sacrificing romance to the needs of Empire, David, Mowgli, and Kim embody the increasing cynicism of the romantic “hero,” a reflection of the “realistic disenchantment” that John McClure outlines in his study Late Imperial Romance (12). McClure has identified the turn of the century as the period in which “imperial romance” becomes something of an oxymoron: as a result of imperialist expansion across the globe, the sites of “magic and providential mystery” required for romance began to disappear (Jameson 134), leading writers to “celebrate the very forces” that would ultimately lead to the demise of the genre (McClure 8-9). This conflict between romance and imperialism frequently results in what McClure calls “counter-romance[s]” (8): texts that work to recapture the “magic” of the genre while retaining a sense of “realistic disenchantment” (12) as well as a skepticism concerning Empire’s “civilizing mission” (8). In Conrad’s Lord Jim (1900), for instance, the text’s multiple perspectives and two-part structure force the reader to question whether Jim’s cowardly desertion of the Patna has

129 While McClure selects Heart of Darkness (1899) from Joseph Conrad’s body of fiction as a case study for this pattern – in addition to E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India (1924) and Kim – I am choosing to extend his argument
undermined his later “excessively romantic” career as “Tuan” or Lord Jim (372). While Marlow presents Jim’s self-sacrifice in Patusan as unequivocally heroic – he dies while trying to enforce peace after the village is attacked – there is still a lingering sense at the end of the novel that, as Marlow says, “poor Jim remains under a cloud” (370): although both he and Stein maintain that Jim’s final act has restored his reputation, his lover Jewel, who feels abandoned and betrayed by her lover, is left embittered after his death (Watts 9).

According to Cedric Watts, Lord Jim exemplifies Conrad’s standing as “one of the great transitional writers of the late nineteenth century”: he writes that it is a text poised between “a valuing (sometimes a romantically eloquent valuing) of honour, fidelity, comradeship, [and] kindness” and “the radical uncertainties, the relativism, the skepticism (and even, at times, the nihilism) of the emerging cultural era, the era of Modernism” (11). While Jacqueline Rose has argued in The Case of Peter Pan (1984) that writing for children excludes and even resists the sort of modernist experimentation that Conrad’s text exhibits (142), I will illustrate how children’s literature does in fact participate in this experimentation, as represented in some of Kipling’s best-known work for children. Reflecting a more recent critical appraisal of the author as a “cross-over” writer, whose work is poised both temporally and thematically between the

here to Lord Jim (1900). The “disenchantment” following Jim’s abandonment of his post at sea, coupled with the uneasiness surrounding Jim’s self-appointed role as the Great White Leader in Patusan, indicates that Lord Jim similarly fits McClure’s description of a “counter-romance” (8).

In regards to Kim, McClure addresses the “uneasiness” that he shares with other critics at the author’s attempt to “mingle religious quest-romance with imperial adventure romance” (27), a subject that I will address later in this chapter. For McClure, Kipling’s solution is to acknowledge and embrace “the increasing rationalization of imperial space” by inventing its “successor,” the “underworld of espionage” (12); however, in my view, the perpetual return to romance in Kipling’s work, coupled with Kim’s unresolved ending, suggests instead the author’s profound discomfort with this “increasing rationalization.”
categories of Victorian and modernist literature, I aim to demonstrate that Kipling’s unconventional narrative form in the Mowgli stories (1893-5) and Kim (1901) forms a similar response to the turn-of-the-century conflict between the “rival claims of romanticism and skeptical realism” that Watts identifies in Conrad’s work (11). Like Juliet Dusinberre and (more recently) Kimberley Reynolds, who interrogate how children’s literature functions as a platform for new genres and literary movements, including modernism, I will argue that Kipling aligns himself with his fellow late imperial romancers by attempting to “fin[d] some way to return to the earlier, more heroic days of the imperial adventure,” transforming the nature and structure of the linear quest journey in the process (McClure Late 11).

For the authors whom I have previously examined in relation to nineteenth-century boy’s romance – including Kingsley, Stevenson, and (to a lesser degree) Scott and Henty – the teleology or end goals of the quest are maturity, marriage, and employment, or at least some degree of security and stability. Kipling’s romances, however, disrupt this pattern because of the author’s refusal to allow his two best-known boy-heroes, Mowgli and Kim, to grow up and

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130 In Time’s Eye (2013), a recently published essay collection dedicated to Kipling, presents a number of connections between modernist literature and the author’s work, predominately in regards to his short fiction and poetry: Jan Montefiore writes that Kipling’s “pared-down, ironic stories narrated by his not-always-reliable ‘I’ … show an awareness of their own artificiality associated with classic modernist texts,” while Harry Ricketts considers the influence of Kipling’s verse on the modernist war poetry of figures like Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke (6). In Unseasonable Youth (2012), Jed Esty similarly explores Kipling’s ties to modernism, analyzing Kim as an “antidevelopmental bildungsroman … [that] literalizes the problem of colonialism as failed or postponed modernization” (14). My argument in regards to Kim is similar to Esty’s; however, my focus in this chapter is centered on questions of genre and form – more specifically, how Kipling’s breakdown of the linear quest-romance reflects a modernist cynicism toward romantic ideals (as I will argue). Moreover, while these critics primarily consider Kipling as a modernist author in relation to his “adult” work – with the possible exception of Kim, a “cross-over” text that has historically appealed to both juvenile and adult audiences – I want to examine Kipling’s modernist tendencies specifically in relation to his writing for children, reflecting Reynolds’ argument that children’s literature embraces generic experimentation.

131 Dusinberre’s Alice to the Lighthouse (1987) explores the pioneering role of Carroll’s Alice books in relation to the rise of literary modernism and writers like Virginia Woolf, while Reynolds’ Radical Children’s Literature (2007) examines writing for children in a variety of forms, from picture books to teen or young adult literature, “focusing on its demonstrable capacity for innovation” in order to “challenge the view that children’s literature is conservative and creatively dependent” (8-9).
assume adult positions as agents of Empire. Just as Conrad revives Jim’s botched romantic career by relocating him to Patusan – a strategy that mirrors H. Rider Haggard’s effort to uncover “increasingly fantastic” locales “in the most remote parts of the globe” as settings for his fiction (McClure Late 11) – Kipling frequently undermines or ironizes romance only subsequently to resuscitate it in the form of a return to childhood. Rather than exploring the implications of their roles as imperial agents, Kipling returns, or attempts to return, to younger versions of his protagonists: the Mowgli stories in the Jungle Books persistently revisit Mowgli’s (seemingly) innocent childhood, while Kim and the lama’s renewed quest for the River of the Arrow in the latter half of Kim enacts a symbolic return to the protagonist’s childhood. As a result, Kipling transforms the linear quest into a perpetual circle, an endless cycle of death and subsequent rebirth that pushes the genre to its very limits. Like the fragmented structure of Lord Jim, the circularity and ultimate creative stagnancy of Kipling’s neverending “and then” narratives suggest the very undoing of quest-romance, a dismantling of the genre that, as I will briefly explore in my conclusion, continues into the early twentieth century (Frye Secular 47).

‘As if she had never gone’: Romantic revisions in Kipling’s tales of childhood

Various critics, including Martin Green (Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire) and Joseph Bristow (Empire Boys) have established that formations of childhood, and particularly of boyhood, are integral to nineteenth-century imperial romance. This connection is particularly explicit in the Mowgli stories and in Kim: Kipling’s boy-heroes remain in the position of grown-

132 Northrop Frye describes two types of narrative in The Secular Scripture: the “hence” narrative and the “and then” narrative. While Frye links the “hence” narrative to realism – a “technique of causality in which the characters are prior to the plot” – he describes romance as a perpetual “and then” narrative, which “moves from one discontinuous episode to another” (47).
up children caught between boyhood and manhood who exploit their childlike connection to the realm of romance in their later work as imperial agents. My central focus in this chapter, however, is not on the depiction of childhood or boyhood in Kipling’s work, a subject that has already received thorough critical appraisal; instead, by examining Kipling’s treatment of genre in his fiction for children, I will argue that the author’s perpetual return to romance is frequently imagined as a return or an attempted return to childhood, a connection that the author first explores in two of his semi-autobiographical short stories and that he explicitly addresses later in his autobiography.

In *Something of Myself* (published posthumously in 1936), Kipling traces his proclivity with romance in his career as a writer back to his childhood. Locating his impulse to romanticize in his solitary games of pretend, Kipling describes how he would imitate the hero of one of his favourite books *Robinson Crusoe* by pretending to be a “trader with savages,” just as Crusoe does in his early voyages at sea:

> My apparatus was a coconut shell strung on a red cord, a tin truck, and a piece of packing-case that kept off any other world. Thus fenced about, everything inside the fence was quite real, but mixed with the smell of damp cupboards. If the bit of board fell, I had to begin the magic all over again. I have learned since from children who play much alone that this rule of ‘beginning again in a pretend game’ is not uncommon. The magic, you see, lies in the ring or fence that you take refuge in. (8-9)\(^{133}\)

\(^{133}\) By imitating Defoe’s hero, the young Kipling is inadvertently following Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s guidance to his ideal pupil Émile, for whom *Robinson Crusoe* is to be his sole “entertainment and instruction” (185). Like the game of pretend that Kipling describes in his autobiography, Rousseau encourages Émile to use Defoe’s novel as inspiration for his childhood play-acting: he writes that he wants the novel to “make [his charge] dizzy; I want him
The five-year-old Kipling’s repeated efforts to recapture the “magic” in his games of pretend would later become an organizing principle in his adult writing. Like the falling of the “bit of board” that “begin[s] the magic all over again,” Kipling’s fiction persistently circumvents the “end” of the quest or the point at which romance becomes oversaturated by imperialism, as McClure has outlined (*Late* 9). This interaction between quest-romance, imperialism and childhood in the Mowgli stories and *Kim* will be my primary focus in this chapter; before moving forward with this analysis, however, I want to begin by examining Kipling’s stories “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” (1888) and “The Potted Princess” (1893), in which the author first reenacts childhood by recycling romance. The purpose of this is not to establish or to encourage autobiographical readings of the Mowgli stories or *Kim*, to which the bulk of this chapter will be dedicated, but rather to trace the link between romance and childhood back to these early stories, in which the author’s nostalgic desire for childhood first assumes the form of a return to romance.

Kipling’s need to create and recreate romance – an urge that, according to the author’s autobiography, can be traced back to his childhood – becomes a central theme in “Baa Baa, Black Sheep,” which is, as Hugh Haughton writes, “the first of the stories [in that it is] about the roots of fiction and the need for stories” (53). Long considered to be semi-autobiographical in nature, in that it loosely corresponds with Kipling’s account of his childhood in *Something of Myself*, “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” is about a five-year-old boy named Punch who is transplanted to England along with his three-year-old sister Judy. As Raj orphans whose parents remain behind constantly to be busy with his mansion, his goats, his plantations; … I want him to think he is Robinson himself, to see himself dressed in skins, wearing a large cap, carrying a large saber and all the rest of the character’s grotesque equipment …” (185).
in India, the two children are sent to live in the “House of Desolation,” where Punch is ostracized by his foster mother “Aunty Rosa,” whose cruelty transforms him into “Black Sheep.” In this oppressive atmosphere, Punch’s “salvation” is to take refuge in fantasy and romance, comforting both himself and his little sister through storytelling: on one particular occasion, “[h]e … welded the story of the Creation on to what he could recollect of his Indian fairy tales, and scandalized Aunty Rosa by repeating the result to Judy” (268). Solace is also provided by Punch’s childhood reading, which includes Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Tennyson’s poetry, and fairytales by Andersen and the brothers Grimm (271).

Like David Balfour over the course of *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, Punch also demonstrates a growing capacity in the role of storyteller across Kipling’s narrative. Just as David uses his uncle’s kidnapping plot against him, Punch similarly employs storytelling as a form of ammunition against his foster mother, part of an ongoing effort to “pa[y] her back full tale” (283). For instance, Aunty Rosa perceives Punch’s version of the Creation story, a hybrid of Biblical lore and Indian fairytale, to be a direct assault against her devout Evangelical faith. Punch’s yarn-spinning, however, amounts to only half of his revenge: by detailing his childhood miseries in his fiction and autobiography, the grown-up Punch (Kipling) ensures that he has truly paid Aunty Rosa back “full tale.” In “Baa Baa, Black Sheep,” the romance tale-telling is two-fold: just as the character of Punch employs the fairytales he learned from his ayah in his retelling of the Bible, the author Kipling rewrites the story of his own childhood as a fairytale romance, in which Punch and Judy are eventually rescued by their mother from the clutches of the wicked “fairy-tale stepmother figure” Aunty Rosa and from the “House of Desolation,” as

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134 Mowgli also interestingly uses this phrase in the context of seeking revenge against Shere Khan for usurping control of the wolf pack in “Mowgli’s Brothers”: he tells Gray Brother, “I will pay Shere Khan full tale for this” (*Jungle Book* 14).
Kipling bitterly referred to his English foster home (Haughton 53).

But Kipling’s “happily-ever-after” ending is not entirely convincing. While Punch – “no longer Black Sheep,” as Kipling writes – eventually rediscovers that “he is the veritable owner of a real, live, lovely Mamma, who is also a sister, comforter, and friend,” it takes Punch’s mother three months in order to win her son back into her affections: when she first tries to embrace him, he throws up an arm to protect himself, expecting to receive a blow (287, 286). Although Punch is apparently so far recovered as to declare to his sister, at the very end of the story, that, “‘It’s all different now, and we are just as much Mother’s as if she had never gone,’” the voice of Kipling the narrator intervenes directly for the first and only time in the telling of the story (288). In response to Punch’s “‘as if she had never gone,’” Kipling adds,

> Not altogether, O Punch, for when young lips have drunk deep of the bitter waters of Hate, Suspicion, and Despair, all the Love in the world will not wholly take away that knowledge; though it may turn darkened eyes for a while to the light, and teach Faith where no Faith was. (288)

There is a positive note here in that Kipling hints that his mother’s love may once again lead Punch back into the fold: under the wicked stepmother’s religious teachings, Punch has ironically come to “know the Lord as the only thing in the world more awful than Aunty Rosa – as a Creature that stood in the background and counted the strokes of the cane” (269). Still, Kipling’s ominous final lines concerning Punch’s first taste of these “bitter waters” suggest that the years spent in this House of Desolation will have a lingering, traumatic effect on his young semi-autobiographical protagonist, as they did on his creator, Rudyard Kipling.

In “Baa Baa, Black Sheep,” Punch’s preferred method of self-solace through storytelling,
both as teller and as reader or audience, originates in his Anglo-Indian childhood: the story opens with a five-year-old Punch being put to bed and imperiously requesting his favourite bedtime story “about the Ranee that was turned into a tiger” (260). Kipling similarly connects India with romance in “The Potted Princess” (1893), which features the characters of Punch and Judy two years later, now aged seven and five.\(^{135}\) In the story-within-a-story, the children are once again under the care of their beloved ayah, who regales her two young charges with a fairytale, a version of the Sleeping Beauty, in which an Indian princess is rescued from a grain-jar by her “prince,” the grandson of a potter. Kipling’s decision to revisit the characters of Punch and Judy five years after the publication of “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” and in the country of their birthplace represents another effort to rewrite his childhood in the vein of fairytale romance: while in reality Kipling and his sister remained in the House of Desolation for six years following their arrival, the frame narrative of “The Potted Princess” returns Punch and Judy to their idyllic Anglo-Indian childhood, and reunites them with their beloved ayah. Kipling also chooses to rewrite the narrative of childhood abandonment in “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” by representing the mother’s absence as temporary in “The Potted Princess”: the ayah tells her tale while the two children are awaiting their mother’s return “from her evening drive” and the story ends shortly after she has returned home (316). Like “Baa Baa, Black Sheep,” then, Kipling similarly concludes “The Potted Princess” with a joyful family reunion, while omitting the years of abuse that lead up to

\(^{135}\) Although “The Potted Princess” takes place after the events of “Baa Baa, Black Sheep,” there are two ominous hints of the ayah’s separation from her charges (which, in reality, had occurred two years prior). The first is the direction of the ayah’s gaze, which travels “across the garden to the blue water of Bombay harbour, where the ships are,” suggesting her impending separation from her young charges. The second comes later in the story when the ayah portends that, depending on the position of the stars when a baby is born, “[that baby] may have to travel very far away” (311). While the ayah reassures Judy that she will not have to leave home, telling her that, “There were only good little stars in the sky on the night that Judy baba was born – little home-keeping stars that danced up and down, they were so pleased” (311), this reassurance does not seem genuine, given the ayah’s meaningful look towards the harbour as well as Kipling’s biography (in which he does not return to India from age six to age sixteen).
this resolution in his earlier story: Kipling’s fairytale frame depicts a happy and carefree childhood, centered around the reassuring presence of two mother-figures, the children’s biological mother and their ayah.

While Kipling uses the fairytale genre in order to return his two child characters to India, the author himself had to wait much longer for a reunion with his parents and sister in the country of his birth; six months after being removed from the House of Desolation, Kipling was enrolled at boarding school and did not return “home” until his graduation at age sixteen, nearly ten years after first being sent to England. Thus, Kipling’s two tales about Punch and Judy indicate the author’s effort to recapture the romance of his own early childhood, rewriting his narrative of childhood trauma as a fairytale with a conventional happily-ever-after ending. These two stories introduce what will become a recurring narrative pattern in Kipling’s later fiction for children. By re-enacting the conditions for romance in his Punch stories, Kipling evades the trauma that he repeatedly associates with growing up across his fiction. Because he returns to an Indian setting in “The Potted Princess,” the perennial locale of romance in his œuvre, Kipling is effectively rewriting personal history, bypassing the semi-autobiographical Punch and Judy’s traumatic removal from their childhood home.

Kipling’s effort to reimagine or reinvent Punch’s childhood in “The Potted Princess” suggests an investment in his perennially childlike characters akin to that of his contemporary J.M. Barrie. This childhood stasis takes on a particularly sinister quality in the Mowgli stories and Kim, in which the link between romance and childhood that the author first establishes in the Punch stories is exploited by the machinations of Empire. Imperialism covets the connection between Kipling’s characters and the world of pure romance: Mowgli’s thorough knowledge of the jungle and Kim’s ability to observe others undetected “like a shadow” – abilities that they
develop as a result of their unusual childhoods – are also qualities that make them perfectly suited to their respective adult professions as forest ranger and spy (Kim 60). With these gifts, however, both Mowgli and Kim work as adults to exploit the romantic settings where they grew up as children. In “In the Rukh” and the last third of Kim, imperial expansion becomes a threat to these sites of romance: a government-supervised forest reserve or “rukh” replaces the jungle of Mowgli’s childhood, while the quest for the lama’s river also becomes a search for the last unmapped place coveted by Empire as a result of Kim’s work with the Survey of India.

In an effort to recreate an idealistic venue for romance – a world in which it is still possible to behave unequivocally like “a hero in a book” (Conrad 40) – Kipling mimics his childhood play by attempting to “begin the magic all over again”: in the two Jungle Books, Kipling returns to Mowgli’s childhood after narrating his adult career in “In the Rukh,” while Kim restarts the lama’s quest just as the protagonist is on the brink of manhood. In both cases, however, Kipling’s strategy to perpetuate romance through a return to childhood ultimately backfires. Much like Conrad’s attempt to reclaim Jim’s romantic aspirations in Patusan – an effort belied by Marlow’s repeated assertion that “‘nobody is good enough’” (292) – the circularity of Kipling’s narrative structure means that romance reappears with more and more irony in the Mowgli stories and in Kim, gradually revealing the machinations of Kipling’s “heroes” as they both exploit and are exploited in turn for their connection to romance. As such, Kipling’s recycled romances narrate the precise moment when, according to McClure, “imperialism suddenly becomes the enemy of romance,” suggesting how imperialism ultimately works to unhinge or deconstruct quest-romance at the turn of the century (Late 11).
Shades of Eden or allegories of Empire? The reading order of the Mowgli stories

In his effort to “return to the earlier more heroic days of the imperial adventure” in the Mowgli stories and Kim, Kipling adopts a similar strategy to the Punch stories, traveling backward, or attempting to travel backward, through narrative time in order to recuperate romance (McClure 11). In the Jungle Books (1894, 1895), for instance, Kipling shifts focus by imagining Mowgli as a child after chronicling his adult career in the short story “In the Rukh,” which was published in 1893, the same year as “The Potted Princess.” Like Kipling’s fairytale, the two Jungle Books, if read through the lens of the author’s autobiography, suggest his desire to recreate the happiness of his early childhood in India, a reading that is in keeping with critical interpretations of the jungle as a paradisiacal setting. Dieter Petzold writes, for instance, that, “… Mowgli’s jungle world incorporates the utopian dream of Eden” which, like the garden in Genesis, is highly prized precisely because it is “threatened by man’s encroachment from outside as well as by corruption from within” (17). Petzold’s reading of Mowgli’s jungle as a version of Eden contains the strands of the two most common interpretations of the Jungle Books: while some critics use the Eden-like setting to argue that Mowgli’s transition from the jungle to the village enacts a passage from childhood innocence to adult experience (see Karlin, for instance), others expand on Petzold’s suggestion of “corruption from within,” characterizing Mowgli’s rise through the jungle ranks as an allegory of imperialism (see Don Randall and McClure Kipling and Conrad).

Although the Jungle Books can, if read in isolation, essentially support either of these critical interpretations, reading the stories of Mowgli’s childhood alongside “In the Rukh” arguably complicates the critical tendency to plot the Mowgli stories as a linear bildungsroman that charts Mowgli’s gradual corruption as he transitions from helpless “man’s cub” to Lord of
the Jungle. In Kipling’s efforts to recapture a younger version of Mowgli in the *Jungle Books*, the author himself seems to promote such a reading, encouraging the reader to look back on Mowgli’s childhood with nostalgia, particularly in the tearful scene at the end of “The Spring Running,” in which Mowgli’s growing maturity forces his final departure from the jungle. However, by reading the stories according to Kipling’s chronological writing order, readers can more easily perceive that Mowgli’s calculating and dictatorial nature in “In the Rukh” first reveals itself in his inclination to dominate the animals as a child in the jungle, effectively tarnishing any suggestion of an Edenic paradise in the *Jungle Books*. As such, a critical reading of “In the Rukh” reveals the *Jungle Books* as imperial romances, in which Mowgli first begins to exploit the romance of his childhood.

By suggesting this disturbing continuity between the adult Mowgli in “In the Rukh” and his child counterpart in the *Jungle Books*, I am contravening earlier critical efforts to distance Kipling’s first published story about Mowgli from the later stories concerning his childhood. While conceding that “In the Rukh” holds the important distinction of being the “original” Mowgli story (see Karlin 12 or W.W. Robson General xiv), critics like Francis Spufford and Daniel Karlin express a certain resentment of “In the Rukh” for threatening to betray what John McBratney calls the sense of “felicitous space” or “juvenile freedom” that “emerges in the fantasy” of Mowgli’s childhood in the *Jungle Books* (“Imperial” 278). Spufford characterizes

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136 McBratney and Randall, in contrast to Spufford and Karlin, suggest that “In the Rukh” provides an important aesthetic closure (McBratney “Imperial” 292) and sense of “resolution” (Randall 67) to the *Jungle Books*: both argue for its inclusion with the other Mowgli stories.

McBratney is borrowing Bachelard’s term “felicitous space,” which originates in the latter’s discussion of how protective and enclosed spaces from childhood — “dreams of a hut, of a nest, or of nooks and corners” — bring a sense of comfort and nostalgia both to the child as well as to the adult through the workings of memory (Bachelard 30). Bachelard’s particular discussion of the “hut dream,” which he calls the “little boy’s daydreaming of primitiveness” symbolized by “a hut in the depth of the forest,” reflects Mowgli’s similar experience of childhood:
the story’s “gratifying demonstration that the wild peg fits exactly into the official hole” as a “[great] imaginative loss” (xxxii), while Karlin describes the finale of “In the Rukh,” in which Mowgli “ends up in the Indian Civil Service, married and looking forward to his pension,” as “almost unbearable” (13).

By separating the largely forgotten or ignored “In the Rukh” from the creative success of the *Jungle Books*, Spufford and Karlin are seemingly following Kipling’s own efforts to divert attention away from his first published story about Mowgli. Prior to the publication of the Outward Bound edition in 1897, which knits all of the Mowgli stories into a single chronological narrative, Kipling considered “In the Rukh” to be “a story for grown-ups” and, therefore, not liable for inclusion with the other stories recounting Mowgli’s childhood in the *Jungle Books* (68). This dismissal occurs in the story “Tiger! Tiger!” included in the first *Jungle Book*, which ends with Mowgli’s decision to hunt by himself in the jungle, having been cast out from both the wolf pack and the “man pack” in the nearby village. The voice of Kipling the narrator then intervenes, providing a conclusion to the story: “Mowgli went away and hunted with the four cubs in the jungle from that day on. But he was not always alone, because years afterward he became a man and married. But that is a story for grown-ups” (68). To reinforce this idea the wildness and freedom of the jungle is tempered by the bonds of love and protection that he forms with his animal “brothers.” And yet, the limited “fraternal egalitarianism” of the *Jungle Books* is replaced by a sense of “feudal patronage” between Mowgli and the wolves in “In the Rukh” (“Imperial” 288-89): as McBratney concludes, the “delights of early felicitous space cannot be translated to those later reconstructions of it in Mowgli’s adult life” after Kipling’s protagonist has been ushered into the imperialist mechanism (291).

137 Though Alan Underwood remarks that a number of editions of the *Jungle Books* subsequent to the Outward Bound edition have also included “In the Rukh,” he also acknowledges that “Kipling's own view, or that of his publishers, seems to have wavered over the inclusion of this story with the other Mowgli tales.” For Underwood, however, the appearance of the story in its original context (the short story collection *Many Inventions*) in the Sussex edition of Kipling’s collected writings “can be seen as reflecting his final judgment on the ordering of his works” (Underwood).
that Mowgli’s life outside of the jungle is out-of-bounds for younger readers, Kipling abruptly concludes “The Spring Running” – the last Mowgli story in The Second Jungle Book in which Mowgli leaves the jungle in order to live with his adoptive mother Messua in the village – with the line, “And this is the last of the Mowgli stories” (295).

That Kipling attempts, by way of his frequent narratorial interventions in the Jungle Books, to separate “In the Rukh” from the other Mowgli stories indicates an effort to restrict his readers’ understanding of his protagonist. Although the telos or end goal of Mowgli’s quest or journey across the Jungle Books is ostensibly to reunite him with his own kind – as the culminating scenes of parting in “Tiger! Tiger!” and “The Spring Running” indicate – Kipling circumvents this future for his protagonist by rejecting “In the Rukh” and repeatedly delaying Mowgli’s final departure from the jungle. By dismissing the dictatorial adult Mowgli, Kipling’s circular narrative structure attempts to resist the overtones of imperialism that a number of critics have found oppressive. Using Mowgli’s childhood in order to recycle romance, Kipling prolongs his hero’s youth in order to preserve the shades of Eden that linger over Mowgli’s relationships with the animals: despite being the self-proclaimed “master” of the jungle, Mowgli

138 Kipling’s abrupt endings to “Tiger! Tiger!” and “The Spring Running” shut down the endlessness of the magic of romance that he tries to conjure up elsewhere in the Jungle Books. By contrast, at the beginning of the story “Red Dog,” Kipling suggests that Mowgli’s adventures “would make many many stories, each as long as this one,” but “we must tell one tale at a time” (221-22). Like his refrain “But that is another story” in Plain Tales from the Hills (1888), the possibility of “many many” untold Mowgli stories suggests “the openness of the presented world, the possibility of carrying on a tale as long as one wishes to – there is always some ‘other story’” (Kokot 60). Incidentally, the refrain from Plain Tales is reminiscent of Michael Ende’s The Neverending Story (from whom I borrow my chapter title), in which chapters frequently end with the phrase, “But that is another story and shall be told another time.”

139 This restricted view of Mowgli is particularly significant, given the age limit that Kipling imposes here: “In the Rukh” is off-limits to the child-readership that he addresses as narrator of the Jungle Books. The authoritarian nature of this relationship between Kipling, the self-proclaimed “editor” of the Jungle Books, and his child addressee reflects a similar dynamic in the Just So Stories, in which the majority of the adult narrator’s asides take the form of information or warnings directed specifically at the child reader or listener, often prefaced by the imperious refrain “Attend and Listen!” (C. Anderson 34). For a further discussion of Kipling’s tone as the narrator of the Just So Stories, see Celia Catlett Anderson and Petzold.
loves the wolves as his own “brothers” and learns to speak with them in their own language. By resisting the vision of Mowgli-as-imperialist – a vision that is fully revealed in “In the Rukh” – Kipling’s effort to perpetuate Mowgli’s childhood in the *Jungle Books* enacts a revealing critique of Empire.

**Shades of Eden: Reading the *Jungle Books* in isolation**

By instructing his audience to read only the eight stories concerning Mowgli’s childhood, Kipling complicates a reading of the *Jungle Books* as participating in the genre of imperial romance. Although critics like McClure and W.W. Robson have persuasively argued that Mowgli learns as a child “the art of a colonial ruler” in relation to the animals, who “represent the natives, the subject people” (W.W. Robson General xix), Mowgli’s position within the larger imperial hierarchy remains unclear in the *Jungle Books*, and there is little in the texts themselves to suggest that they are operating as allegories of British rule in India. While Mowgli learns to quell the animals with his unflinching gaze – an ability that suggests the ultimate power of man over beast and perhaps of colonizer over colonized – Kipling also qualifies this power by frequently suggesting the fallibility of humans in stories like “Tiger! Tiger!” in which the villagers Mowgli encounters are foolishly superstitious, and “The King’s Ankus,” which highlights human greed. The purpose or “moral” behind these stories is to reinforce Mowgli’s profound dissimilarity from other humans, an indication – falsely, as it turns out in “In the Rukh” – that there is no future for him among his own kind.  

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140 Mowgli laughs at the villagers for branding him a “sorcerer” and an outcast in “Tiger! Tiger!” and he proves immune to the greed that a bejeweled elephant goad or ankus provokes in his fellow men in “The King’s Ankus.” As critics like Karlin and Spufford have remarked, Kipling’s Bandar-log or monkey-people, who “sit in circles on the hall of the king’s council-chamber, and scratch for fleas and pretend to be men,” also suggest a negative depiction of humans and human behaviour in the *Jungle Books* (*Jungle Book* 38).
As Spufford writes, Kipling could not begin or end the *Jungle Books* with the “drab disclosure of Mowgli’s role in the imperial scheme” revealed by the story “In the Rukh,” in which the adult Mowgli manipulates his close ties with his former wolf “brothers” in order to secure a government position. While the *Jungle Books* recount Mowgli’s gradual ascension through the ranks, culminating in his position as the leader of the jungle in the penultimate Mowgli story of *The Second Jungle Book* “Red Dog,” there are still evidently strong bonds of love that tie the “man’s cub” to his animal companions. By learning the Master Words in order to claim protection from each species, a lesson that Baloo insists Mowgli learn in order to offset his heightened vulnerability in the jungle, Mowgli is able to co-exist peaceably with the animals by claiming kinship with them: his cry for help to Rann the kite in the chapter “Kaa’s Hunting” – “We be of one blood, thou and I” – is in fact a reminder of this sense of brotherhood that he shares with the various animals of the jungle (30). The fact that other men do not share this same bond with members of the animal kingdom – something that Mowgli determines for himself when he discovers the elephant-goad or hook used to force wayward elephants into obedience in “The King’s Ankus” – only serves as yet another reminder of the essential difference between Mowgli and the other humans he encounters. This difference disappears somewhere between the end of “The Spring Running” and the beginning of “In the Rukh,” during which time Mowgli similarly learns to exploit the animals for his own personal gain.

Mowgli’s gaze is an ominous sign of the nature of his future relationship with the animals, but his fierce love for Kaa, Baloo, and Bagheera – a love emphasized in the scene of their final parting in “The Spring Running” – elevates the bond that he shares with his former guardians beyond the power struggle that emerges in “In the Rukh.” That Kipling “wavered” on the inclusion of “In the Rukh” with the stories in the *Jungle Books* indicates his effort to divide Mowgli as a loving and beloved child from Mowgli as a domineering adult, a division that is
clearly represented in “The Spring Running” (Underwood). In keeping with pervasive nineteenth-century ideas about childhood inherited from figures like Locke, Rousseau, and Wordsworth – that “the child represents a pure point of origin, deeply connected to the natural and primitive world, and as yet unmired by the sullying forces of language, sexuality, and society” (C. Robson 6) – “The Outsong” sung by Kaa, Baloo, and Bagheera suggests a firm divide between childhood innocence and adult corruption, as represented by the gate through which Mowgli must pass as he leaves the jungle for the last time:

On the trail that thou must tread  
To the thresholds of our dread,  
Where the Flower blossoms red;  
Through the nights when thou shalt lie  
Prisoned from our Mother-sky,  
Hearing us, thy loves, go by;  
In the dawns when thou shalt wake  
To the toil thou canst not break,  
Heartsick for the Jungle’s sake. (298-99)

Mowgli has crossed an important and irreversible threshold, and the figurative “gate” which divides his child self from his adult self has closed: as Karlin writes, Mowgli’s passage from the jungle to the village means that “the self, which was blissfully multiple and dissolute … must now adopt a single and uniform identity” (22). Reflecting the Victorian reimagining of Eden not as a mythical place but as a specific stage of life experienced in childhood, Mowgli, like Adam, must ultimately forsake his jungle-paradise for the “prison” of village life, where he will be
condemned to never-ending “toil.” The animals’ song of mourning for their lost “man’s cub” reveals Kipling’s investment in Mowgli as a “pure point of origin,” a figure symbolizing “eternal youth and innocence” who becomes the central vehicle for perpetuating romance in the Mowgli stories (Rose 6).

If, as Jacqueline Rose argues, the covert objective of children’s literature is to “secur[e], plac[e], and fram[e] the child,” then Mowgli’s final exit from the jungle, which signifies his coming-of-age, represents a clear threat to Kipling as a children’s writer; without Mowgli “fixe[d]” within the “felicitous space” of his jungle paradise, Kipling can no longer continue to narrate the romance of his childhood (Rose 2). As such, it is possible to argue that Mowgli’s prolonged lament at the end of “The Spring Running” rightfully belongs to his creator, who is using his protagonist to channel his own feelings of grief and nostalgia. Whereas elsewhere in the Jungle Books, Mowgli proves to be a typical child who is, as Stevenson writes, “somewhat deaf to the sentimental” (“Gossip on Romance” 53) – for instance, in the chapter “Letting in the Jungle,” Mowgli is oblivious to Bagheera’s declaration of love for his “Little Brother” (86) – in “The Spring Running,” Kipling dwells on Mowgli’s anguish as he leaves the jungle for the last time:

‘Hai-mai, my brothers,’ cried Mowgli, throwing up his arms with a sob. ‘I know

\[141\] In “In the Rukh,” Mowgli is in fact compared to Adam, the first man, by the Head Ranger Muller, who exclaims, “‘Dis man … is an anachronism, for he is before der Iron Age, and der Stone Age. Look here, he is at der beginnings of der history of man – Adam in der Garden, und now we want only Eva!’” (254).

\[142\] Rose’s central argument – that children’s literature manifests the adult writer’s “desire” for the child, a figure who is “rendered innocent of all the contradictions which flaw our [adult] interaction with the world” – seems to fit the relationship between author and protagonist in the Jungle Books (8-9). Mowgli’s ignorance of the nature of human cruelty and greed as a child in the jungle, as illustrated in stories like “The King’s Ankus,” indicates that Kipling prolongs Mowgli’s childhood in order to preserve this quality of innocence in him.
not what I know! I would not go; but I am drawn by both feet. How shall I leave these nights?’ … ‘It is hard to cast the skin,’ said Kaa as Mowgli sobbed and sobbed, with his head on the blind bear’s side and his arms round his neck, while Baloo tried feebly to lick his feet. (293-94, original emphasis)

According to Karlin, this moment in the *Jungle Books* represents the onset of puberty or Mowgli’s passage from childhood to adulthood, and Mowgli’s sadness at casting off a new skin or embarking on a new trail are metaphors used by Kaa and Bagheera (respectively) to express the painfulness of this transition (22). As in Kipling’s novel *Kim*, which cuts the reader off from the narrative of Kim’s schooldays with the sentence “‘The Gates of Learning’ shut with a clang” (171), Kipling’s brusque concluding sentence “And this is the last of the Mowgli stories” indicates that the village gates have already “shut with a clang” behind Mowgli, ushering him into the grown-up world where the romance of the *Jungle Books* abruptly ends (295).

And yet, the gate that closes off the village from the jungle and that should usher Mowgli into his new adult life actually turns out to be a permeable barrier. Rather than face the uncertainty of Mowgli’s future, Kipling enables his protagonist to return repeatedly to the jungle as the pretext for writing further Mowgli stories. The a-chronological structure of the two *Jungle

143 The author’s father John Lockwood Kipling, the original illustrator of the *Jungle Books*, also depicts the sadness and finality of Mowgli’s departure from the jungle. Following the concluding sentence, “‘And that is the last of the Mowgli stories,’” the elder Kipling offers the reader a peek into Mowgli’s adult life in the village. His final illustration in *The Second Jungle Book* shows an adult Mowgli outfitted in a robe and turban and sitting in a hut beside what we can only presume to be his wife and baby; with his hand supporting his chin and a melancholy expression on his face, Mowgli appears to be gazing either through an open doorway or at a tapestry on the wall depicting a bird and a tree branch. In either case, Mowgli’s gaze is directed outward and away from his wife and young child, whose presence indicates that this illustration provides a glimpse into Mowgli’s future, sometime following the events of “In the Rukh.” Readers are left to speculate about the significance of Mowgli’s despondent appearance: for instance, if he is perhaps feeling nostalgic for the freedom he experienced in the jungle and regretting his decision to get married and accept a government position. Another possibility, however, is that Lockwood Kipling’s illustration depicts the ominous future that Kaa, Bagheera, and Baloo imagine lies in store for Mowgli: in this reading, Mowgli’s sadness could be channeling the fear that the animals hold for the “dread[ed] thresholds” of the village (298).
Books means that Mowgli’s exodus at the end of “The Spring Running” is in fact the third time that he has bid his friends goodbye: his initial farewell comes at the end of the first Mowgli story, “Mowgli’s Brothers,” in which he decides to leave the wolf pack and go to his own kind in the village. During this leave-taking, Bagheera, noticing Mowgli’s tears, tells him that:

‘Now I know thou art a man, and a “man’s cub” no longer. The jungle is shut indeed to thee henceforward. Let them fall Mowgli; they are only tears.’ So Mowgli sat and cried as though his heart would break; and he had never cried in all his life before. (20)

“Mowgli’s Brothers” ends with the same note of sadness and finality as does “The Spring Running”: the last sentence reads, “The dawn was beginning to break when Mowgli went down the hillside alone to the crops to meet those mysterious things that are called men” (21). However, the story “Kaa’s Hunting,” which immediately follows “Mowgli’s Brothers,” returns to a younger version of Mowgli at a time when he was still a member of the wolf pack and being taught the Jungle Law by Baloo. It is only in the third Mowgli story, “Tiger! Tiger!,” that the reader learns what has subsequently happened to Mowgli since he departed the jungle for the village. In this story, Kipling picks up where “Mowgli’s Brothers” left off: having been cast out from the “man pack,” Mowgli returns to the jungle only to take leave of his friends for a second time, declaring that he will henceforth hunt in the jungle alone. And yet, as he does with the story “Kaa’s Hunting,” Kipling backtracks once again by returning to a younger version of Mowgli: the first story in The Second Jungle Book “How Fear Came” again takes place before Mowgli has left the Seeonee wolf pack.

This perpetual structure of departure and return is a strategic technique on Kipling’s part that allows him to postpone the inevitable outcome of Mowgli’s maturation from boy to man.
Like his childhood effort to “begin the magic all over again” in his games of pretend, the author’s pattern of bidding farewell to Mowgli, then subsequently reincarnating the character for another round of adventures suggests that, like J.M. Barrie, the author cannot bear for his protagonist to grow up: Mowgli fits Rose’s description of Peter Pan as “a little boy who does not grow up, not because he doesn’t want to, but because someone else prefers that he shouldn’t” (3). The disavowal of “In the Rukh” that comes at the end of “The Spring Running” – “And this is the last of the Mowgli stories” – indicates that Kipling would rather hold on to Mowgli’s childhood self than move forward into his adulthood, which introduces the reader to a darker side of Mowgli’s character. In “In the Rukh,” Kipling succeeds at writing an imperial romance in which Mowgli self-consciously takes advantage of his connection to the world of romance for his own material gain, ultimately exploiting the Eden or paradise of his childhood that is conjured up in the Jungle Books.

By presenting readers with a cynical adult Mowgli, “In the Rukh” functions as a very different sort of romance from the Jungle Books, one that readers who are first introduced to Mowgli as a boy may not expect or, for that matter, accept. Kipling himself dismissed this early effort as unsuccessful, leading many of his critics to follow suit. And yet, a reading of this first – and last – Mowgli story is crucial, I would argue, to our understanding of the Jungle Books. By subsequently re-examining the stories of Mowgli’s childhood through the lens of “In the Rukh,” as I am proposing in this chapter, readers are forced to re-evaluate the Jungle Books as imperial romances and to interpret Mowgli’s behaviour as that of a boy learning “the art of a colonial ruler” (W.W. Robson General xix).
Allegories of Empire: Reading “In the Rukh” in isolation

Unlike the *Jungle Books*, in which Kipling adopts the narrative perspective of Mowgli and his animal companions, “In the Rukh” represents the first time that Mowgli is seen completely from the outside through the eyes of the forest ranger Gisborne and his superior, the Head Ranger Muller. As such, the story begins with an introduction to the life of a ranger, which hints at Kurtz’s fate in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). While the narrator claims that this position is the most important of the “wheels of public service that turn under the Indian Government” in that it will eventually lead to the “reboisement of all India,” it is also a lonely life, and a ranger runs the risk of “going native,” the fate that befalls Conrad’s character (222). Through Marlow’s eyes, Kurtz is presented as a man who, after experiencing the isolation of the African jungle, descends into a brutish existence: left “alone in the wilderness,” Kurtz’s soul “had looked within itself ... [and] had gone mad,” according to the narrator (107). No longer motivated by a desire to educate and enlighten “like a beacon on the road to better things” (58), Kurtz is seemingly corrupted by the isolation and “darkness” of his surroundings, using fear and violence in order to establish a position of God-like divinity among the natives.

Just as the “God-forsaken wilderness” of the Congo transforms Kurtz as recounted by Marlow (29), the Indian jungle similarly “set[s its] mark upon” Gisborne so that he “grows silent with the silent things of the undergrowth” (224). While Gisborne initially loves the job for “[leading] him into the open on horseback,” the seclusion and remoteness of a ranger’s life and work, “tak[ing] him far from the beaten roads and the regular stations,” leads over time to a furious hatred of his position as well as a craving for “such society as India affords” (223, 24). Though Gisborne is once again reconciled to his work – as Kipling writes, “the forests took him back again and he was content to serve them” – his experience of isolation is evoked in the
contrast between the expansive rukh or jungle and Gisborne’s tiny bungalow, a “thatched white-walled cottage of two rooms ... set at one end of the great rukh and overlooking it” (224). Unable to keep a garden “for the rukh swept up to his door ... and he rode from his veranda into its heart without the need of any carriage drive,” Gisborne must reconcile himself to this wilderness in order to survive: its ominous presence, like the Congolese jungle or the remote settlement of Patusan in Conrad’s fiction, constantly threatens to overwhelm the forest ranger and his mission.

By turning his attentions to the occupation of a ranger and to the remote and vaguely mysterious Indian jungle, Kipling reflects McClure’s characterization of imperial romance, which he credits with developing “new heroic professions” as well as “new sites for the playing out of old stories” (Late 10). The “symbiotic” relationship that existed between romance and imperialism for “much of the nineteenth century” is embodied in the figure of the ranger, whose occupation transforms him into an agent of romance: by protecting the landscape’s natural resources, the ranger essentially guards the “raw materials” of the genre (McClure 10). But while the rangers work to preserve India’s jungles as a site for romance, they also paradoxically profit from the natural landscape; they are the “doctors and midwives of the huge teak forests” and yet, among their many other duties, “[t]hey poll and lop for the stacked railway-fuel along the lines that burn no coal,” calculating “the profit of their plantations to five points of decimals” (223). Though the source of this “railway-fuel” is not clear (i.e. whether it is harvested from dead or living trees), Kipling’s intimation that the rangers exploit the very landscapes that they have sworn to protect suggests that imperialism takes advantage of the natural resources of romance, a process in which Mowgli himself participates when he accedes to this occupation.
alone” by “meeting tiger, bear, leopard, wild-dog, and all the deer, not once or twice after days of beating, but again and again in the execution of his duty” (223-4). For rangers like Gisborne, coming “to know the people and the polity of the jungle” is a gradual process; Mowgli’s immediate and intimate knowledge of the rukh, by contrast, makes him a particularly attractive candidate for the position. While Gisborne initially regards Mowgli solely as a welcome “diversion” from his “regular work” (232), amused by the “child-like tales” he tells of the animals’ doings in the jungle (239), he quickly recognizes that Mowgli has the makings of an important ally in his work for the Department of Woods and Forests:

‘I must get him into the Government Service somehow. A man who can drive nilghai (tigers) would know more about the rukh than fifty men. He’s a miracle – a *lusus naturae* – but a forest-guard he must be if he’ll only settle down in one place.’ (237, original emphasis)

Gisborne’s resolve that Mowgli must somehow be fixed “‘in one place’” and transformed into a ranger suggests how imperialism recuperates romance for its own purposes, ultimately using Mowgli’s connection to romance, in the form of his “child-like tales,” to track the movement of game in the rukh.

That Mowgli’s special relationship with the jungle and its inhabitants is exploited for imperial gain signifies a betrayal of the magic in the *Jungle Books*: Mowgli’s transformation from a figure of romance into another cog in the “wheels of public service” (“In the Rukh” 222) is what Karlin finds particularly “unbearable,” prompting him to question “Is there a lover of Kipling who never blushes for him?” (13). But while it is tempting to regard Mowgli as having
been unwittingly “trapped” by the forces of civilization through Gisborne and Muller, we cannot preserve the seeming innocence of the *Jungle Books* by characterizing Mowgli as a passive victim in this transformation. In fact, the problem with “In the Rukh” for readers of the *Jungle Books* is that it portrays an entirely different and rather unbecoming side to Mowgli’s character. Although he initially appears to be a willing and loyal subject of “the Sahib” Gisborne, “trott[ing] at his stirrup” and obediently demonstrating his skill and knowledge when it is asked of him, the Mowgli introduced in “In the Rukh” is scheming and conniving in a way that is different from his boyish overconfidence in the *Jungle Books* (239). Entirely conscious of the fact that outsiders are enchanted and mesmerized by his appearance, Mowgli deliberately invokes romance in order to insinuate his way into the pecking order of the government service.

Mowgli’s various interactions with Gisborne, in which he deliberately withholds his knowledge in order to retain an advantage over his superior, particularly demonstrate his cunning as well as his aptitude for manipulation. In his dealings with Gisborne, Mowgli refuses to lay all of his cards out on the table: instead, like a magician, he mesmerizes his audience by pulling his “tricks” out of his hat one by one. For instance, when Mowgli drives Gisborne’s white mare through the jungle using his “magic,” thereby proving himself to be more loyal than Gisborne’s butler Abdul Gafur, who was using the mare to steal money from his master, Gisborne demands to know how he is able to perform this “devil’s work” (241). Mowgli, however, rebels for the first time against Gisborne’s authority, speaking to him “as he would speak to an impatient child”:

‘Now if I rose and stepped three paces into the *rukh* there is no one, not even the

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144 Mowgli initially tells Gisborne that a lifestyle in which he would be forced to sleep in a hut “is all too much a trap to me” (240).
Sahib, could find me till I choose. As I would not willingly do this, so I would not willingly tell. Have patience a little, Sahib, and some day I will show thee everything, for, if thou wilt, some day we will drive the buck together.’ (245)

Although Mowgli vows to disclose his secrets to Gisborne so that the two men will stand on an equal footing and ‘‘some day … drive the buck together,’’ this promise goes unfulfilled. Rather than reveal his advantage, Mowgli instead uses his superior knowledge of the jungle in order to secure his own upward mobility, sufficiently impressing the Head Ranger Muller on their first acquaintance that he is immediately offered the position of forest ranger.

The extent of Mowgli’s authority over his superiors is fully revealed in a key scene towards the end of the story, in which Mowgli, having taken his revenge on Abdul Gafur by deflowering his daughter, is once again seen from the outside by Gisborne:

There was the breathing of a flute in the rukh, as it might have been the song of some wandering wood-god, and, as they came nearer, a murmur of voices. The path ended in a little semicircular glade walled partly by high grass and partly by trees. In the centre, upon a fallen trunk, his back to the watchers and his arm around the neck of Abdul Gafur’s daughter, sat Mowgli, newly crowned with flowers, playing upon a rude bamboo flute, to whose music four huge wolves danced solemnly on their hind legs. (256)

This scene mirrors Mowgli’s first appearance in the story when he suddenly materializes before Gisborne, who likens him to the “wood-god” Pan, crowned with a wreath of white blossoms (227). While their first meeting seems to have occurred by chance (though the crown of flowers may suggest otherwise), Gisborne’s second sighting of Mowgli in his “natural habitat” is
evidently the result of deliberate planning on Mowgli’s part. Like David Balfour with his memorial in *Catriona*, Mowgli demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of the conventions of romance, using the facade of the “wood-god” in order to achieve his own agenda. In this scene in the glade, for instance, Mowgli self-consciously positions himself in front of a romantic backdrop in order to display his power over both (wo)man and beast, as well as to impress his superior. Fully aware that Gisborne and Gafur are watching him, though his “back [is turned] to the watchers,” Mowgli brags confidently to Gafur’s daughter:

… ‘I drove the nilghai for the foolish young Sahib, and the big fat mare for the big fat Sahib, when they questioned my power. It were as easy to have driven the men themselves. Even now,’ his voice lifted a little – ‘even now I know that behind me stand thy father and Gisborne Sahib … Remembering that thy father beat thee more than once, shall I give the word and drive him again in rings through the *rukh*?’ (259-60)

Mowgli then proceeds, with “the hint of the wood-god,” to order that Gafur consent to the marriage of his daughter “or he shall run once more” (261). When Gisborne tries to enforce a compromise – Gafur’s daughter will return to her father that night, and the wedding will be held the next day – Mowgli makes it clear that this is the last time either he or Gafur’s daughter will obey such direct orders (263). Although Gisborne remains Mowgli’s supervisor, by ceding to his demands, including his desired marriage with Gafur’s daughter, Gisborne has implicitly acknowledged Mowgli’s capacity to manipulate him.

Gisborne and Muller quickly come to recognize their comparative disadvantage in relation to Mowgli, who is, as Muller says, “‘blood-brother to every beast in der *rukh!*’”(254). In marked contrast to the “fraternal egalitarianism” that Mowgli shares with his wolf brothers in the
*Jungle Books*, however, the meaning of “brother” takes on a sense of servitude in “In the Rukh”: Mowgli’s wolf “brothers” are now compelled to dance to the tune of the flute in order to demonstrate loyalty to their master as well as to impress Gafur’s daughter (McBratney *Imperial* 100). In revealing the wolves’ presence to Gisborne and Gafur here for the first time, Mowgli demonstrates that his “magic” and his control over his former brothers are one and the same: the wolves are the agents who are ultimately responsible for Mowgli’s seemingly “magical” ability to drive the nilghai or tigers through the jungle. Romance and imperialism are inextricably intertwined in this scene: the “magic” of Mowgli’s romantic backdrop, in the form of the wolves’ dance, cannot dispel the reader’s awareness that Mowgli is exploiting these animals in order to assert his own power.

**Imperial romance: Reading the *Jungle Books* through “In the Rukh”**

That Mowgli’s wolf brothers have essentially become his servants or slaves suggests that this scene in “In the Rukh” represents the ultimate breakdown of “felicitous space” or the part of the jungle that exists beyond the reaches of imperialism over the course of the *Jungle Books* (McBratney *Imperial* 103). Returning to the stories of Mowgli’s childhood after reading “In the Rukh,” a story that collapses the familial relationship between Mowgli and the wolves, highlights what McBratney argues is an increasing “strain between the fraternal and magisterial impulses” in Mowgli’s relations with the jungle animals (“Imperial” 100). While Mowgli’s final farewell in “The Spring Running” displays the mutual love between Mowgli and the animals, the power dynamic at the heart of this relationship is revealed in the first story included in *The Jungle Book* “Mowgli’s Brothers,” in which Mowgli is introduced as a “naked brown baby” to the jungle (4). Although the grounds for Mowgli’s adoption by the wolf pack might seem to be based on love and affection, there are also less agreeable motives implicated here. That Mowgli
“‘shall live to run with the Pack and to hunt with the Pack’” is the result of his adoptive wolf-mother Raksha’s personal vanity – she says with pride, “‘was there ever a wolf that could boast of a “man’s cub” among her children?’” – as well as her expectation that Mowgli will one day hunt and kill his nemesis and the jungle’s collective pest, Shere Khan: she tells her infant son that “‘the time will come when thou wilt hunt [the tiger] as he has hunted thee!’” (Jungle Book 5, 6).

Mowgli’s value as a tool or weapon is reasserted when he is first presented before the wolf council, where the wolves collectively agree to allow the “man’s cub” to stay in the jungle under their protection. Akela, the leader of the wolf pack, recognizes that Mowgli may come to be “‘a help in time,’” to which Bagheera adds, “‘Truly, a help in time of need; for none can hope to lead the Pack forever’” (Jungle Book 9). Both the alpha wolf and the panther consider Mowgli to be a future, up-and-coming candidate for the leadership of the wolf pack, but what neither of them can predict at this stage is just how far Mowgli’s power will eventually extend. The animals’ strategy to use Mowgli as a political pawn ultimately backfires: in addition to killing Shere Khan (as recounted in the story “Tiger! Tiger!”), Mowgli also goes on to usurp the jungle’s most powerful animals, including Akela, Bagheera, Baloo, and Kaa, as well as the jungle’s supreme leader Hathi, the elephant. As Shamsul Islam argues, the Jungle Books use the structuring principle of “battle and progress” in stories like “Kaa’s Hunting,” “Tiger! Tiger!,” and “Red Dog” in order to trace Mowgli’s ascent from being the jungle’s most vulnerable inhabitant to being its most powerful (10). By the time Mowgli has come of age in “In the Rukh,” the power dynamic that is first established between himself and the animals has completely reversed: no longer the helpless “man’s cub,” Mowgli has used his newfound authority to transform the wolves into his trained dogs.
On the one hand, then, “In the Rukh” solidifies the *Jungle Books* as colonial allegories by showing the culmination of what is only briefly hinted at in the *Jungle Books*: namely, Mowgli’s essential nature as a “colonial ruler” (W.W. Robson General xix). On the other hand, there are also moments in which Kipling pulls back from or works against a potential allegorical reading of the *Jungle Books*, such as the final scene in “The Spring Running,” in which Mowgli tearfully reasserts that Kaa, Baloo, and Bagheera are his “brothers” (*Second Jungle Book* 293). While Mowgli’s kinship with the animals slowly disintegrates over the course of the Mowgli stories, the end of “The Spring Running” and other moments of nostalgia scattered across the two *Jungle Books* provide Kipling with the opportunity to highlight the fraternal bond between Mowgli and the animals, distancing himself from his first depiction of a despotic adult Mowgli in “In the Rukh.” That Kipling was ultimately disappointed or displeased with this adult Mowgli is demonstrated by his subsequent attempt to reinvent his protagonist in the *Jungle Books*, in which Mowgli’s dictatorial impulses are tempered by the love and respect that he holds for his animal guardians. By turning away from the adult Mowgli on the cusp of an imperial career, Kipling indicates not only a criticism of Empire, but also a deep-seated dissatisfaction with imperialism as a means for perpetuating romance.

The ending of “In the Rukh” anticipates what will become Kipling’s effort to reimagine the character of Mowgli in the *Jungle Books*. As the story is gradually overwhelmed by the shadow of imperialism, Kipling works to reinvigorate romance by bringing his Mowgli stories full circle as well as introducing a new vehicle for future romances featuring his famous protagonist. After Mowgli takes up the occupation of a forest ranger – a position that, it is insinuated, requires him to exploit the jungle of his childhood – Kipling marries off his boy-hero and produces another “naked brown baby” suggesting the possibility of a new series of stories featuring Mowgli’s son (263). By deliberately evoking Mowgli’s introduction in the story
“Mowgli’s Brothers,” in which he is also described as a “naked brown baby” (4), Kipling presents the Mowgli stories as a continuous narrative: a “spiral” or “open circle,” in which “the end is the beginning transformed and renewed by the heroic quest” (Frye Secular 174). In “In the Rukh,” this promise of renewal comes from Mowgli’s child, a younger version of his father who, because he has not yet been absorbed by the imperialist mechanism, represents a fresh candidate for romance. While Kipling will later delay Mowgli’s bildungsroman by repeatedly returning to younger versions of his protagonist in the Jungle Books – a strategy made possible by the a-chronological structure of the Mowgli stories – here he grudgingly allows his protagonist to grow up, yet cannot resist once again creating another platform for romance by shifting his focus onto a new prospective hero.

What Kipling would have done with the character of Mowgli beyond “In the Rukh” is unclear: with his position as a member of the government service as well as his responsibilities as a husband with a young child, Mowgli’s very adult concerns would have presumably led to fewer opportunities for adventures in the jungle. Kipling, however, bypasses the problematic narrative of Mowgli’s adult life by enacting a return to childhood. In addition to introducing Mowgli’s son, Kipling also deliberately leaves an opening in the chronology of Mowgli’s life, a gap that would allow him to return to a younger version of his protagonist later in his writing,

145 Commenting on Kipling’s change of tone in stories like “The Undertakers” and “The Miracle of Purun Bhagat” included in The Second Jungle Book, Roger Lancelyn Green has suggested that a third Jungle Book, which Kipling had once contemplated writing, would have continued to pursue a more “adult” direction. Green postulates that stories written explicitly for adults around the same period – such as “Garm – a Hostage” and “The Maltese Cat” – might have been originally intended for inclusion in a third volume of jungle stories (Kipling and the Children 130). In a letter composed in 1897, however, Kipling reveals plans for more animal stories, but firmly denies any plans for further Jungle Books: in reply to a query from one of his child readers (presumably given his tone in the letter), Kipling writes that he “really and truly … can’t write any more of them – at least not just now and if I wrote a third Jungle-Book and a Fourth Jungle-Book why then I should have to write a Fifth Jungle-Book [as well as a sixth and seventh] and some of them would be dull and some would be flat and some would be stuffy and you would not care for them” (“Letter to Miss Welman, 14 August 1897”).
should he so desire. In a prefatory footnote to “In the Rukh,” he writes:

This tale, published in *Many Inventions* … was the first written of the Mowgli stories, though it deals with the closing chapters of his career – namely his introduction to white men, his marriage and civilization, all of which took place, we may infer, some two or three years after he had finally broken away from his friends in the jungle (vide “The Spring Running,” *Second Jungle Book*). Those who know the geography of India will see that it is a far cry from Seonee to a Northern forest reserve; but though many curious things must have befallen Mowgli, we have no certain record of his adventures during those wanderings. There are, however, legends. (qtd in R.L. Green “Mowgli’s Jungle” 30)

The two or three-year interval between “The Spring Running” and “In the Rukh,” in which Mowgli somehow travels from Seonee to a forest reserve farther in the north, would yield plenty of material for future romances about Mowgli. Kipling already seems to be testing the waters when he refers to the “many curious things” that happened during this interval that have now passed into legend. Though Kipling never in fact expanded upon these “legends,” it is clear from this preface that the author intended to pursue the romance of Mowgli by once again moving backward, not forward, through narrative time: he describes “In the Rukh” as chronicling the “closing chapters” of Mowgli’s career. By following up the narrative of Mowgli’s adulthood with the *Jungle Books*, in which the author consistently returns to younger and less cynical versions of his protagonist, Kipling links a return to childhood with a return to romance, a dynamic that is played out in his stories about Punch and Mowgli as well as in what many regard as his most accomplished work, the novel *Kim*. 
Returning to the road: Recuperating romance in *Kim*

Motivated by a similar effort to evade the “[s]hades of the prison-house” that he associates with Mowgli’s coming-of-age (Wordsworth “Ode” l.67), Kipling refuses to narrate Kim’s time at school, a place that Ian Baucom likens to a “pedagogical prison house” (91). In this refusal to narrate Kim’s schooldays, followed by an effort to renew his joint quest with the lama for the river of Enlightenment, Kipling postpones Kim’s bildungsroman and renews romance in the text. However, as in the Mowgli stories and particularly “In the Rukh,” imperialism invades and works to deconstruct romance. Kim’s, and Kipling’s, repeated attempts to evade the shadows of Empire by escaping into “great, grey, formless India, beyond tents and padres and colonels” are futile (143); in his role as a government spy, Kim’s search for the lama’s river moves toward “the eradication of the last elsewhere,” signalling the ultimate demise of the genre of imperial romance (McClure *Late* 11).

Though Kipling once referred to *Kim* self-deprecatingly as “nakedly picaresque and plotless” (*Something of Myself* 154), the novel is actually comprised of three distinctive parts or segments. Kim’s initial quest to find the river of Enlightenment with the lama as a child (1) is interrupted when he discovers the army camp and is subsequently sent as a pupil to St. Xavier’s (2); when Kim is released early from school in order to take up his position as a government agent, he and the lama attempt to renew their quest in the third and final section of the novel (3). This three-part structure, in which Kim and the lama’s joint quest is broken off when Kim is sent to boarding school, indicates how genre is attached to specific locations or settings in Kipling’s novel, a link that Suzanne Keen explores in *Victorian Renovations of the Novel*. Keen labels these textual transitions – moments that are “initiated by a combined shift in genre and setting that changes the fictional world of the novel” – as “narrative annexes” that
work by interrupting the norms of a story’s world, temporarily replacing those norms, and carrying the reader, the perceiving and reporting characters, and the plot-line across a boundary and through an altered, particular and briefly realized zone of difference. (1)

Although Keen does not specifically address *Kim* in her study, her definition of the narrative annex will allow me to trace how Kipling signals a change in genre through a corresponding change in setting. In his text, the Grand Trunk Road, which Kim and the lama travel on their joint quest, becomes the locus of romance, while Kipling’s aborted school story – a gap in the text from which we as readers are curiously shut out – is located at St. Xavier’s in Lahore. As such, Kipling’s subsequent effort to revive romance in the text is registered in Kim and the lama’s return to the road following Kim’s imperialist awakening at boarding school.

By resuming their search for the river of Enlightenment, the lama and his “chela” or disciple attempt to recuperate the original conditions of their initial road journey, in which they set out together to fulfill their respective quests: the lama’s goal is spiritual Enlightenment, while Kim is “quest[ing] for the father, or rather, for the solution to the cryptic message contained in the name of the father” (Randall 121, original emphasis). However, when Kim is discovered by an English regiment to be a white man’s son and therefore a sahib-in-training – an episode that basically corresponds to the anagnorisis or recognition of the hero that, in Northrop Frye’s schema, indicates the beginning of the end of romance – the lama’s path diverges from Kim’s (*Anatomy* 192). Kim is taken to St. Xavier’s to be made into a “sahib,” and as “‘The Gates of Learning’ shut with a clang,” they not only separate the lama from his beloved chela, but also signal the beginning of Kim’s schooldays and a dramatic change in the tone of Kipling’s romance (171).
Child’s play: Kim and the lama’s first road journey

Thomas Richards has written in relation to Kim that, “so far as the state is concerned, there is no such thing as a non-conducting medium; everyone, and everything, consciously or unconsciously, forms part of the state’s internal lines of communication” (30). While the validity of Richards’ claim is demonstrated over the course of Kipling’s novel, in which Kim increasingly finds himself unable to divide his position as a government spy from his persisting loyalty to the lama, I would argue that Kim’s limited awareness surrounding his conflicting roles initially allows Kipling to disentangle romance from the imperial apparatus. In this respect, Kim does successfully get beyond internal state lines of communication: although incarnations of British imperialism are encountered everywhere in his initial road journey with the lama, Kim escapes their hegemonic influence by remaining unaware of their larger significance because of his youth. Robert Fraser writes that, “for Kim, at least at the beginning of the novel, the imperial presence is as remote as it is for his Indian friends. Indeed, for all his delight in diversity, Kim learns of distinctions of power slowly, and with apparent reluctance” (61). Because this is a learning process for Kipling’s protagonist and one that develops gradually over the course of the novel, crediting Kim with a grown-up awareness of the workings of Empire as a small boy is problematic: as the author himself highlights, Kim only comes to see the world around him in relation to the Great Game with considerable time and training.

Kipling repeatedly highlights Kim’s inability to grasp his role as a cog in the imperialist machine throughout the first third of the text. While Kim is the habitual focalizer of Kipling’s third-person narration, the narrator periodically shifts away from Kim’s perspective in order to
emphasize the necessary limitations of his knowledge.\textsuperscript{146} For instance, when Kim agrees to carry a message for Mahbub Ali, the narrator informs the reader that Kim “did not suspect that [he] ... was registered in one of the locked books of the Indian Survey Department as C251B” (69). As Zohreh T. Sullivan remarks, Kim’s understanding of the Game is “simply that it was ‘intrigue of some kind’ whose worth lies in the occasional money and hot meals that Mahbub Ali gives him as reward” (155). While Kim “warm[s] to the game,” ultimately prizing new information more than the prospect of mere money – as Kipling writes, “he was Irish enough by birth to reckon silver the least part of any game” – his store of knowledge is confined to partial conversations that he overhears by chance, unbeknownst to the adults around him (84). After he spies on Colonel Creighton, for instance, Kim becomes aware that war is imminent but when he communicates his findings to the lama and the old Indian soldier, the narrator stipulates that Kim “pretended to know more than he knew” (95). By discovering new information in this haphazard way, Kim is unwittingly training himself for his future profession as a government spy whilst still a child. At the same time, however, the limitations of Kim’s knowledge, as revealed by the narrator, ensure that he remains unaware of the larger implications of the Great Game.

That Kipling’s third-person narrator chooses to emphasize his protagonist’s ignorance at such crucial moments in the narrative – for instance, after he agrees to transmit Mahbub Ali’s message to the army camp – complicates Baucom’s argument that Kim “has learned the Wonder House’s lesson ... [and] will fulfill his imperial responsibility to catalog and collect” (87). The quotation to which Baucom is referring here illustrates Kim’s attitude towards the lama:

\begin{quote}
Frances Hodgson Burnett is similarly concerned with the limitations of a child’s knowledge in \textit{Little Lord Fauntleroy} (1886), which begins with the sentence, “Cedric himself knew nothing whatever about it” (1). By alternately focalizing the narration from both Cedric’s perspective as well as from that of the adults who surround him, Burnett highlights Cedric’s innocence about the circumstances into which he is thrust: for instance, that his grandfather is actually an irresponsible landowner, and not a generous one, as his idolizing grandson presumes.
\end{quote}
This man was entirely new to all his experience, and he meant to investigate further, precisely as he would have investigated a new building or a strange festival in Lahore city. The lama was his trove, and he purposed to take possession. (60)

While, in the larger context of the novel, Kim’s investigation of the lama can be interpreted as the performance of anthropological fieldwork in the name of Empire, Kipling encourages the reader to enter Kim’s mindset here, interpreting his desire to “take possession” through the filter of a young boy’s mind. In this respect, Kim’s curiosity in the lama assumes a childish or childlike quality, echoing the opening scene of the novel in which he playfully “takes possession” of Zam-Zammah in a game of “king-of-the-castle” (51). Like the cannon, which is “always first of the conqueror’s loot” (49), the lama becomes Kim’s trove in a way that is similar to Jim Hawkins’ boyish glory in his inspection of Billy Bones’ hoard near the end of *Treasure Island* (1883). In the latter example, Jim focuses not on the material value of the coins, but rather on their foreignness, dwelling in his description on their exotic qualities and concluding that, “I had never more pleasure than in sorting them” (186). Mowgli similarly delights in examining the White Cobra’s treasure in the story “The King’s Ankus” (*The Second Jungle Book*): while he exclaims “‘Oho! … this is like the stuff they play with in the Man-Pack,’” Mowgli remains indifferent to the treasure’s value and the greed that it will inevitably elicit among the human inhabitants of the village (158).

147 Comparing Kim’s reaction with the lama’s obvious pleasure as he examines the museum’s Buddhist collection – he is “delighted as a child at each new trove” (56) – also suggests that the desire for treasure is not an exclusively imperialist impulse in Kipling’s text: in this example, Kipling stipulates that the lama “went through the collection with the reverence of a devotee and the appreciative instinct of a craftsman” (56).

148 In *Something of Myself*, Kipling reveals a similar childlike glee in treasure when he describes his visits with his
treasure resembles, I would argue, Kim’s interest in the lama, a manifestation of his self-professed “‘desire to see some new things’” (130). And yet, just as Mowgli’s continuous search for “‘new game’” leads him to the ankus, Kim’s inquisitive nature initiates him into the imperialist system when he is drawn by his curiosity to investigate the Mavericks’ army barracks (Second Jungle Book 153).

The imposing sight of rows of “empty, lime-washed barracks” effectively serves as Kim’s introduction to British imperial power, presenting a formidable challenge to his urge to “escape into great, grey, formless India” that the romance genre enables (147, 143). Don Randall writes that “European time” in Kipling’s text is the “time of imperial enterprise,” which is necessarily “apportioned and regimented” (140): as an Anglo-Indian, Kim, who has hitherto been accustomed to the “ambling, undifferentiated Oriental time” of his homeland (140), can only marvel in wonder as the Mavericks pitch their camp, transforming a mango-grove into “an orderly town” in only thirty minutes (Kipling 129). In contrast to the synchronicity and simultaneity of time demonstrated by new technologies such as the railway, steamship, telegraph, and telephone, which are all effectively used by the British to control their Empire, time moves at a more leisurely pace in the East (T. Richards 5-6). For Kipling, a certain laxity in regard to time is characteristic of Eastern natives: he writes that Mahbub Ali possesses “an Oriental’s views of the value of time” and that “All hours of the twenty-four are alike to Orientals, and their passenger traffic is regulated accordingly” (70, 74). Because of its

sister to the South Kensington Museum as children. After “the sorely tried mother” buys them season’s tickets, the two children quickly come to feel that they “owned that place”: “[f]rom the big Buddha with the little door in his back, to the towering dull-gilt ancient coaches and carven chariots in long dark corridors – even the places marked ‘private’ where fresh treasures were always being unpacked – we roved at will, and divided the treasures child-fashion” (15).
connection to India in Kipling’s fiction, romance also offers this alternative experience of time in *Kim*: quests, as a general rule, often take many years to complete, and the quest for the River of the Arrow is no exception – the lama is “prepared to spend serene years in his quest” (126). Kim himself hints that time is experienced differently on the road when he answers Father Victor’s inquiry about the duration of his quest with the reply, “Oh, many days” (137) – a response that indicates a much longer journey than the hundred or so pages that it comprises in the actual text.

Although Johannes Fabian would argue that this distinction between different time zones amounts to a denial of coevalness with the Indians on the part of the British – as he writes, “one assigns to the conquered populations a different Time” (30) – this denial of coevalness appears to have a liberating effect on Kipling’s protagonist. Due to its alternative experience of both time and space, the romance of Oriental time presents a challenge to British imperialist hegemony in Kipling’s text. Kim’s many journeys on the road free him at least temporarily from the spatial and temporal confines of school, and provide him with moments in which he can at least feel that he has somehow escaped the dictates of Empire. One such moment occurs, for instance, when the narrator describes, in one extremely long and winding sentence joined by several semicolons, the “wandering road, climbing, dipping, and sweeping about the growing spurs” on Kim’s “long, lazy journey” to Simla and Lurgan Sahib, a journey that is “all pure delight” to Kim who is all too eager to escape from St. Xavier’s (193-4).149

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149 David H. Stewart observes that Kipling’s prose style changes when he is describing Kim and the lama’s journey on the road: the choppiness of Kipling’s language elsewhere in the text, featuring frequent “commas, dashes, and foreign words,” is replaced by a more flowing prose style, indicating to my mind that the author has transported the reader across a narrative annex in the text (29). Zohreh T. Sullivan also acknowledges this stylistic change in Kipling’s language, writing that, “The impressionistic lyricism of Kim’s perceptions on the road change to dry, factual, objective reporting of words and actions” (162); we see this reporting in action following Kim’s arrival at St. Xavier’s, when Kipling provides only a brief, cursory description of the “usual punishments” and “usual tricks” that make up his protagonist’s schooldays.
As a child perched “astride the gun Zam-Zammah” (49), Kim has already been initiated into the imperialist mechanism; by delivering Mahbub Ali’s message to Colonel Creighton, Kim proves that he can successfully serve as a conducting medium, although as Kipling stipulates he remains unaware of the larger significance of his mission. In this way, Kim’s particular blend of precocity and childish ignorance has proven to be useful for the Empire. Like the other children who make brief appearances in the novel – namely, the naked child who will “‘make a soldier’” and Lurgan Sahib’s Hindu child who practices the jewel game – Kim is similarly rehearsing his adult career by prematurely assuming a minor role in the Great Game (103). In this way, the romance of the road becomes doubly significant in Kipling’s text: in addition to providing Kim with temporary escapes from the drudgery of school, the road also works against Kim’s slow and steady progress toward becoming a sahib, resisting the moment in which he will become permanently fixed or mapped by Empire.

While the experience of boarding school is intended to transform him into a sahib so that he will be better equipped to serve the Empire, Kim’s escapes or attempted escapes into the world of romance suggest the operation of an alternate time zone in which Kim’s maturity remains at a standstill, both physically and mentally (146). Although Kim plays at being “grown-up” on his initial journey with the lama – for instance, “[he] felt very much of a man as he pulled at the smooth coconut-shell [of the water-pipe], his legs spread abroad in the moonlight…” (86) – this pose only amounts to child’s play. As in the short story “Wee Willie Bristow’s thesis – that performing the work of empire is somehow childlike, even for adults – is also reflected in Kipling’s novel about the “Great Game.” For instance, the old soldier “looked as abashed as a child interrupted in his game of make-believe” when is forced to admit that the sword he carries is only “an old man’s fancy” (100), a reminder of his glory days fighting on the British side during the Mutiny. Daniel Dravot and Peachy Carnehan’s efforts to build their own empire in “The Man Who Would Be King” are also likened to a sort of child’s game, albeit one with deadly consequences: the “child’s paper whirligig” that Dravot twirls before they set out on their journey to Kafiristan (255) is later echoed in Carnehan’s description of his body “turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig” after the natives turn against them, finding they were not gods but “only men,” (260).
Winkie,” which ends with the author’s declaration that the protagonist, who still uses baby talk, has “enter[ed] into his manhood” (259). Kim’s assertion that he feels like a grown man is premature. Accompanying the lama on his quest in the role of chela does not result in Kim’s maturity, a reality that is well-documented by the author when, after Kim’s capture, we see Kipling’s protagonist from the outside: Reverend Bennett and Father Victor draw attention to Kim’s immaturity by repeatedly referring to him as a “‘boy’” and by proclaiming their intention to “‘make a man of [him],’” at least according to the latter (146).

Rather than precipitating his transition into manhood, the romance of the road preserves Kim in a state of eternal boyhood, giving free rein to his boyish reactions as he explores his new surroundings. In these moments, Kipling’s mode of narration also works to preserve Kim’s childlike state: when the lama discusses spiritual matters with other adults, Kipling frequently excludes his protagonist from these conversations. For instance, while the lama is attempting to convert the old soldier whom they encounter on their journey, the narration shifts to Kim who is resting lazily against a tree and contemplating the natural world rather than the lama’s spiritual teachings: Kipling writes (from Kim’s viewpoint) that “there was a drowsy buzz of small life in hot sunshine, a cooing of doves, and a sleepy drone of well-wheels across the fields” (103). The naked child who suddenly appears before the group, toppling over as he makes “a solemn little obeisance before the lama,” reinforces the link that Kipling fosters in this scene between romance and the experience of childhood, paralleling Stevenson and Frye in their writings on the

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151 The climax of the story, which has resulted in the sudden maturation of Wee Willie Winkie according to the narrator, involves the titular hero coming to the rescue of a “maiden” in enemy territory in Afghanistan.
Disrupting this scene of pastoral paradise, however, is the old soldier’s wistful and foreboding remark to the lama that “‘They grow up and become men,’” referring both to Kim and the naked child (104); while Kim will become a government spy, the child with the “sprawling, chubby legs” is apparently destined for the military: the retired officer playfully asks him “‘How wilt thou ever make a soldier, Princeling?’” (103). The old soldier’s enduring fealty to the British Empire – he proudly tells Kim and the lama that he was one of only three men in his regiment who remained loyal during the Mutiny (101) – provides an insidious glimpse of Empire which always remains just beyond the consciousness of Kim and the lama in their initial journey, despite its constant presence in the landscape of the road, including the “te-rain” which they board at the beginning of their quest, the system of canals which they pass, and even the Grand Trunk Road itself. In this way, Kipling seems to suggest that in order for the romance plot to continue in *Kim*, the characters must stick closely to the “nomadic flow” of the road (T. Richards 24). Any form of divergence or distraction that leads them from this fixed path, including figures like the old soldier, become insistent reminders of Empire-at-work that threaten finally to inculcate them into imperialist hegemony. As Richards writes, the figure of the nomad, whom Kim and the lama clearly embody in Kipling’s text, represents everything that “has remained counter to the state” and, consequently, everything that “European states … have sought to contain and destroy” – or, even better, “territorialize” (19-20). When Kim and the lama are detained from their combined quest by the old soldier, the two nomads are in danger of

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152 Frye writes of the “perennially childlike quality of romance” (*Anatomy* 186), and Stevenson’s line “[a] great romantic – an idle child” also speaks to this connection (“Gossip” 64). In Kipling’s text, the lama’s childlike qualities, coupled with his perpetual association with the road and with romance, also reinforce the link between the genre and childhood.
being fixed or mapped by imperialist ideology, which is what ultimately happens to Kim when he is discovered by the English army and taken to boarding school in Lucknow.

“‘You would scarcely be interested’”: Kim’s aborted school story

The textual gap following the sentence “‘The Gates of Learning’ shut with a clang” signals the reader’s transition into the narrative annex of Kim’s schooldays (171), and a similar gap occurs after Kim’s first holiday “escape” from school, when he is transported back to Lucknow (212). But while Keen stipulates that a narrative annex is meant to “carr[y] the reader, the perceiving and reporting characters, and the plot line across a boundary and through an altered, particular and briefly realized zone of difference” (1), we as readers are curiously shut out from the majority of Kim’s actual bildung at school. The few details that we are given, such as Kim’s proficiency at mathematics and cartography, only hint at what he learns and experiences there, seemingly in order to keep readers informed of Kim’s ulterior agenda when he resumes his quest with the lama. That Kim’s school story is missing from the novel points to Wolfgang Iser’s term the “minus function,” which he defines as a gap or “blank” in the text “brought about by a delicate omission of generic features that have been firmly established by the tradition of the genre” (208).

Applying Iser’s theory of the “minus function” to Kim insinuates the possibility that readers are meant to supply the traditional “generic features” of the school story to accommodate this textual gap: Kipling himself seems to invoke this strategy when he asserts that Kim “suffered the usual penalties” and “played the usual tricks” during his time at St. Xavier’s (171). But there is also a hint here of the traumatic gap in Kipling’s own biography – namely, the six years he spent as a child in the “House of Desolation” – which hints that Kipling’s effort to exclude readers from Kim’s school story is perhaps equally an attempt to avoid reliving his own
past through fiction. Just as he recalled his own immersion into British society with pain, Kipling “at least partially regrets the fate to which he has assigned his character,” anticipating “the imminent lobotomization of Kim with something like sorrow,” according to Baucom (91).

Perhaps this is why Kipling deliberately chooses not to highlight Kim’s growth from naïve child to jaded Sahib (towards the end of the novel, Kim reflects that “‘I am very old ... Every month I become a year more old’” [185]). Unlike Charlotte Brontë or Charles Dickens, whose popularity grew with their detailed accounts of school life in Jane Eyre (1847) and David Copperfield (1850), Kipling elects not to elaborate on these usual “tricks” and “punishments” in Kim, instead repeatedly insisting that “you,” as he addresses the reader, would “scarcely be interested” in “the record of a boy’s education” (212; see also 171).

By shutting the reader out from the narrative of Kim’s schooldays, Kipling suggests that he resents the very bildung necessary to what Thomas Richards calls his “Bildungsroman in the service of the state” (23, original emphasis). Although the plot requires that Kim go away to

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153 In his autobiography, Kipling shortly dismisses his own school days as “horrible,” “brutal enough,” and “not pleasant” (18-20).

154 We see this change in Kim’s attitude – the result of his passage from (relative) innocence to experience – reflected through the lama, who remains arrested in a childlike state throughout the novel: his writing, for instance, is “clumsy” and “childish” (55), and he is also dependent upon Kim to secure them food for their journey (“Simply as a child, the old man handed him the bowl” [61]). While Kim suffers from exhaustion throughout their second road journey, culminating finally in a sort of nervous breakdown, the lama maintains his air of innocence; uninterested in the “details of life at St. Xavier’s,” the lama’s “mind moved all in the past, and he revived every step of their wonderful first journey together, rubbing his hands and chuckling” (241).

155 The narrator’s sudden direct address to the reader here also signals that Kim’s schooldays mark a new narrative annex in the text: up to this point, Kipling has chiefly narrated from Kim’s perspective or adopted a third-person omniscient narrative stance. As Sara Suleri writes, there is a “third-person silence imposed by the education that signifies the playing of the Great Game” (130). While readers “se[e] the subcontinent through Kim’s eyes” in the novel’s opening chapters, Kipling’s recourse to third-person narration in the concluding chapters forces readers “to cast an anthropologist’s eye upon the figure of Kim” (Suleri 129). Zohreh T. Sullivan (borrowing terms originating from critic Franz Stanzel) characterizes this transition as a shift from a “‘character’” narrator, whose perceptions are first intermingled with Kim’s, to “[a] ‘reflector’ narrator, who absorbs and mimics the in-group and ironic voice of English power ... becoming thereby the collective voice of colonizing society” (164).
school, the author refuses to highlight this narrative annex, choosing instead, like the lama, to bide his time as narrator until Kim can once more get back on the road. As I have written previously, romance is indeed revived in the text – but with a difference. The constant surveillance of the imperial system is so all-encompassing that once Kim has been initiated, he seemingly cannot escape: his attempt to run away from school is short-lived and he is quickly ushered back into the fold in his stay with Lurgan Sahib, whose jewel game becomes practice in miniature for the Great Game into which Kim will soon enter (T. Richards 28). When Lurgan Sahib tests Kim’s imaginative capacity – for instance, when he encourages him to picture the pieces of a broken jar coming back together – Kim’s disciplined mind resists these games, automatically reverting back to the multiplication tables that he learns at St. Xavier’s.

The renewal of the quest and the unraveling of romance
Kim’s inability to enter into Lurgan Sahib’s games signals the moment in which romance begins to unravel in the text. Despite Kipling’s attempt to revive the genre when Kim and the lama resume their quest, their search for the river of Enlightenment highlights the “expanding frontiers of rationalization” that threaten the romance genre (McClure Late 9). Mirroring Haggard’s use of “increasingly fantastic” settings “in the most remote parts of the globe” in his exotic romances, Kipling similarly quests for an unmappable place beyond the reaches of Empire in Kim (McClure 11). As McClure notes, romance is on a perpetual search for undiscovered territory, a desire that Kim himself reveals at the very beginning of the text when he tells Mahbub Ali, “‘I am tired of Lahore city. I wish new air and water’” (67). However, the

156 In Kipling’s “The Man Who Would Be King” (1888), Daniel Dravot and Peachy Carnehan similarly profess that “‘India isn’t big enough for such as us,’” and declare their intention before the narrator “‘to go away to some other place where a man isn’t crowded and can come to his own’”: specifically Kafiristan, the “‘top right-hand corner of Afghanistan’” (252). Although the narrator protests that the country is “‘one mass of mountains and peaks and
distant hills to which Kim and the lama ultimately retreat is both the culmination of the lama’s quest for a setting which is “perched above the world, [and] separated from delights” as well as the realization of the Empire’s quest for the “last” unmapped place. Although one of their guides remarks that, “This is the world’s end” – a line that invokes William Morris’ nineteenth-century medievalist romance *The Well at the World’s End* (1896) – the implication behind this discovery of the unmapped place is that it will not remain unmapped for long (300). Baucom’s reading insists that the novel contains “textual moments in which the subcontinent refuses to be mapped,” citing the curator’s admission that he does not know the whereabouts of the lama’s sought-after river (95-6). But Kim’s entry into this back-of-beyond as a fully-fledged government agent implies that the lama’s retreat and the river where he found Enlightenment will soon spark the interests of the Empire-at-large: the lama’s quest for the river and Kim’s search for identity ultimately conflict with one another.

In his discussion of Kipling’s text, Edward Said writes that, “There is no resolution to the conflict between Kim’s colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling there was no conflict” (23, original emphasis). By contrast, I have attempted to register a sense of conflict in this chapter through Kipling’s

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Kipling suggests in his preface to *The Jungle Book* that Mowgli is also being pursued by government intelligence: Mowgli’s adventures “were collected at various times and in various places from a multitude of informants, most of whom desire to preserve the strictest anonymity” (qtd in Green “Mowgli’s Jungle” 31). Like Kim, whose discovery of the river of Enlightenment precipitates the destruction of romantic space, Mowgli is similarly working toward the devastation of the jungles of his childhood, both actively in his role as a forest ranger and passively as an object of government interest.

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repeated attempts to free Kim from school and to reunite him with the lama on their quest. That the narrative perpetually returns Kim to romance suggests his prevailing desire to serve the lama as chela, a desire that he particularly expresses towards the end of the text. Recognizing his failure to straddle his two roles, Kim laments his own inability to perform the role of a faithful disciple:

‘I have talked to people on the road and left thee alone … I have – I have … Hai mai! But I love thee … and it is all too late … I was a child … Oh, why was I not a man?’ (320)

Kim’s perspective that he has failed the lama by leaving him “‘alone’” is substantiated by Kipling’s narration, which highlights Kim’s childish incapacity to attend to the lama as he preaches the doctrines of Buddhism. In these moments of spiritual discussion – for instance, the conversation between the lama and the old soldier – the narrator abruptly shifts to Kim, who is always on the periphery of these discussions.158 As such, the extent of Kim’s knowledge and learning about the faith of which he is a self-proclaimed disciple remains unclear, and Kim himself expresses regret at his failure to carry out this role, suggesting that it is too late for him to follow his lama into the Path of Enlightenment.

The conflict between Kim’s deep-seated desire to serve the lama and his role as a “chain-man” in the Great Game persists beyond the ending of the text (224). While several critics have interpreted the passage in which Kim, after experiencing a kind of physical and emotional

158 Kim listens to the lama’s conversation with the curator about the potential whereabouts of the river from behind a closed door, but “[m]ost of the talk was altogether above his head” and as a result he grows bored and falls asleep (55). He again grows tired after he is barred from the lama’s spiritual conversation with the woman of Shamlegh both physically, in that he is not allowed to walk alongside them, and linguistically: Chinese Buddhist doctrine resembles the “sing-song cadence” of a nursery rhyme or lullaby to the sleepy Kim (119).
breakdown,\textsuperscript{159} feels “the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without” as the resolution of this conflict – Kim has chosen the “wheel” of worldly activity over the spiritual “way” – the novel ends by presenting Kim once again with a choice between his two roles (331). Although Kim’s reawakening is undoubtedly of a worldly rather than a spiritual origin – he recognizes that “[r]oads were meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and women to be talked to” – the lama’s invitation to Kim to bathe in the river where he has experienced Enlightenment indicates the possibility that Kim may in fact turn away from this worldly path and seek the spiritual way because of his enduring faith in and loyalty to his master (331). That the text ends before Kim makes his final choice between the “wheel” and the “way” becomes for James H. Thrall “the question of the forever absent next page. Does Kim get wet? – Does he, in fact, follow his master’s wishes and submerge himself in the stream?” (46). While Tom’s spiritual quest comes to a satisfying resolution in The Water-Babies when he is finally allowed to “go home” with Ellie on Sundays, Kim is left in a state of limbo because of this “forever absent next page” (Thrall 46).

That Kim remains perpetually torn between his two conflicting roles suggests the ultimate failure of his quest. While the lama finds his river, Kim never fully solves the riddle of his identity, a dilemma represented by the lingering question “‘Who is Kim – Kim – Kim?’” (233). As such, there is a sense of irony in the contrast between Said’s assessment of \textit{Kim} as “Kipling’s only successfully sustained and \textit{mature} piece of long fiction” and the persisting immaturity of Kipling’s protagonist (7, emphasis added). In spite of his precocity and world-weary attitude, Kim is still confused about his own identity, as well as his indefinite spiritual

\textsuperscript{159} For Randall, Kim’s breakdown at age seventeen anticipates the “half-collapse that sets in at twenty-two or twenty-three” (173) to which former pupils of St. Xavier’s are frequently subject, according to the narrator (Randall 157).
status, suggesting that he remains a child even as Kipling’s text draws to a conclusion. Kim seems to come into his own by adopting a more grown-up role in the Great Game, and yet this promotion still leaves him feeling unsatisfied: he continues to question himself both in his capacity as an imperial agent and as chela to his beloved lama. While Tom the water-baby, David Balfour, and even Mowgli\textsuperscript{160} achieve a degree of security and stability by the conclusion of their respective narratives – all three are married and hold respectable middle-class occupations – Kipling’s open ending and failure to match his protagonist with a suitable partner asserts that Kim has not achieved a similar level of permanency in either his professional or his personal life.\textsuperscript{161}

Though his future is largely undetermined, Kim’s inability to free himself from the confines of the tangible world – as we see when the “wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without” following his breakdown – implies that he will remain under imperial control (331). As Richards and Black have noted (see p. 29 and p. 244, respectively), the museum, whose reach extended across the globe in the nineteenth century, brackets the entire text (T. Richards 15): the novel opens on the threshold of the Lahore Museum, and ends with a sentence

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\textsuperscript{160} My inclusion of Mowgli in this list is qualified by the fact that Kipling retreats from this adult version of his protagonist in “In the Rukh”; rather than celebrate Mowgli’s successful integration with his own kind, both author and protagonist (as per my analysis of Lockwood Kipling’s illustration in fn. 139) instead dwell nostalgically on his childhood in the jungle.

\textsuperscript{161} Like many of Kipling’s male characters, Kim remains a bachelor, suggesting the increasingly “boys’ club” atmosphere of romance with the approach of the turn of the century (see Showalter). Although the Amritzar courtesan who buys Kim’s railway ticket on the initial road journey actually assists the male quest (78), women are generally seen in Kipling’s text as a perpetual distraction from what is imagined as exclusively male business: as Kim himself says, “How can a man follow the Way or the Great Game when he is so-always pestered by women?” (306). As such, while male-male friendships thrive in the novel, Kim’s only significant and sustained relationship with a member of the opposite sex is with the widow of Kulu, who acts as a surrogate mother by nursing him back to health following his breakdown. That Kim ultimately requires a mother instead of a mate suggests his persisting immaturity, as well as a significant departure from the pattern of Scott’s or Henty’s novels or Frye’s theory of romance, which suggest that the protagonist of romance is typically rewarded with marriage and a secure position in society following his adventures.
\end{quote}
comparing the lama to a “stone Bodhisat” sitting in this same museum (336). Despite the fact that Kipling’s text endeavors to take its readers to the world’s end, both the lama and his disciple remain enclosed under the eye of Empire and the scope of the imperial museum: the novel ends, as Jed Esty writes, by suggesting the never-ending story of imperial expansion (411-12). The only possibility that Kim and the lama will be able to transcend this hegemonic imperial influence lies in the text’s flirtation with sacred space, which is beyond the reach of the third-person omniscient narration: the moment in which the lama bathes in the river remains outside the scope of the narrator, who focuses instead on Kim and his breakdown. And yet, the comparison between the lama post-Enlightenment and the “stone Bodhisat” indicates that entry into this sacred space does not preclude one’s role as an imperial subject. Kim and the lama’s final goal – to achieve entry into a space beyond the reaches of Empire – ultimately proves to be futile, notwithstanding Kipling’s many efforts to return both lama and chela to the road in order to fulfill their joint romantic quest.

**Conclusion: “and so it will go on ...”**

“For poets for whom the recovery of identity or the attainment of an end is problematic, or impossible, the focus may be less on arrival or completion than on the strategy of delay” (Patricia Parker *Inescapable Romance* 5).

The title of Patricia Parker’s critical work *Inescapable Romance* mirrors the argument that I have outlined here in relation to Kipling’s fiction. Just as Parker explores how the genre resists closure or a sense of “narrative ‘ending’” in her study of romantic verse, my focus throughout this chapter has been on the relationship between Kipling’s representation of childhood and what Parker calls the “dilated or suspended threshold of romance” (3, 6). Echoing the final line of Stevenson’s essay “A Gossip on Romance” – “[a] great romantic – an idle child” (64) – quest-romance in Kipling’s fiction relies on the author’s ability to suspend his boy-heroes perpetually in childhood. In a “strategy of delay” that evokes the nineteenth-century nostalgia for childhood
as an irrecoverable paradise, Kipling’s recycling of romance is both an effort to postpone the trauma that he associates with impending maturity as well as an attempt to avoid the narrative moment in which “imperialism suddenly becomes the enemy of romance” (McClure 11) – both “problematic” and “impossible” endings for the author. By choosing to move backward rather than forward through narrative time, Kipling is able to prolong the childhoods of his protagonists: in the *Jungle Books*, the author resists Mowgli’s future as an agent of Empire by returning to younger versions of his “man’s cub,” while in *Kim* he attempts to extend his protagonist’s childhood by reuniting him with the lama on their joint quest. Though both Mowgli and Kim demonstrate a capacity for manipulation as young boys – a far cry from the forthright heroes of earlier romances by writers like Henty – as adults they actively work toward the destruction of the romantic environments to which they adapt themselves as children. In their roles as agents of Empire, Mowgli and Kim usher in “the very forces” that will exploit the unconquered regions on which romance depends as a genre (McClure 9).

By freezing his protagonists in childhood, Kipling attempts to maintain or conserve the sites of “magic and providential mystery” integral to the romance genre, ultimately working against the imperialist hegemony that his work is frequently thought to celebrate (Jameson 134). The modernist “skepticism” that Watts has perceived in Conrad’s *Lord Jim* is symbolized by Mowgli’s and Kim’s arrested development, which suggests Kipling’s uncertainty about England’s future as a global imperial power, particularly in *Kim*’s open ending (11). As Randall writes, by leaving his protagonist “suspended upon the brink of an impossible manhood,” Kipling uses Kim’s “insuperable adolescence” to “mirro[r] the problem of imperial consolidation, the problem of an empire that has not discovered – and that may never discover – its appropriate coming of age” (158). Kipling’s inability or reluctance to allow Kim to reach maturity, coupled with his rejection of the adult Mowgli in “In the Rukh,” also echoes his
cautionary tone in poems like “Recessional” (1897) about the lasting impact and legacy of the British Empire. As such, romance and imperialism constantly work to undermine or undo one another in Kipling’s writing: while imperialism works to destroy the sites of romance, Kipling’s perpetual return to the genre probes the very limits of Empire. This double-movement is also at work in the episodic structure of *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910); the creation and dissolution of the magic fairy ring, which bookends each of Puck’s visits to the children Dan and Una, recreates the thematic pattern of his tales about the history of England, in which imperial power passes from hand to hand “as natural as an oak growing” (*Puck* 303).

Like Kipling’s earlier publications for children, the Puck books similarly work to perpetuate childhood: the fairy’s power to make the children forget each of his visits hints at the potential for endless historical “lessons” and, consequently, for further sequels chronicling Dan and Una’s adventures. In this impulse to delay childhood through an “endless deferral of endings” (Parker 10), Kipling sets an important precedent for J.M. Barrie, who similarly uses romance as a vehicle for the eternal child in *Peter Pan* (originally published as *Peter and Wendy* in 1911). Like Puck’s ability to make Dan and Una forget their magical encounters, Peter’s forgetfulness enables him to perpetuate his romantic career. The departing members of Peter’s cohort – Wendy, John, Michael, and the lost boys – are forgotten just as quickly as Peter can find appropriate replacements: Wendy is succeeded by her daughter Jane, who is succeeded in turn by her daughter Margaret “and so it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless” (153). For Barrie’s famous boy-who-would-not-grow-up, however, this opportunity

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162 Although “Recessional” was ostensibly written in celebration of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, the poem indicates Kipling’s growing awareness that the sun is setting on the British Empire and that the power afforded by imperial conquest is by its very nature transitory: he writes that, “all our pomp of yesterday/ Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!” (l. 15-16).
for endless adventure, fuelled by his deep-seated need “always to be a little boy and to have fun,” comes at a steep price (27): while he experiences “ecstasies innumerable that other children can never know,” he is also “for ever barred” from the lighted window that represents the “joy” of family and domestic life (141).

In the absence of these deeper human connections, Peter is left to puzzle out the troubling “riddle of his existence” alone – a fate not unlike Kim’s at the end of Kipling’s novel, when the conflict between his two roles provokes a similar crisis of identity (110). By perpetually recycling romance in their work – a variation of the genre that Frye likens to a comic strip, in which “a central character … goes through one adventure after another … persist[ing] for years in a state of refrigerated deathlessness” – both Kipling and Barrie arguably deprive their protagonists of a deeper sense of meaning or spirituality (Secular 186); while Christian, Tom the water-baby, and (to a certain extent) David Balfour are able to use religious instruction to guide them on their quests, Mowgli, Kim, and Peter are provided with no such moral compass. By severing the final connective thread between romance and religion in their work, Kipling and Barrie are ostensibly yielding to what Moretti refers to as “the pressure of cultural selection”: namely, the desire for entertaining, rather than instructive, children’s literature (72). In so doing, however, these authors enable the survival of quest-romance beyond its period of emergence in the mid-nineteenth century. By transforming the linear quest journey into a never-ending spiral, Kipling’s and Barrie’s recycling of romance anticipates the preoccupation with “endless” forms of the genre through sequels, prequels, and adaptation into the twenty-first century (Frye 186).163

163 Incidentally, both Kipling’s and Barrie’s writings have inspired a number of more recent sequels and prequels: Pamela Jekel returns Mowgli to the jungle in The Third Jungle Book (1993), while Geraldine McCaughrean’s sequel Peter Pan in Scarlet (2006) and the series of prequels penned by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, beginning with Peter and the Starcatchers (2004), expand on the story of Peter Pan and his adventures in Neverland.
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