‘Betwixt-and-Between’: Liminality in Golden Age Children’s Literature

by

Emma Hayes
BA(Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University
August, 2018
I am the author of the thesis entitled

‘Betwixt-and-Between’: Liminality in Golden Age Children’s Literature

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis may be made available for consultation, loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

'\textit{I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct}'

Full Name: 

(Please Print)

Signed: 

Date: 11/12/18
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify the following about the thesis entitled (10 word maximum)

“Betwixt-and-Between”: Liminality in Golden Age Children’s Literature

submitted for the degree of __Doctor of Philosophy_____________________

a. I am the creator of all or part of the whole work(s) (including content and layout) and that reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

b. The work(s) are not in any way a violation or infringement of any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

c. That if the work(s) have been commissioned, sponsored or supported by any organisation, I have fulfilled all of the obligations required by such contract or agreement.

d. That any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

e. All research integrity requirements have been complied with.

'I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct'

Full Name: ____________________________ (Please Print)

Signed: ________________________________

Date: 6/3/18

Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code 00113B

Signature Redacted by Library
Acknowledgements

I have been incredibly lucky to have had the support offered by many people throughout the process of completing this thesis. I am especially grateful to my Principal Supervisor, Professor David McCooey, for his invaluable insight, expertise, and unwavering support throughout this project. I would also like to thank my Associate Supervisor Dr Kristine Moruzi for her expertise throughout the final stages of my project. I would like to thank Associate Professor Cassandra Atherton, who offered me valuable insight into my project and guidance as my Associate Supervisor (and briefly as my Principal Supervisor) in the middle phase of my candidature. Dr Leonie Rutherford also offered me guidance in the early stages of this project in her role as Associate Supervisor.

I would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support I received in completing this project through an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship). I also received insight and encouragement as a member of the Children’s Literature HDR research group. I would like to thank the staff at the Deakin University Library, especially Marion Churkovich, Lorraine Driscoll and Angela Kirk, who assisted me in sourcing numerous texts. I would also like to thank Robyn Ficnerski who offered me invaluable support and assistance throughout my candidature.

Finally, as I feel I don’t have enough words to thank them, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. I am so very grateful for their endless love and encouragement, and I would never have been able to complete this project without their support. I would like to especially thank my brother Christian, who has been an endless source of love, support and laughter, and my Mum Sharon, not only for her unwavering love, care and support, but for introducing me to Golden Age texts in the first place.
List of Publications

Some of this material has appeared in earlier versions in the following publications:


Abstract

Golden Age Children’s Literature is characterised by its emphasis on ideas of liminality. J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) depicts its eponymous character as a ‘Betwixt-and-Between’ (17). This state of being betwixt-and-between is emblematic of many Golden Age children’s texts that thematise the liminal in myriad ways. In particular, depictions of liminal space – such as borders and thresholds – necessarily evoke liminal characterisation. Indeed, the ‘Betwixt-and-Between’ status of Peter Pan and numerous other Golden-Age protagonists finds its parallel in Victor Turner’s theory of the liminal. For Turner, liminal subjects are ‘neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial’ (95).

Turner asserts that the liminal is characterised by a ‘peculiar unity’: the ‘coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation … that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both’ (99). This thesis will discuss the significance attached to this ‘peculiar unity’, and its implications for Golden Age texts, by addressing five spatial domains: domestic spaces, domesticated natural spaces, pedagogical spaces, the British Empire and, finally, fantastic spaces. The thesis will demonstrate how the emphasis on liminality in each of the five spatial (and increasingly abstract) domains reflects social changes that occurred throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Contemporary anxieties become metonymized into representations of interstitial or contested space; and liminal characterisation functions as a means through which the texts negotiate uncertainties. For example, the Golden Age’s evocation of liminality highlights changing ideas of childhood: Marah Gubar reads Golden Age child protagonists (and child readers) as ‘artful collaborators’, rather than ‘prIMITIVE naïfs’ (6). This thesis contributes to the critical discourse on Golden Age Children’s Literature by explicitly highlighting the key role evocations of the liminal play in both representations of place and characterisation.
## Contents

**Introduction** ................................................................................................................................. 1

The Golden Age of Children’s Literature .......................................................................................... 4
Liminality in Golden Age Children’s Literature .............................................................................. 13
Place as a Thematisation of the Liminal ............................................................................................ 23

**Chapter One: Domestic Spaces** ....................................................................................................... 29

The Public and Private Home: *The Railway Children* ................................................................. 34
Interconnected Domestic and Public Space: *Anne of Green Gables* ............................................ 43
Re-establishing Primogeniture: *The Secret Garden* ...................................................................... 49

**Chapter Two: Domesticated Natural Spaces** .................................................................................. 58

The ‘Friend and Helper’: Representations of Pan in Edwardian texts for Children .............................. 62
‘Scope for imagination’: Natural Spaces in *Anne of Green Gables* ........................................... 71
Missel Moor and Liminality: *The Secret Garden* ........................................................................... 76
From the River Bank to the Wild Wood (and home again): *The Wind in the Willows* ............... 83

**Chapter Three: Pedagogical Spaces** ............................................................................................... 92

Dramatising the Liminal: Angela Brazil’s Girls’ School Stories .................................................... 99
School as Preparation for Empire: *Stalky & Co.* ........................................................................... 114

**Chapter Four: Empire** .................................................................................................................. 137

Mediated Liminality: *The Secret Garden* ....................................................................................... 142
Idealised Liminality: *Kim* ............................................................................................................... 154

**Chapter Five: Fantastic Spaces** .................................................................................................... 170

Fantastic Portals: The Psammead Trilogy and *Puck of Pook’s Hill* ............................................ 178
‘To die will be an awfully big adventure’: The Fantastic and Death........................................... 185

**Conclusion** .................................................................................................................................... 201

**References** .................................................................................................................................... 206
Introduction

After the eponymous Peter Pan flies from his home (13) in J. M. Barrie’s 1906 text *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, he is never the same again. Having left his mother and flown to Kensington Gardens after Lock-out Time (15), Peter soon realises that he is shunned by all of the other inhabitants of the gardens – such as fairies and birds (15) – and flies to the island in the Serpentine which is inaccessible to humans (16). As he consults the wise crow, Solomon Caw, Peter learns that he has become a “‘Betwixt-and-Between’” (17). Peter is neither a human nor a bird and must live on the inaccessible island until he is able to build a boat (23-7). Peter remains a “‘Betwixt-and-Between’” (17) for the rest of the text.

As a canonical work of children’s literature, Barrie’s text itself occupies a betwixt-and-between status: the text of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* comprises sections of Barrie’s earlier text for adults, *The Little White Bird* (1902), which were removed and published separately as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* in 1906 (Hollindale, xix). The alterations between the two editions were, as Peter Hollindale notes, ‘minor’ (xix), and largely consisted of removing references to earlier sections of *The Little White Bird* (xxix). This elision of difference between the adults’ and children’s text is significant: like its eponymous protagonist, the canonical children’s text of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* occupies an in-between status and resists easy classification as it exists betwixt-and-between adults’ and children’s literature.

This in-between status is emblematic of numerous Golden Age children’s texts. For example, Peter Hunt highlights this difficulty in categorising Golden Age children’s texts as he discusses Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). Hunt posits that ‘*The Wind in the Willows* may be the greatest case of mistaken identity in literature: it is commonly accepted as an animal story for children – despite being neither an animal story, nor for children’ (vii). It is by no means coincidental that both *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and *The Wind in the Willows*, which resist easy categorisation as children’s literature, were published in the Edwardian era, when ‘cross-writing for both readerships [adults and children] flourished’ (Gavin and Humphries, 2). Adrienne E. Gavin and Andrew F. Humphries note the centrality of childhood in the years spanning 1901-
1914 positing that ‘[d]espite Romanticism’s idealization of the child and Victorian advances in education, it was the Edwardians who truly made the child central to “childhood” and childhood central to the Zeitgeist’ (1). Importantly, Gavin and Humphries also connect this emphasis on childhood to literary production (1) and assert that the period saw a proliferation in texts published for (and about) children, ‘creating a diamond age of gorgeously illustrated gift books and a merging of child and adult readerships for the same texts’ (5). But while these particular Edwardian texts serve as especially notable examples, the Victorian era should not be ignored. Golden Age children’s texts more generally, including texts published in the late-Victorian era, can also be characterised in terms of their in-between status.

Peter Pan’s “Betwixt-and-Between” status is also evident in many of the other child characters featured in Golden Age texts, who often occupy interstitial categories. A number of Rudyard Kipling’s child protagonists provide notable examples. The eponymous character of Kipling’s *Kim* (1899) – another example of a text that resists easy categorisation as children’s literature – is characterised by his uncanny ability to shift identity with ease. Signifiers of Kim’s ““Betwixt-and-Between”” nature abound: Kim was born to Irish parents in colonial India under British rule; he speaks numerous languages and can adopt myriad disguises; and he is able to both spy on and impersonate the people he encounters. Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895) depict Mowgli the ‘man-cub’ (*Jungle Books* 16) eliding distinctions between wolf and human as he lives with the ‘Free People’ (17, my emphasis), but is also inescapably bound by the ‘Law of the Jungle’ (12, my emphasis). *Stalky & Co.* (1899) offers another example of Kipling’s emphasis on interstitial categories; as ““stalkiness”” (*Stalky & Co.* 13), with its implications of wiliness (*Stalky & Co.* 13), cunning and the deft manipulation of rules to suit one’s own agenda emerges as the eponymous Stalky’s defining quality. Such ““Betwixt-and-Between”” characterisation takes myriad forms in Golden Age texts: child characters are situated both physically and symbolically between the putative categories of ‘public’ and ‘private’; between binary markers of gender; between inside and outside; between the colonies and the metropole; between animal and human; between the real and the fantastic; and even between life and death.

However, it is through their explicit connection to theories of the liminal that repeated evocations of the ““Betwixt-and-Between”” in Golden Age children’s
texts become especially significant. As I discuss below, liminality refers to an anthropological concept popularised by Victor Turner, regarding the social and symbolic importance of the middle (or liminal), transitional stage of rites of passage in traditional societies. Just as Peter Pan (and his Golden Age contemporaries) are imbued with images of the “Betwixt-and-Between”, Turner importantly utilises the term ‘betwixt and between’ to discuss the liminal (Forest of Symbols 97, 110; Ritual Process 95).

Michael Joseph asserts that ‘[l]iminality describes the quality of being socially segregated, set apart and divested of status, and relates to associated characteristics and qualities: indeterminacy, ambiguity, selflessness, and becomingness’ (138). This quality is especially pertinent in discussions of childhood (as Joseph notes) as childhood itself is liminal. Liminal childhood is also central to literary studies: Joseph suggests that ‘literary children dismayingly breach boundaries, and in their passage into adulthood (Turner’s phrase), they symbolize both chaos and order, antistructure and structure’ (139). Indeed, the anthropologist Edith Turner (Victor Turner’s spouse and collaborator) also posits the centrality of the liminal in literary studies, noting (Victor) Turner’s indebtedness to literature as the foundation for some of his theories (163). Edith Turner importantly notes Turner’s identification of the liminal in Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, the Mary Poppins texts (167), works by Robert Louis Stevenson and Charles Kingsley (168), and ‘countless children’s stories with the theme of passage to adulthood’ (167). As I will discuss below, this thesis does not adopt a rigid Turnerian theorisation of the liminal in its interpretation of Golden Age texts – the settings of these texts differ markedly from the traditional societies Turner discusses – but instead utilises pertinent aspects of Turner’s theory to elaborate on the significance of repeated evocations of the betwixt-and-between.

The repeated evocations of liminal spaces (which necessarily advert to liminal characterisation) in Golden Age texts are profoundly significant in terms of our understanding of those texts. Consequently, each chapter of this thesis focuses in detail on five spatial (and increasingly abstract) domains: domestic space, domesticated natural spaces (such as gardens), pedagogical space, empire and, finally, fantastic spaces. Not surprisingly, given the inherent fluidity and ambiguity of the liminal condition, each of these spatial domains are marked by some form of anxiety associated with their attendant ideologies. The liminal spaces and
characterisation represented in Golden Age texts function as a means through which cultural anxieties are addressed, explored and, in many cases but not all, resolved. Just as the Turnerian liminal functions as a phase during which the liminal subject departs from structure and gains insight about the originary culture before returning to (uphold) structure once again, depictions of liminal space (and liminal characterisation) in Golden Age children’s literature act as virtual spaces in which various anxieties and problematics regarding particular spatial domains can be ‘played out’ in the relative safety of the ultimate liminal space of the text.

**The Golden Age of Children’s Literature**

In a thesis discussing the Golden Age of children’s literature, it is important to outline existing scholarship in the field. Roger Lancelyn Green utilised the term ‘Golden Age’ to discuss children’s texts in the 1962 issue of *Essays and Studies*. His article ‘The Golden Age of Children’s Books’ represents ‘an attempt to chart some of the more or less definite islands off a portion of the mainland of our more generally recognized literary heritage’ (36). However, it is worth noting that, as Peter Hunt asserts, Green’s article focuses largely on ‘biography and description’ (35). Angela Sorby notes that, since Green’s intervention, the term ‘Golden Age’ has ‘spread and morphed to become a designation of generic excellence’ (96).

Sorby posits that ‘[t]he first Golden Age of children’s literature began, more or less, with *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and ended with *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), although some would start earlier, with Catherine Sinclair’s *Holiday House* (1839), or end earlier, with *Peter Pan* (1911)’ (96). This thesis locates the Golden Age between the years of 1865, with the publication of Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and 1914, with the advent of the First World War. In discussing the Golden Age of children’s literature, it is important to note Humphrey Carpenter’s 1985 text *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature*. Carpenter’s biographical readings are largely reductive, attributing Golden Age literary production to authorial immaturity and a tendency to produce “‘escapist” literature, aimed ostensibly at children’ (19). Laura C. Stevenson asserts that ‘[Carpenter’s] heavily Freudian interpretations stop short of saying that there was
something sexually askew with all important children’s writers … He does, however, firmly attach their works for children to their “warped lives” (428).

It is important to note the print culture out of which the Golden Age of children’s literature emerged. The increased literary production and consumption that characterises this period did not emerge from a vacuum but was the result of economic and social factors. Laura C. Stevenson’s 2011 article “Literary Ladders in the Golden Age of Children’s Books” resists readings (like Carpenter’s) that attribute the existence of Golden Age children’s literature to authorial innocence or escapism. Instead, Stevenson attributes the advent of the ‘Golden Age’ to changing conditions in the late-Victorian literary marketplace: Stevenson posits that ‘[t]he literary marketplace in which [Golden Age authors] had to establish themselves was hardly one in which innocence could survive; it was changing with unprecedented speed determined by technological developments and a new generation of entrepreneurial editors’ (429).

These technological advances are particularly pertinent as Stevenson asserts that children’s texts emerged in response to the growing demands of a mass audience with increasingly high access to print culture (433). Stevenson notes that

Between 1850 and 1885 a combination of cheap paper, high-speed presses, inexpensive engraving, and the increasing literacy of an expanding population brought about an explosion of printed matter. Book production quadrupled, and so did the number of weekly, monthly, and quarterly magazines, which rose from 643 in 1875 to 2,531 in 1903, paralleled by a rise in newspapers from 1,609 in 1875 to 2,504 in 1914. During the late-Victorian era, readers of all social levels had regular access to literary and visual stimulation inconceivable to their grandparents. (430)

Stevenson posits that the Golden Age of children’s literature – which she proposes began in 1865 with Macmillan’s initial publication of Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and the publication of Kingsley’s The Water-Babies (1862)
single-volume form (439) – signalled a departure from the separate ‘ladder[s]’\textsuperscript{1} of adults’ and children’s fiction and awarded children’s literature (and its prevalent authors) a place in the literary mainstream.

While Stevenson’s discussion focuses chiefly on the technological and economic conditions that enabled the production of (Golden Age) children’s texts to flourish, Kimberley Reynolds highlights social factors that played a significant role in the production of children’s literature in the late-Victorian era, with a focus on readers’, as opposed to authors’ and publishers’, views of contemporary texts. While Reynolds’ *Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children’s Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910* (1990) doesn’t explicitly situate discussion of the increased literary production and consumption in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras in terms of a ‘Golden Age’, the text highlights significant cultural factors in the development of children’s literature. Reynolds places greater emphasis on the periodical press than Stevenson, citing the inaugural issues of the *Boy’s Own Paper* and the *Girl’s Own Paper* in 1897 and 1880 respectively as ‘confirmation of an established mass audience for juvenile publishing’ (xvi). While the term ‘Golden Age’ implies an emphasis on canonical texts (and, indeed, this thesis discusses canonical texts), it is also important to note the ubiquity of the periodical press in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Reynolds posits an inextricable relationship between changing educational policies in Britain and the widespread production of children’s texts. She asserts that

> The phenomenon which is juvenile fiction can largely be viewed as originating in Britain in the 1880s. The publication of children’s books and periodicals of late-Victorian and Edwardian England was essentially a new enterprise, arising in tandem with the educational reforms of 1870 and 1880, and the advent of new printing technology which made it possible to produce cheap books and periodicals on a large scale. (xv-xvi)

\[\textsuperscript{1}\] Stevenson engages with the metaphor of the separate ‘literary ladder[s]’ of adults’ and children’s literature outlined by Mrs Molesworth in the May 1893 issue of *Atlanta* (428).
The production of (chiefly inexpensive) popular reading material served a social function, disseminating ideologies pertaining to class differences, and enforcing hegemonic power structures, as literature intended for consumption by working-class child readers differed greatly from that intended for middle- and upper-class child readers. Reynolds asserts that these differences in reading material were informed by, and in turn reflected, class-based differences in models of education. While both working- and middle-class children received a ‘utilitarian’ (13) education, children of the upper classes ‘received a largely classical education’ (14). However, it is important to note that the ‘utilitarian’ education received by both working- and middle-class children differed in emphasis, as working-class children received an education that instilled lessons of ‘frugality’ and ‘obedience’ (13), and ‘insufficient knowledge of political economy to enable them to interfere in the decision-making of their masters’ (13); the curriculum intended for middle-class children ‘emphasis[ed] skills such as accountancy, which would be required by small businessmen’ (13).

While Reynolds notes that working-class literacy had initially represented a threat (8-9) to the social hierarchy, universal education and the attendant introduction of institutionalised language (17-18) served to mitigate this threat by entrenching linguistic hierarchies: the “‘natural” language of the working classes’ (17) differed from the ‘literary’ (18) language offered as part of the curriculum in secondary schools (18) frequented by the middle classes. Different models of literature reflecting these hierarchized distinctions developed (and, indeed, were marketed) in turn. Indeed, Reynolds states that ‘[t]he social pressures influencing the teaching of English divided readers into two categories: the elementary or concrete, and the cultured’ (20). Importantly, anxieties about a ‘literate working class’ were addressed by ‘policies which made it more attractive for publishers to provide low-status, popular fiction on a grand scale’ (20). Reynolds posits that this production of inexpensive, easily accessible reading material aimed at working-class child readers served a dual purpose: it enforced (social) passivity through

---

2 Needless to say the utilitarian, “‘natural” (18) language included in curriculums for working-class students also differed greatly from language featuring in the curriculum intended for upper-class students.
‘closely monitored’ reading material that did not challenge the existing social hierarchy, and produced texts with perceived lower literary merit to ‘reinforce the cultural superiority of those who condemned [them]’ (21).

However, while Reynolds discusses the presence of texts aimed at working-class child readers, she nevertheless situates children’s literature as a firmly middle-class phenomenon. Reynolds posits that ‘while there are stratifications within children’s literature … as a genre it has always been almost entirely middle class in subject matter and values’ (30). The middle-class nature of the genre of children’s literature reflects the predominant image of (middle-class) childhood. Reynolds writes that

A final, related, factor which contributed to the middle-class nature of juvenile publishing came from the dominant, bourgeois, notion of childhood being elaborated at the end of the nineteenth century. The need for a special literature for children could only be perceived when children were recognised as being different from adults … By the late nineteenth century, not only did a fully-formed middle- and upper-class notion of childhood exist, but surrounding it there had also evolved an idealised, highly sentimental aureole. (31)

Importantly, Gavin and Humphries assert that this idealised image of (middle-class) childhood continued in Edwardian texts, as ‘[t]he predominant textual portrayal of childhood is of middle-class children living generally pleasant lives’ (2-3). For Gavin and Humphries, the ‘tendency to idealize childhood’ (3) was a central tenet of the Edwardian era, with an unprecedented cultural emphasis placed on the figure of the child (1). As I will discuss below, changes in the perception of childhood (both in textual worlds and in the process of literary production), are emphasised in recent scholarship discussing Golden Age texts. The technological and social factors outlined above – changes in the literary marketplace, increased literacy, and an idealisation of (middle-class) childhood – converged to allow the advent of the Golden Age of children’s literature.

Marah Gubar’s 2009 text Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children’s Literature marks a significant intervention in studies of Golden Age children’s texts. Gubar resists the ‘critical commonplace that Golden Age
children’s authors latched onto and popularized the most sentimental and disabling strand of Romantic discourse about childhood’ (10). Significantly, Gubar challenges the perception of Golden Age child characters (and, by extension, child readers) as ‘primitive naïfs’ (6), instead reading them as ‘artful collaborators’ (6). Gubar asserts that classic Victorian and Edwardian children’s books do not represent young people as untouched Others, magically free from adult influence. On the contrary, they generally conceive of child characters and child readers as socially saturated beings, profoundly shaped by their culture, manners and morals of their time, precisely in order to explore the vexed issue of the child’s agency … Golden Age authors often take a strikingly nuanced position, acknowledging the pervasive and potentially coercive power of adult influence while nevertheless entertaining the possibility that children can be enabled and inspired by their inevitable inheritance. In doing so, they resist the Child of Nature paradigm, which holds that contact with civilized society is necessarily stifling, in favour of the idea that young people have the capacity to exploit and capitalize on the resources of adult culture (rather than simply being subjugated and oppressed). (4-5)

In resisting the ‘Romantic primitivism’ (4) that characterises some scholars’ assessments of Golden Age child protagonists, Gubar’s reading of Golden Age texts suggests that child protagonists (and other child characters) are able to exercise autonomy and benefit from their contact with adult culture.

Like Gubar’s *Artful Dodgers*, Victoria Ford Smith’s *Between Generations: Collaborative Authorship in the Golden Age of Children’s Literature* (2017) also addresses questions of children’s agency while highlighting the collaborative nature of literary production. While Gubar reads child characters as ‘canny’ collaborators (5) rather than ‘primitive naïfs’ (6), Ford Smith reads children as

---

3 Gubar’s discussion of children’s theatre in chapters five and six of *Artful Dodgers*, and her references to the subjects of Lewis Carroll’s photography, provide exceptions in which she discusses the position of “real” children. Ford Smith acknowledges her indebtedness to Gubar’s discussion in general (16), but in particular, to her discussion of children’s theatre (16-18).
literal (and oft-neglected) collaborators in the production of Golden Age texts. Ford Smith highlights the many child collaborators in works by authors such as Robert Browning (3-6) and J. M. Barrie, and posits that Adults’ partnerships with young writers, illustrators, and co-conspirators reveal that the agentic, creative child was not only a figure but also an actor, vital to authorial practice; the texts that adult writers produced with children, and their accounts of working with young people, revised models of childhood and authorship in material as well as figurative ways. (8)

Rather than a passive consumer of texts produced by adults, the child is, for Ford Smith, a significant collaborator in their production. Through a close examination of Golden Age texts and their accompanying ‘composition narratives’ (21), which detail the creative process of literary production, Ford Smith highlights the seminal role child collaborators play in ‘fictive, real, and hybrid partnerships’ (22). Child collaborators exist in ‘fictive’ (22) partnerships with adult producers of literature as they appear in texts as listeners who nevertheless function as ‘active participants in narrated tales’ (22). They also appear in ‘real’ (22) partnerships with adults as children and adults co-author myriad works (23) (although, as Ford Smith notes, ‘[c]ommon definitions of professional authorship often exclude children or elide their participation’ (21)), or as children annotate, extend or develop existing (adult) works (23). Finally, children and adults appear in ‘hybrid’ (23) collaborations – which form the ‘true center’ (23) of Ford Smith’s project – in which adult authors fictionalise their relationships with child collaborators. (Ford Smith posits Barrie’s relationship with the Llewellyn Davies brothers as a ‘canonical’ example of such hybrid collaborations (24).) Ford Smith states that

---

4 For a more detailed discussion of Robert Browning’s collaboration with Willie Macready, who was ten years old when he instigated contact with Browning (3), please see ‘Introduction: A Child’s Story’ in Between Generations (pp. 3-36).
I reject the critical commonplace that adults alone define the limits of child autonomy through myopic, idealized constructs of childhood while real young people, hobbled by passivity and powerlessness, are incapable of creative agency. Instead, I take seriously the contributions of childhood collaborators, whose participation in nineteenth-century literature and culture is palpable, profound, and often exercised in creative partnerships with adults. (20)

*Between Generations* extends Gubar’s discussion of children as collaborators with adults *within* Golden Age texts and embarks on the project of unearthing children’s hidden role in literary production. Both Marah Gubar’s and Ford Smith’s texts represent two recent interventions in the field of Golden Age children’s literature that highlight the continued significance of Golden Age texts. In their discussion of the complexities associated with the relationships between adults and children both within the text and in the process of literary production, these texts also advert to the inherently liminal nature of Golden Age children’s literature. Children (and adults) occupy a “‘Betwixt-and-Between’” status.

In a thesis discussing children’s texts (and especially in a thesis that borrows part of its title from Barrie’s eponymous Peter Pan) it is also important to discuss Jacqueline Rose’s seminal text *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction* (1984). *The Case of Peter Pan* posits a relationship between adults and children that is characterised by a fundamental power imbalance. According to Rose, adults produce an image of childhood within texts in order to influence a child reader who is, quite literally, subject to what they read: ‘[i]f children’s fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp’ (2). Rose discusses J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* texts as a seminal example of this adult/child relationship in which children are represented, and hence shaped, to meet adult ends. As Marah Gubar asserts, *The Case of Peter Pan* addresses ‘the complex issues raised by a literary genre whose recipients inhabit a less powerful subject position than its practitioners’ (29).

Ford Smith posits that Rose’s premise has become a critical commonplace (9-10): notably, Perry Nodelman’s influential 1992 article “The Other:
Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children’s Literature” extends Rose’s ‘premise that children’s literature is a form of colonization’ (Nodelman 29) and meticulously highlights ‘parallels’ between Edward W. Said’s Orientalism and ‘our representations of childhood in both child psychology and children’s literature’ (29). Importantly, Nodelman notes an ‘[i]nherent [d]istortion’ akin to that outlined in Said’s Orientalism (1978) in the way ‘we’ (adults) represent childhood. Nodelman claims that ‘[n]o matter what claims we make to the contrary, our supposedly objective descriptions of childhood are equally anything but objective and are similarly permeated with assumptions developed over a number of centuries by a history of adult observation and discussion’ (30). As Clare Bradford discusses, Nodelman ‘converts [Said’s] analogy into a model of child-adult relations, constructing “children” as a dehistoricized and homogenized category’ (7). Under Nodelman’s model, children notably become inherently inferior, are feminised (29), are viewed through a distorted gaze⁶ (30), are inescapably “childlike”⁷, are dominated, and, in functioning as the binary opposite of adulthood, serve to define it: ‘[w]e need children to be childlike so that we can understand what maturity is – the opposite of being childlike’ (32). However, Bradford posits one significant difference between Said’s Orientalism and Nodelman’s mobilisation of Said’s thesis: while ‘children are always seen as occupying a state or stage that will lead to adulthood … Orientals never transmute into Orientalists and are thus always and inescapably inferior’ (7).

In charting the progression of Rose’s premise, it is important to discuss Ford Smith’s intervention in the field, in which she challenges the prevalence of Rose’s contention. Ford Smith posits that, in Rose’s work, ‘the fictional child and the real child often seem to collapse into one another; both are idealized, eroticized, and slippery constructs, products of an adult imagination characterized as anxious

---

⁶ Nodelman asserts that

The paradox is that we can claim objectivity for our observations only by being other than what we observe; but in being other, we have no choice but to interpret what we observe in terms of ourselves and own previously established assumptions. (30)

⁷ ‘Contemporary children’s literature is filled with images of childhood experience that accord more with Wordsworth’s visions of idyllic childhood innocence than with the realities of modern children’s lives’ (Nodelman 31).
at best and malevolent at worst’ (9). Ford Smith challenges a tendency in scholarship, which she attributes to Rose’s discussion of adult desire in *The Case of Peter Pan*, to avoid discussing ‘real’ children and exercise an almost exclusive focus on locating ‘evidence of adults’ ideologies in texts written for young people’ (10). Ford Smith instead advocates for the practice of considering how the literary child ‘might exist alongside, or in conversation with, the lived experiences of real children’ in order to address ‘significant blind spots in the field’ (11). While this thesis does not address ‘real children’ (Ford Smith 11), it seeks to explore the way in which adult authors utilised the recurrent trope of the liminal – both in the form of liminal child characters and representations of liminal space – to address and resolve anxieties inherent in contemporary culture. In doing so, this thesis does not seek to discuss how literary representations of children seek to resolve adults’ anxieties about childhood per se, but rather seeks to discuss how contemporary anxieties are metonymized into literary representations of (liminal) childhood. While this might once again be suggestive of an attempt to ‘to secure the child who is outside the book’ (Rose 2) by appropriating the child for the purpose of mitigating adult anxieties, the myriad representations of childhood in Golden Age children’s texts suggest that children occupy a privileged (and, as both Gubar and Ford Smith assert) liminal position within late-Victorian and Edwardian texts.

**Liminality in Golden Age Children’s Literature**

As I noted above, liminality (broadly speaking) refers to the experience of being ‘betwixt and between’. Importantly, liminality does not refer to a ‘state’ – such as a ‘liminal state’ – as the liminal exists, according to Turner’s definition, *between* states (*Forest of Symbols* 94). Liminality has featured in various studies of children’s literature: Joseph asserts that use of the term appeared frequently in conjunction with discussions of adolescence in the 1990s (138) and with ‘representations of childhood, children, and child culture’ more generally after 2000 (139). Joseph highlights how use of the term has developed beyond its anthropological provenance to become a key concept in literary studies:
The adjective “liminal” appeared [in children’s literature criticism] with greater innovation and richness of use, generally indicating “in between,” “bounded,” or “hybrid.” “Liminal space” emerged as a flexible concept in which space can refer (extensively) to literary time/space or to something more abstract: For example, Hogwarts and Crusoe’s island are both liminal spaces because they are projected outside of society and symbolize a borderland through which the protagonist or the community of liminal beings, “the *communitas*,” passes to reenter structure (Turner 1969). On the other hand, liminal space can also be used (intensively) to signify an interior state – a projection of creative power, a metaphor for the imagination. (139)

The liminal offers a useful means through which to analyse the myriad representations of ‘betwixt-and-between’ places and characterisation in Golden Age texts. While, as I will discuss below, the liminal refers to an experience of being physically or symbolically removed from the (social) structure, it nevertheless serves, as Turner suggests, to *maintain* the wider (social) structure. This becomes especially significant in Golden Age children’s literature, as texts in which child characters are ostensibly removed from their normal physical space and social milieu nevertheless advert to the dominant ideologies associated with each of the spatial domains this thesis discusses.

Victor Turner outlines his (first) theorisation of the liminal in “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*”, which appears in the 1967 text *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Turner elaborates on the

---

8 Just as Joseph (139) highlighted in regard to the use of the term “liminality” in children’s literature scholarship, Dara Downey, Ian Kinane and Elizabeth Parker note that “liminality” has been used ‘as a sweeping term in academic parlance’ (3) with little regard for its anthropological provenance. Downey et al cite the universal applicability of liminality as a key tenet of its popularity (3), but also note its misapplication across a number of disciplines (3-6). However, Downey et al also note the inherent difficulty in their attempts to clarify the term, as they note that ‘what we are objecting to and in turn advocating for is admittedly paradoxical: a more cohesive approach to the discursive rhetoric of liminality, which is, in itself, defined as a condition lacking in cohesion’ (4). Downey et al propose a return to theories of the liminal as popularised by van Gennep and Turner.

9 As the title of the text suggests, Turner’s discussion in “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*” primarily focuses on Ndembu rites of passage. However, Turner importantly posits the universality of the liminal in his essay, as he notably compares the strong kinship bonds that form between liminal subjects (who Turner often characterises as ‘neophytes’ (*Forest of Symbols* 98)) – even if they are from disparate backgrounds – to bonds formed through experiences.
importance Arnold van Gennep attributes to the ‘transitional period’ (Kimball ix) in rites of passage. Arnold van Gennep’s seminal 1908 text The Rites of Passage (Les rites de passage) notably analyses ‘ceremonies accompanying an individual’s “life crises”’ (vii). Solon T. Kimball notes that ‘[van Gennep] pointed out that, when the activities associated with such ceremonies were examined in terms of their order and content, it was possible to distinguish three major phases: separation (séparation), transition (marge), and incorporation (agrégation). Considered as a whole, he labeled these the schéma of rites de passage’ (vii). These ‘rites de passage’/‘rites of passage’ (Kimball vii) inform Turner’s theory of the liminal, as Turner elaborates on van Gennep’s terminology: van Gennep posits that ‘a complete scheme of rites of passage’ (11) often includes (but doesn’t always include) ‘preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)’ (11).

Turner develops van Gennep’s concept of liminal rites (Forest of Symbols 94) but places special emphasis on the ‘margin (or limen, signifying “threshold” in Latin)’ (Ritual Process 94). Turner discusses the ‘intervening “liminal” period, [in which] the characteristics of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state’ (Ritual Process 94). This liminal period is symbolically significant, both in terms of the cultural emphasis placed on the rites of passage Turner

such as joining a sorority or fraternity, or joining a ‘Naval or Military Academy’ (Forest of Symbols 101).
identifies in traditional societies, but also because of the use of symbolism associated with the liminal:

[undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns. It is interesting to note how, by the principle of economy (or parsimony) of symbolic reference, logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens … This coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both. (Forest of Symbols 99)

Turner elaborates on this symbolism to highlight that liminal subjects are often presented as being or possessing nothing (Forest of Symbols 98-9; Ritual Process 95): ‘neophytes’ are often not gendered; they have ‘no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, [or] kinship position’ (Forest of Symbols 98). Turner notes that

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (Ritual Process 95)

These aspects of liminality that are particular to rituals in traditional societies can be extended to advert to the fact liminality signifies an uncertain experience, in which the normal mores associated with a given culture no longer apply. (Although it must be noted that the experience of the Turnerian liminal carries its own mores;
for example, neophytes must display complete submission to their instructors and ‘accept arbitrary punishment without complaint’ (*Ritual Process* 95). The liminal broadly signifies a temporary removal of social structure, a trope that enables analysis of both phenomenological and sociological interstices in Golden Age texts.

Before moving on to discuss the significance of Turner’s liminal *process* in more detail, it is important to note that at times, the state of uncertainty posed by liminal beings undergoing rites of passage can be ‘polluting’ (*Forest of Symbols* 97). Turner adopts Mary Douglas’s assertion that ‘[t]he unclear is the unclean’ (*Forest of Symbols* 97). Consequently, liminal subjects, characterised as they are by uncertainty, become symbolically polluted. Turner notes that ‘liminal *personae* nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting to those who have never been, so to speak, “inoculated” against them, through having been themselves initiated into the same state’ (*Forest of Symbols* 97). Liminal individuals may be physically or symbolically hidden (through disguise; or the use of masks or costumes) because they ‘have physical but not social “reality”’, and ‘it is a paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there!’ (*Forest of Symbols* 98).

I assert that the overarching idea associated with this notion of pollution in the liminal is that the liminal *can*, as Turner demonstrates, be problematised. In a broad sense, the lack of definition associated with the liminal – both in liminal individuals and, by extension, liminal space such as literal and metaphorical thresholds, and even colonies – can become cause for anxiety. As I will discuss in more detail throughout this thesis, such anxieties pertaining to the liminal become significant. Liminality is, at times, presented as a problematic phase, or signifies a troubling identity, which a text’s ideologies suggest must be resolved. For example, chapter one discusses the way in which Colin Craven from Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911) is cured of the malaise that symbolically connects him to images of (hysterical) femininity so that he may become the rightful heir of Misselthwaite Manor at the text’s close. Colin’s illness, with its attendant implications of femininity, represents a problematic liminality. (In light of the discussion that will follow, it is also worth noting that Colin’s cure signifies a return to, and a reinforcement of, the existing social structure.)

Turner’s liminality fundamentally outlines the process of a departure from, and a return to, the originary social structure. The liminal functions as a phase
during which the liminal subject may reflect upon aspects of the culture from which they have (physically or symbolically) departed as part of the liminal process. For example, Turner elaborates on the symbolism associated with the liminal in traditional societies, which prompts neophytes to reflect on aspects of the originary culture: Turner discusses the significance of symbolism associated with *sacra* (*Forest of Symbols* 102) in prompting neophytes to consider in depth myriad aspects of their culture. Notably, Turner discusses monsters, which provide insight about culture:

Much of the grotesqueness and monstrosity of liminal *sacra* may be seen to be aimed not so much at terrorizing or bemusing neophytes into submission or out of their wits as at making them vividly and rapidly aware of what may be called the “factors” of their culture … Monsters startle neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted. (*Forest of Symbols* 105)

This emphasis on prompting neophytes, or liminal beings, to think about their culture during their symbolic departure from social structure also prompts them to adopt dominant mores. For example, the Turner notes the way in which a song that Bemba women sing communicates ‘the deeper moral that to abide by tribal custom and not to sin against it either by excess or defect is to live satisfactorily’ (*Forest of Symbols* 104). In a broader sense the experience of departing from structure and experiencing a different physical, social or temporal reality reinforces the original structure, to which an individual will later return. Edward W. Said elaborates on this in *Culture and Imperialism*:

According to Turner, societies can be neither rigidly run by ‘structures’ nor completely overrun by marginal, prophetic, and alienated figures, hippies or millenarians; there has to be alternation, so that the sway of one is enhanced or tempered by the inspiration of the other. The liminal *figure* helps to maintain societies. (170)
As I noted above, this idea of the liminal ‘maintain[ing] societies’ (Said, *Culture* 170), or reinforcing the dominant social structure, becomes evident in Golden Age children’s texts in which the liminal is problematised, and later resolved. As the discussion of Kipling’s *Kim* in chapter four demonstrates, however, this resolution is not always complete. To use *The Secret Garden* as an example once again, this tendency of problematising and resolving the liminal becomes evident in the text’s ideologies pertaining to domestic space, as I discussed above, but also in its treatment of Mary Lennox’s and Colin’s symbolic links to the colonies. As chapter four outlines, *The Secret Garden* suggests that Mary’s and Colin’s symbolic links to India, which suggest a colonial liminality, must be eradicated in order for them to achieve health and happiness at the text’s close.

It is important to note the significance of *communitas* in Turner’s liminal theory. Once again Turner adopts a Latin term (*Ritual Process* 96) to discuss ‘an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society’ (*Ritual Process* 97). Communitas is experienced among individuals who enter the liminal phase together (*Ritual Process* 96), and Turner asserts that ‘[a]mong themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism’ (*Ritual Process* 95). The experience of communitas highlights essential bonds:

> To put it briefly, at certain life crises, such as adolescence, the attainment of elderhood, and death, varying in significance from culture to culture, the passage from one structural status to another may be accompanied by a strong sentiment of “humankindness,” a sense of the generic social bond between all members of society – even in some cases transcending tribal or national boundaries – regardless of their subgroup affiliations or incumbency of structural positions. (Turner, *Ritual Process* 116)

The experience of communitas is not unique to liminality (*Ritual Process* 109): Turner cites the significance of the court jester (*Ritual Process* 109), myriad figures in folk literature and even the “‘mysterious’ stranger” in the “the traditional “Western”” (*Ritual Process* 110) as examples of marginalised figures both in life and literature who ‘symbolize the moral values of communitas as against the coercive power of supreme political rulers’ (*Ritual Process* 110). According to
Turner, the myriad figures who experience communitas share common attributes: ‘they are persons or principles that (1) fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs’ (Ritual Process 125). Turner posits a repeated depiction of ‘the structurally inferior as the morally and ritually superior, and secular weakness as sacred power’ (Ritual Process 125). Through the experience of communitas, the inferior may exercise power over the (usually) superior.

However, while communitas appears to grant power to the ‘structurally inferior’ (Ritual Process 125), it is important to note the relationship between communitas and structure. Communitas allows certain freedoms – for example, a court jester may ridicule their structural superiors (Ritual Process 109-110) – but in the process reinforces structure. Turner posits that ‘the collective dimensions, communitas and structure, are to be found at all stages and levels of culture and society’ (Ritual Process 113). It is useful to note Turner’s discussion of structure. As Turner amalgamates myriad definitions of structure, he notes that ‘[m]ost definitions contain the notion of an arrangement of positions or statuses … [and] the institutionalization and perdurance of groups and relationships … All share in common the notion of a superorganic arrangement of parts or positions that continues, with modifications more or less gradual, through time’ (Ritual Process 126). Turner notes that ‘communitas is made evident or accessible … only through its juxtaposition to, or hybridization with, aspects of social structure’ (Ritual Process 127).

Communitas exists in a dialectical relationship with structure (Ritual Process 129) and is pivotal to (but as I noted above, not limited to) the liminal process: Turner states that ‘in rites of passage men are released from structure into communitas only to return to structure revitalized by their experience of communitas. What is certain is that no society can function adequately without this dialectic’ (Ritual Process 129). Once again, The Secret Garden offers a pertinent example of the way in which this operates in Golden Age children’s texts as it depicts social bonds resembling communitas. As Colin works in the eponymous secret garden with his cousin Mary and Dickon Sowerby (who lives in a cottage on the moor near Misselthwaite Manor, to which Colin is heir), many (but not all) hierarchical distinctions are elided. Colin gains health through working in the garden alongside Mary and Dickon, and as chapter one demonstrates, the
experience of communitas allows the *structure* of primogeniture to be reinforced at the close of the text. Just as the liminal phase encompasses communitas, Turner demonstrates that communitas is inherently liminal: ‘[c]ommunitas breaks in through the *interstices* of structure, in liminality; at the *edges* of structure, in marginality; and from *beneath* structure, in inferiority’ (*Ritual Process* 128, my emphasis).

Before moving on to a brief discussion of the way in which the liminal has been utilised (both explicitly and implicitly) in discussions of Golden Age children’s literature in particular\(^\text{10}\), it is important to address the distinction between the liminal and liminoid. Unlike the liminal, the liminoid is not explicitly associated with ritual, and does not involve the resolution of crises:

Turner coins the neologism “liminoid” to refer to experiences within modernity that are not ritualistic per se, but are quasi-ritualistic events associated with leisure, such as attending a theatrical or sporting event. While the liminoid is also “associated with marginality” (St John 9), the term refers primarily to experiences of entertainment or play, rather than rites of passage. As Turner writes, “One *works* at the liminal, one *plays* with the liminoid” (*From Ritual to Theatre* 55). However, in both traditional rituals and modern events, there is a temporary suspension of normal social structures. Whether “liminal” or “liminoid,” such moments are intense and impermanent. (McCooey and Hayes, 47)

While this thesis could be said to engage with the liminoid rather than the liminal, as it discusses (comparatively) modern texts in which representations of the liminal are not explicitly ritualistic, the liminal’s emphasis on the resolution of crises (or, as I assert, anxieties) is pertinent to my project (and, as I noted above, the emphasis on maturation in theories of the liminal is pertinent to children’s literature in

\(^{10}\) It is outside the scope of this Introduction to discuss the application of theories of the liminal to children’s literature in general, but it is worth noting that Melanie Otto utilises liminal theory to discuss Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* (2006). For more detail, please see Otto’s entry “Figures in a Foreign Landscape: Aspects of Liminality in Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*” in *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place*, Edited by Dara Downey, Ian Kinane and Elizabeth Parker, pp. 137-51 (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).
general). As I will discuss below, a number of scholars have utilised the liminal (both in implicit and explicit ways) to discuss children’s texts.

John McBratney’s *Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space: Rudyard Kipling’s Fiction of the Native-Born* (2002) explicitly utilises liminality to theorise the idealised position of the ‘liminal figure’ (xiii) of ‘the white creole – or as Kipling calls him, the “native-born”’ (xiv). As I will discuss in more detail in chapter four, McBratney posits the special ability of the liminal native-born to perform as ‘model imperial servant and ideal imperial citizen’ (xxi). For McBratney, Kipling’s liminal subjects are most able to effectively navigate and negotiate the liminal space of the British Empire. However, while McBratney explicitly utilises the liminal to discuss Kipling’s texts, the liminal is also implicit in other key texts discussing late-Victorian and Edwardian children’s literature.

Notably, Sally Mitchell’s *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England, 1880-1915* (1995) posits the existence of a ‘provisional free space’ (3) in which girls were granted new freedoms. Mitchell posits that a number of social changes, such as compulsory (or increased) education and more varied work opportunities for working- and middle-class girls alike (3), granted girls the opportunity to (physically or symbolically) depart from the family home and enter ‘a separate culture’ (3) of girlhood. Such a transition meant that ‘girls had some period of transition between “child at home” and the assumption of wholly adult responsibilities’ (3). The ‘provisional free space’ of girlhood Mitchell posits is inherently liminal, existing between two (social) structures in which girls are allowed greater freedoms than those sanctioned under normal social conditions: Mitchell notes that ‘[g]irlhood, in its archetypal form, is bounded on each side by home: by parental home on one side, by marital home on the other’ (9). While ‘the space between the two family homes’ (9) represents the (physiological and sociological) liminal realm to which the girl may travel, the home represents the structure to which the girl must return. The liminal is also implicit in Ford Smith’s discussion of ‘composition narratives’, which comprise ‘assemblages of documents that detail authors’ creative processes’ (21). These composition narratives outline creative partnerships between adult and child authors that evoke communitas, as they ‘reveal varied formations of intergenerational collaboration’ (21). Ford Smith posits that ‘composition narratives are *threshold textual spaces*, mediating between authors’ experiences in crafting a text and the formal publishing
conventions – such as title pages, reviews, and advertisements – that usually declare sole authorship’ (21, my emphasis). As these examples of scholarship suggest, liminality offers a valuable lens through which to view the myriad evocations of the ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner, *Ritual Process* 95) in Golden Age texts.

**Place as a Thematisation of the Liminal**

Spatial imagery abounds in Golden Age children’s texts. Michael Joseph attests to the importance of place imagery in Golden Age texts as he states that ‘[o]ne can begin to appreciate the broadly pervasive importance of liminal space to children’s literature by noting its iteration in the titles of canonical texts: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56)’ (139). This emphasis on representations of place continues throughout Golden Age texts: notably, Barrie’s *Peter Pan* texts evoke Neverland and L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* sees Anne name significant places such as ‘the Lake of Shining Waters’ and ‘the White Way of Delight’. The eponymous garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* is, as Madelon S. Gohlke asserts, the ‘symbolic center’ (895) of the text, and is so pervasive that at times it seems to function as an ‘agentic character in its own right’ (Morgan 81).

As the five chapters of this thesis, which focus on increasingly abstract spatial domains, suggest, spatial imagery is seminal to Golden Age children’s literature. However, liminal space becomes especially important in Golden Age texts as characters traverse literal and figurative thresholds. These thresholds are both real, such as the window through which Anne Shirley gazes in *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), and fantastic: notably, Nesbit’s Psammead Trilogy sees child characters traversing both physical and temporal boundaries, and Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) sees Dan and Una travel through a liminal portal to different temporal domains. Thresholds are both concrete and abstract (the British Empire forms a notable example of abstract space that is addressed in numerous texts), and they carry significant ideological freight. Importantly, the numerous liminal spaces featured in Golden Age texts advert to liminal characterisation: as child characters
traverse liminal spaces they are imbued with liminal attributes, and liminal child characters imbue myriad spaces with liminal attributes in turn.

Maria Sachiko Cecire, Hannah Field, Kavita Mudan Finn and Malini Roy posit that privileged access to designated childhood spaces is a common feature of children’s texts. Cecire et al note that ‘[a] recurring characteristic of canonical children’s literature in English is the designation of special spaces of childhood into which only children may pass. The frequency of these locations in beloved works for young people is a testament to the way in which childhood itself is often seen as a world apart, with its own logic and landmarks to distinguish it from adult reality’ (1). Cecire et al also read spatial imagery in direct parallel with children’s position in the world: they posit that ‘[i]n an environment typically built for larger adults, the child’s place in the world is frequently as the smaller, usually weaker Other to the adult norm. Given this, it is no wonder that so many works of children’s literature suggest alternate spheres in which the child’s size, strength, and power is far greater than in reality’ (3). These alternations in size and strength are evocative of the liminal, as they suggest the interplay between disparate states.

However, this thesis is specifically concerned with liminal space and its attendant ideologies. As I have noted above, interstitial spaces are a defining feature of Golden Age texts: Peter Pan’s Neverland, the secret garden, the constant depictions of border transgressions surrounding ‘The Coll’ Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk attend in *Stalky & Co.*, and the contested site of the British Empire all form notable examples. Robert T. Tally Jr. posits that ‘[l]iminality signifies a threshold between two zones, an anteroom distinct from that which could be said to be definitely inside or outside, here and there’ (xii). For Tally, the site of the liminal also becomes a site of potentiality, as ‘one who is located in the space of the liminal must ever be attuned to the presence of adverse of conflicting possibilities’ (xii). However, Tally also notes the ‘neutrality’ associated with liminal space, and notes this as ‘an aspect that confirms its connection with utopia’ (xii).

The reading of place in this thesis is indebted to, but not exclusively reliant upon, insights from the field of human geography. Human geography offers a

---

11 For a more detailed discussion of the interplay between ideas of “big” and “small” in children’s culture, see Lynne Vallone’s *Big and Small: A Cultural History of Extraordinary Bodies* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2017).
pertinent theoretical framework because of its emphasis on the way in which humans inscribe meaning on space and place. Human geography looks beyond divisions of landscape, or the arbitrary lines on a map, and examines the way in which humans impose meaning on the spaces and places they inhabit. As the title of the human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) indicates, Tuan emphasises the experiential nature of space and place. Tuan asserts that ‘Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other’ (3). In discussing ‘space’ and ‘place’, it is important to differentiate between the two terms, although Tuan nevertheless emphasises their interconnectivity:

In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. “Space” is more abstract than “place.” What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities of space. The ideas “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

Dara Downey, Ian Kinane and Elizabeth Parker highlight the interplay between ideas of place and space as they note that ‘[w]ithin the conceptual framework of human geography, place embodies a sense of human familiarity and is seen, broadly, as either comforting or restrictive – or both. Space, on the other hand, is representative of geographical uncertainty and those areas which are unknown; it may be “read” in similarly internally contradictory terms – that is, as either liberating and/or threatening’ (2). Spaces and places embody a multiplicity of meanings, which are inscribed upon them by the characters who inhabit them: indeed, Downey et al assert that ‘human conceptions of place and space may be dependent on the relationships between real and imagined topographies or
spatialities – between the geophysical environment and the human cognition or interpretation of that environment’ (2).

Rudyard Kipling’s Kim offers an example of how the differentiation between space and place can be mapped onto Golden Age texts. The space(s) in which the text is set – the plains, the mountains, Lahore, Umballa – become inscribed with meaning through the machinations of the Great Game and the Search for the River of the Arrow, and embody ideas of place. These spaces become places as their status as contested sites inscribes them with meaning. The setting of Kim also offers an example of how the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’ can be conflated: the imperial space of the frontier also functions as the place in which ownership of space is negotiated. The arbitrary lines denoting territory transform from spaces to places through the meaning inscribed upon them as part of the Great Game. The River of the Arrow also functions as a pertinent example of place (as opposed to space) in Kim, as the Lama finds new meaning in a river he has visited numerous times before throughout the course of his Search. The space of the river near the Maharane’s house becomes the place of the lama’s search – the River of the Arrow – when the lama inscribes new meaning upon it and achieves enlightenment (240).

However, this thesis is principally concerned with evocations of liminal space. Downey, Kinane and Parker assert that ‘[l]iminal spaces are those which are, simultaneously, place and space. They are familiar, yet unknown; they are secure, and yet intimidating … [liminal spaces are] those which exist between space and place’ (3). While the term ‘liminal spaces’ may seem contradictory, given that the liminal exists ‘between space and place’ (Downey et al 3) and therefore does not constitute a space in itself, I am following Downey, Kinane and Parker’s use of the term in this thesis. While the concept of liminal space adverts to ideas of spacelessness and placelessness, liminal space paradoxically forms a space/place that is at once removed from, and inextricably connected to, wider geographical and social space. Importantly, Downey et al note the geographical and social conditions in the period immediately following the Golden Age (after the First and Second World Wars) in which ‘[t]he decline of British colonial occupation in many of its former colonies and the rise of a new, critical postcolonial discourse further complicated conversations about land ownership, entitlement, and geographical heritage’ (10). Downey et al argue that these changes necessarily led to alterations
in the conceptions of space and place: ‘[t]o speak of space was thus to speak of how space was occupied – and by whom – and the ways in which space in turn affected and determined the behaviour of those who occupied it, passed through it, and interacted with it’ (10). This thesis similarly reads liminal space in terms of the child characters who occupy it. These characters exist in constant interaction with liminal space as they are both imbued with liminal qualities through occupying interstitial categories and render defined spaces liminal through liminal characterisation.

As the structure of this thesis suggests, the liminal can be found in a number of spatial domains. Chapter one demonstrates the liminal child’s privileged ability to traverse the ostensibly private domain of the home. Liminal children negotiate the ideologies surrounding (private) domestic space in E. Nesbit’s *The Railway Children* (1906), which sees the protagonist siblings Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis leave their London home to live in the country following their father’s mysterious departure. *The Railway Children* sees the intervention of the public rupture in the middle-class home, but Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis consistently violate the division between private and public, symbolically opening their country home to public view, and by imbuing the eponymous (liminal) railway with notions of the domestic. L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) also examines the interplay between notions of public and private as the orphan Anne Shirley traverses various liminal spaces at Green Gables. Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911) offers a pertinent example of the way in which the liminal can be problematised, as Mary embarks on the project of preparing her cousin Colin Craven to adopt an appropriate form of masculinity that will allow him to function as an effective master of Misselthwaite Manor. Importantly, the domestic spaces discussed in chapter one of this thesis are characterised by a return to structure: notably, (middle-class) privacy is restored at the close of *The Railway Children*, and the structure of primogeniture is restored at the end of *The Secret Garden*.

Chapter two, which discusses domesticated natural spaces, demonstrates the way in which the repeated trope of the pastoral evokes the liminal. The pastoral is, as its characteristics of retreat and return suggest, an inherently liminal genre. The texts discussed in this chapter mobilise the tropes of liminality and the pastoral in order to allow space to symbolically delineate and resolve ideas. This chapter discusses evocations of Pan in three key Edwardian texts that engage with ideas of
childhood: J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904, 1906), Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*. This chapter also discusses the way in which the eponymous character of *Anne of Green Gables* renders the domesticated natural spaces problematically liminal through imaginative investment in the landscape. The chapter ends with a discussion of the way in which *The Wind in the Willows* elaborates on the theme of retreat and return that is inherent in the pastoral.

Chapter three, which discusses pedagogical spaces, highlights a gendered difference in the way in which liminality is treated in the school (which is, in itself, a liminal space). This chapter discusses Angela Brazil’s *The Fortunes of Philippa* (1906) and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* (1912), and Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* (1899). While the girls’ school stories engage in the project of mediating or tempering characters’ liminal qualities, *Stalky & Co.* elaborates on the efficacy of liminal “’stalkiness’” (Kipling 13) as a means through which boys may learn to function as effective imperial administrators. Chapter four continues the theme of imperialism, as it discusses the different ways in which *The Secret Garden* and *Kim* (1901) depict (colonial) liminality. This difference is informed by notions of place: while *The Secret Garden* embarks on the project of eliminating problematic markers of colonial liminality in the metropole, *Kim* elaborates and celebrates myriad forms of liminality in the colonies on the condition that they assist British occupation of India. These texts suggest that liminal identities must be rigidly policed both in the metropole and in the colonies in order to effectively further the interests of the British Empire.

Finally, in its discussion of fantastic spaces, chapter five discusses both the trope of the liminal portal, and symbolic and literal representations of childhood death in Golden Age texts. The trope of the portal allows texts to depart from structure and explore ideas inherent in each of the chapters this thesis has addressed so far. The repeated trope of (literal or symbolic) childhood death adverts to the inherent liminality of childhood, but also to cultural anxieties surrounding the changing notion of childhood throughout the Golden Age. This thesis asserts that the mobilisation of the trope of the liminal – and in particular, place as a thematisation of the liminal – awards Golden Age children’s texts the ability to explore and resolve qualities implicit in each spatial domain.
Chapter One: Domestic Spaces

Representations of domestic space feature prominently in Golden Age texts. Domestic space was itself a pertinent concern in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras. Notably, the popular Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House, named after Coventry Patmore’s 1854 poem, disseminated a model of femininity that Christiana R. Salah identifies as ‘literally inhuman’ (209). Elaine Showalter notes the submissive nature of the figure of the ‘Perfect Lady, an Angel in the House’, ‘queen in her own realm of the home’, for whom the domestic sphere is her rightful place (14). Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar also emphasise the importance of domestic spaces in women’s lives. Women were, in the nineteenth century, ‘imprisoned’ in their homes – specifically, in the houses that belonged to their fathers (83).

Feminist scholars emphasise the manner in which the (Victorian) home serves to enforce such prescribed roles. Notably, Françoise Basch emphasises the Victorian model of ideal femininity, where a woman’s ideal place is within the home (3). Basch believes that the popular ideal of femininity at the time rested on the contrast between active male and passive female – while ‘man was the “architect” … woman [was] “the soul of the house”’ (5). This idea also led to the popular notion that a woman’s contribution to the world was that of wife and mother (Basch 5), and established philanthropic work as women’s ‘privileged domain’ (7). Doreen Massey also emphasises the way in which women’s confinement in the domestic sphere was not only a specifically spatial control, but also a social control imposed upon feminine identity (179). The home, which is ‘coded female’, is where ‘the woman (mother, lover-to-whom-you-will-one-day-return)’ resides (180).

While such images of the home held special significance for women, the importance placed on the idea of home also had important implications for wider social institutions. Judith Flanders posits that home, for the Victorians, became omnipresent (4). Functioning as a refuge from, and an ‘emotional counterweight’ against, the public workplace and rapid industrialisation, the middle-class home was imbued with special significance (4-5). S. J. Kleinberg argues that the middle-class model of the “ideal” home became incorporated not only into models of
domestic architecture, but also the legal system (142). This model of home was characterised by a strict division between the (masculine) public and the (feminine) private. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga state that this division between public and private space constitutes the primary symbolic message communicated by the house (4). Kleinberg asserts that the ‘interior’ world of home (the province of women and children), and the ‘exterior’ (and masculine) public world, served both to separate the responsibilities of each sex and to condemn those who did not adhere to their prescribed roles (142).

Moira Munro and Ruth Madigan emphasise the strict boundaries within the nineteenth century home, with the public/private and masculine/feminine binaries symbolically expressed in rigidly demarcated rooms (107). Similarly, Moira Donald stresses the spatial divisions inherent in the middle-class house, with the public/private binary being split further into categories of upstairs, downstairs, front and back. Donald also emphasises the presence of rigid sociological boundaries. She posits that only a limited number of individuals would have the freedom to cross over all the literal and metaphoric boundaries within the home, and importantly, states that children would not have been part of this privileged group. Donald attributes the ubiquitous presence of the nursery in Victorian homes not to adults recognising children’s need for space, but rather, to a desire to remove children from adult space (107). Importantly, Sally Mitchell states that divisions within the house were also expressed through furniture and decoration. While dark colours, heavy furniture and wood panelling were characteristic of “masculine” spaces such as the library, study and, in larger houses, the smoking room, light colours and delicate furniture featured in “feminine” spaces such as the morning room and drawing room (Daily Life 118).

However, many scholars question the veracity of this public/private divide. They posit instead that the public is situated ‘at the heart of the private’ (Bryden and Floyd 11-12). While such houses did indeed function as private homes for some inhabitants, for others, they functioned as a workplace. Moira Donald emphasises that ‘home was not the antonym of work’ and stresses the subjective nature of domestic space: the house has multitudinous meanings, dependent upon who is functioning within it (104-7). Donald highlights the lack of privacy middle- and upper-class families experienced due to the presence of servants in the house (106). Notably, a working-class servant of lower social standing than a middle- or
upper-class caller would also have had ‘little social justification’ to refuse a member of a higher social class entry, rendering the threshold between the private house and public world precariously insecure (104). The tenuous divisions between the public and private world were also explored within the home through the figure of the wife/mother. Donald stresses that the home, a supposed refuge, was the site of ‘back-breaking toil’ which was directed by a mistress whose own intensive labour had to be made invisible in order to maintain an image of peaceful passivity (109). Donald stresses that women completed “work” constantly within the passive, private house. Sewing provides a notable example – women completed domestic tasks while maintaining an image of relaxation (110-11). The Victorian middle-class home only represented a private site of refuge from the public world and work for the master of the house (Donald 117).

Lynne Walker and Vron Ware also demonstrate the presence of the “public” within the American middle-class home as they explore how women participated in abolitionist activities. Walker and Ware posit that private and public spheres were elided as women decorated their homes (and indeed their own person) with heavily charged political – and hence, public – images. Though Walker and Ware highlight that women ‘[p]rofessing to care for the wronged Negro slave’ could be seen as an extension of the traditional feminine caring role (76), they posit that these women were also contesting and challenging this role as they transgressed the public/private boundary (80). Similarly, Jane H. Hunter posits that the Victorian domestic world was ‘breaking down’ in America as girls eschewed the limitations of the private sphere in favour of the public sphere (2). Hunter also details how the public world also entered the domestic space in the form of ‘refinement’. As a result of changes in household production, where labour moved out of the home due to industrialisation (11-12), girls eschewed domestic labour in favour of ‘refinement’

---

1 Interestingly, Donald asserts that social class is the key to privacy (or a lack of it), since a middle-class caller did not gain automatic entry into a working-class home (104-5). Martin Hewitt offers a similar perspective in his examination of middle-class district visiting. Although Hewitt asserts that the manuals offered to middle-class district visitors offered no evidence of them encountering difficulty in entering working-class homes, he concomitantly claims that the working-class threshold was carefully policed (121-133). However, Hewitt also offers an image of the working-class home as a thoroughfare (124) and states that the working-class threshold was open and associated with fewer social complexities than the middle-class threshold.
While Hunter emphasises that middle-class girls still completed token domestic tasks such as baking and dusting in order to appease their mothers, greater emphasis was placed upon girls’ ability to master tasks such as sewing, piano playing and reading (21-3). Notably, piano playing emphasises the idea of performance: in mastering the ability to play the piano, girls would be expected to display their skill at parties and social gatherings.

Though they seek to reveal the manner in which the domestic is not necessarily private, these readings of domestic space reveal the manner in which the feminine is nonetheless paired with the domestic. Importantly, Marah Gubar’s reading of domestic Golden Age texts reveals these tensions. Gubar attributes great importance to realist domestic texts by female authors, devoting the first chapter of *Artful Dodgers* to notable Golden Age domestic texts (39-68). In doing so, Gubar addresses a facet of Golden Age literature which has been somewhat neglected in critical literature. While R. L. Green² attributes a level of importance to domestic (and even didactic) texts penned by female authors, such texts are indeed often neglected in scholarship focusing on the Golden Age.

Gubar posits that the domestic spaces featured in Golden Age texts function as a pivotal site of adult/child collaboration (50). She attributes the popular understanding of child protagonists as ‘primitive naïfs’ (6) to scholars ignoring the important role female authors³ – writing realist domestic texts – played in shaping texts for children. This important role consisted of the use of a child narrator. Gubar attempts to remedy the ‘radically incomplete genealogy’ commentators have adopted to examine texts. While many scholars discuss Dickens’s 1868 *Holiday Romance* as the first piece of prose to utilise a child narrator, then cite Nesbit as the author who popularised the use of child narrators, Gubar insists that the female authors of Golden Age domestic stories played a significant role (39-40). However, while Gubar emphasises the importance of such explicitly domestic texts in the Golden Age, she awards them little attention after the first chapter of *Artful Dodgers*.

² Importantly, Green was the first scholar to describe texts written for children spanning the mid-Victorian to Edwardian eras as belonging to a ‘Golden Age’ in 1962.

³ Notably, Gubar focuses on the works of Juliana Horatia Ewing, Charlotte Yonge, Mary Louisa Molesworth, Dinah Mulock Craik, Catherine Sinclair, Mary Howitt and Harriet Mozley.
This comparative lack of attention (both in individual texts and Golden Age scholarship at large) to texts emphasising domestic space may be due to the fact that domestic texts are varied: notably, Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* presents evocative domestic scenes. Robert Hemmings notes the symbol of the birdcage in Grahame’s text, and asserts that the animals do not remark upon the ‘implications of captivity’ represented by the cage, but identify with, and yearn for, the sense of home it represents (68). The texts this chapter will discuss present similarly varied domestic scenes. E. Nesbit’s *The Railway Children* (1906), L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911) each present varied images of domestic space.

Importantly, the varied images of domestic space displayed in these texts advert to ideological changes associated with the shift from the Victorian to the Edwardian home⁴. While Helen C. Long highlights the enduring nature of Victorian ideals of (middle-class) domestic privacy in her discussion of Edwardian architecture (11-12), and Jane Hamlett writes that ‘the gulf between Victorian and modern can be overstated’ (*Material Relations* 209), Long also notes the way in which ‘a more relaxed approach to manners and decorum’ (13) in the Edwardian era allowed a relaxation of the privacy associated with the home. In particular, Long notes the increased opportunities for ‘less formal occasions’ during which guests could enter the home (13), and posits that ‘[t]he upheavals of the [Edwardian era] began to alter relationships in society slowly undermining some of the Victorian values held dear and effecting a subtle relaxation in etiquette and lifestyle’ (12). The texts addressed in this chapter advert to these shifting ideals in their depictions of domestic space. While both *The Railway Children* and *Anne of Green Gables* depict representations of the public sphere intruding on domestic space, *The Secret Garden* highlights a return to structure in the form of primogeniture.

---

⁴ This change in the ideology associated with the home also had significant implications for girls. Sally Mitchell writes that ‘over the years between 1880 and 1915 both working-class and middle-class girls increasingly occupied a separate culture’ (*The New Girl* 3). This ‘separate culture’ granted girls the ability to ‘[move] from family into a quasi-public space’ (*The New Girl* 9). This movement into the public adverts to the changing relationship between public and private domestic space that is addressed in this chapter.
The Public and Private Home: *The Railway Children*

*The Railway Children* (1906) depicts the siblings Roberta (Bobbie), Peter and Phyllis consistently blurring the line between private and public spaces. Nesbit’s text offers a particularly pertinent example of the play of the Turnerian liminal in the domestic space. While the *The Railway Children* awards Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis various opportunities to challenge the rigid demarcation between public and private as they engage in liminal play in the areas surrounding the eponymous railway, the text ultimately enforces a return to structure in the form of a renewed emphasis on the privacy associated with the middle-class home.

*The Railway Children* focuses on Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis after they move with their mother from London to the country, following their father’s mysterious departure. The dénouement reveals that Father has been falsely imprisoned for treason. As Mother writes stories to support the family the trio are captivated by the railway and soon become the eponymous railway children. Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis befriend Perks the Porter, a passenger they christen the ‘old gentleman’ (36), and often the anthropomorphised trains (36). While these friendships, and the children’s activities in the public domain, facilitate interactions between the domestic and public worlds, the text ultimately reinforces the importance of (middle-class) domestic privacy.

Scholars connect Nesbit’s texts with public ideas due to her involvement in the Fabian Society. Scholars differ in their reading of Nesbit’s social criticism, with some characterising her as subversive, and others as conservative. Notably, Chamutal Noimann argues that *The Railway Children* ‘stands firmly in the field of subversive political children’s books’ (368). Dennis Butts similarly asserts that Nesbit became critical of social inequality in the Edwardian era (ix). Anita Moss emphasises Nesbit’s ‘ardent’ belief in social reform, and attributes it to her involvement in the Fabian Society (232). Conversely, Barbara Smith suggests the complexities inherent in Nesbit’s political affiliations. While Nesbit ‘was by association more politically unorthodox than most people in her historical and social context’, the Fabian Society was comparatively moderate and emerged from a middle-class background (Smith 153-5). Christopher Parkes similarly challenges Nesbit’s putative socialist ideals as he writes that Nesbit is ‘more interested in the economic well-being of the middle classes than a radical redistribution of wealth.
or a change in the ownership of the means of production’ (103). While it is indeed important to examine the manner in which Nesbit’s socialism influenced her novels, it is also important to note that these ideas suggest Nesbit’s close engagement with the idea of the public. This engagement is pivotal to her evocation of domestic space in *The Railway Children*.

*The Railway Children* can be characterised as a realist text which presents concerns traditionally associated with domestic space. Dennis Butts categorises *The Railway Children* as a domestic text, likening it to texts by Charlotte M. Yonge, Louisa May Alcott, Susan Coolidge and Juliana Horatia Ewing. Butts posits that Nesbit’s text contains the ‘basic element[s]’ of ‘family’ stories, such as a realistic mode, a focus on middle-class families, and descriptions of domestic events. Shirley Foster and Judy Simons similarly categorise *The Railway Children*, likening the text to work by Alcott and Coolidge, as well as to Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850).

Indeed, Nesbit emphasises the (middle-class) domestic at the opening of the text. The narrator’s description of the ‘red-brick-fronted villa’ comprises an encyclopaedic list of the features of the house, and concludes that it contains “every modern convenience”, as the house-agents say. These “modern convenience[s]” attest to the middle-class status of the children’s London home: the villa has ‘coloured glass in the front door, a tiled passage that was called a hall, a bathroom with hot and cold water, electric bells, French windows [and] a good deal of white paint’. Long notes that while coloured glass was ‘expensive’ it was ‘within reach of the better-off middle classes’, and similarly locates a

---

5 *The Railway Children* is often categorised as a realist, domestic text due to its lack of fantastic elements present in some of Nesbit’s other prominent work – notably, the Bastable series and the Psammead Trilogy.
6 Interestingly, Troy Boone also describes *The Railway Children* as a ‘determinedly domestic’ text due to the fact that it is primarily concerned with English class relations and ‘[has] little to say about international relations at the apex of British colonial expansion’ (98).
7 Likening Nesbit’s Edwardian text to Warner’s Evangelical text of 1850 on the basis of a shared domestic setting alone may appear reductive, but Foster and Simons identify ‘the fragmented family, the absent parent and the affirmation of female strength’ as unifying threads (132). Similarly, Foster and Simons identify how Mother functions as ‘an embodiment of female virtue’ for Bobbie, providing an example of femininity for Bobbie to emulate. They also assert that Mother perpetuates the ideal of the Angel in the House, becoming a home-maker who incorporates strength, care for others, self-abnegation and stoicism (143-4).
well-appointed bathroom (96) and even white paint (86) like those described at the opening of the text as the province of the middle classes.

The domestic space of the ‘red-brick-fronted villa’ (1) becomes further commodified as the ostensibly private house is associated with the ‘house-agents’ of the public world. This connection between the domestic and the public world is demonstrated in myriad ways even before Bobbie, Peter, Phyllis and Mother journey to Three Chimneys, the country house in which they live after they leave London. Both Moira Donald and S. J. Kleinberg identify the lack of privacy in the middle-class home due to the presence of servants (106), and notably, the maids depicted in *The Railway Children* taunt the children with knowledge they possess about their father’s whereabouts (11). Even as Bobbie, Peter, Phyllis and Mother leave their middle-class London home for the more modest dwelling Three Chimneys represents, a servant – Mrs. Viney – is still present. Indeed, when the family arrives, and Mrs. Viney is absent, they are presented as quite helpless: Mother does not have a key to the house and confesses that she does not know where to find anything (15). Mother’s helplessness suggests the extent to which her apparently private domestic life has been influenced by the labour of servants who signify the public world. Left in privacy, Mother seems helpless this first evening at Three Chimneys – indeed, it was Aunt Emma who had the foresight to pack the remnants of the store cupboard (20).

The eponymous railway functions as a liminal space where public and private merge in the text. Significantly, Susan Anderson highlights the function the railway serves in connecting places to each other (311). The importance of the railway and railway station near Three Chimneys is self-evident. Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis spend a large portion of their time near the trains and many of the events in Nesbit’s ‘episodic’ plot occur near the railway, from which Susan Anderson claims the novel gains its ‘coherence’ (311). Notably, the trio saves a train from a landslide

---

8 Long also writes that large windows (such as the ‘French windows’ (1) mentioned in the text) ‘came to epitomise middle-class status’ (86).
they also rescue a boy who injures himself in a tunnel during a paperchase (170) and wake a sleeping signalman (188).

The children’s perceptions of trains alter drastically when they first see a train outside London. While in the city trains had been ‘a means of getting to Maskelyne and Cook’s, the pantomime, Zoological Gardens and Madame Tussaud’s’ (1), they perceive trains differently when they reach the country. The train moves ‘noisily’, the children feel ‘the rush of its passing’ and they ‘see all of a train’ for the first time (24-5). This unadulterated experience of the train is transformative, and it is as a result of this encounter that Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis become the eponymous railway children.

Bobbie’s, Peter’s and Phyllis’ experience of the trains and the station also have important implications for the text’s presentation of ideas about gender. After Perks refers to a train as “she”, Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis also regard the trains as feminine: ‘After that the train was never again “it” to the children’ (42). The gendering of the train has important implications for Foster and Simons, who state that it is ‘by no means coincidental’ that trains are feminised in the text (134). Trains function as a common interest which boys and girls share, and Foster and Simons assert that *The Railway Children* undermines conventional ideas of female passivity and ‘assumptions about philosophies of difference’ by utilising the railway as the narrative thread (134).

The liminal trains and train station function as a benign representation of the interaction of domestic and public worlds. Domestic space is somewhat comically evoked at the station as Phyllis serves an afternoon tea of bread and butter and tea in a large tin can (113). Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis indulge in ‘delightful conversation’ with Perks the Porter (43) and Bobbie asks an engine-driver and fireman to repair Peter’s model train in her father’s stead, declaring that “everybody that has anything to do with railways is so kind and good” (68). Nesbit’s evocation of the railway depicts a pleasant place in which domestic and public space meet.

Conversely, *The Railway Children*’s evocation of the law has negative effects upon domestic space. The law signifies a troubling division between public and private space after the removal of two key figures in the text: the children’s own father, and Szezcpansky, the ‘Russian gentleman’ (86). The intrusion of the law reveals the text’s concerns about the marriage of private and public domains.
As Father and Szezcpansky are removed from their families, their respective domestic spaces are ruptured. Nesbit’s text expresses concern at this rupture as it depicts the distressed Szezcpansky crying (78), having lost his family after being unjustly imprisoned “‘just for writing a good, noble, splendid book’” (83). The text paints a graphic picture of the manner in which the law intruded on Szezcpansky’s home, then imprisoned him in a dungeon and exiled him to Siberia (83), before Mother garners the children’s sympathy by urging them to pray for “‘all prisoners and captives’” (85).

Chamutal Noimann states that *The Railway Children* questions the ‘patriarchal institutions of empire, nation and family’ by removing the symbolic head of each – Father – in ‘one fell swoop’ (368). Father’s removal provides the catalyst for change as his absence facilitates the text’s presentation of what Noimann describes as a ‘gender-blind, social democratic community’ (369)⁹. Importantly, Noimann also asserts that the intrusion of the law is pivotal to the text’s presentation of collectivism. Father’s removal allows the state to become an extended family and allows Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis to become children of the railway (373). While the changes Noimann describes are pertinent, the text in fact remains ambivalent about the intrusion of the law.

Importantly, Father laments the connection between his house and the public world:

> Just then there was a knock at the front door.

> ‘Who on earth! said Father. ‘An Englishman’s house is his castle, of course, but I do wish they built semi-detached villas with moats and drawbridges.’ (6)

Father’s comment reveals his desire for the privacy associated with the idealised middle-class home – here, it functions as an ‘emotional counterweight’ against the external world of work (Flanders 4-5). This public/private division is soon

---

⁹ Noimann addresses the problematic issue of the reversal of this change signified by Father’s return at the novel’s close. She states that Father’s return – which fundamentally undermines the change Noimann asserts that his absence facilitates – represents Nesbit’s ‘bitter acknowledgment of just how difficult it is to achieve true and permanent radical change’ (369).
undermined, however, as Father departs and the maids hint that they know about the circumstances prompting his disappearance (11).

It is Father’s return at the text’s close, and the concomitant restoration of the private domestic space, that reveals both the manner in which the law renders the private domestic space open to public scrutiny and the text’s ideologies regarding the privacy associated with the (middle-class) home. After Bobbie accidentally discovers the reason for her father’s disappearance (161), she confides in her mother and the pair decides to keep the circumstances a secret from Peter and Phyllis (164). However, Bobbie writes to the old gentleman and asks for his assistance (166-7) in obtaining Father’s release, though Father’s incarceration ostensibly remains secret. However, Father’s return inverts ideas of public and private, as Mother, Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis are the last to know about his freedom: significantly, the postal service, a notable public institution, failed to deliver a letter informing the family of Father’s impending arrival (222).

The final image of the text ultimately reveals the manner in which *The Railway Children* depicts the introduction of structure to check the play of the liminal in the text. The close of the text seeks to re-create demarcations between public and private space:

> He goes in and the door is shut. I think we will not open the door or follow him. I think that just now we are not wanted there. I think it will be best for us to go quickly and quietly away. At the end of the field ... we may just take one last look, over our shoulders, at the white house where neither we nor anyone else is wanted now. (223)

The text emphasises that the public – represented by the reader in this instance – must respect the sanctity of the private domestic space, and not venture over the threshold. This paragraph is the final section of the text, and is significant in that it reveals one of the primary messages of *The Railway Children*: while Bobbie, Peter

---

10 None of the children are aware of the reason for Father’s absence until the novel’s close, when Bobbie accidentally sees a newspaper article reporting the details of his trial (161).
and Phyllis may temporarily elide the distinction between public and private, the middle-class home must ultimately remain private.

Similarly, Mother’s illness presents another example of the manner in which Nesbit depicts a marriage of domestic and public space, but ultimately emphasises the importance of domestic privacy. Mother falls ill, but declares she cannot afford Dr Forrest’s recommended list of remedies (46) and asks the children to prepare a relatively inexpensive alternative (mutton). While the children are able to procure a limited number of the remedies (46-7), they also signal to the old gentleman as he passes on the train and ask him to provide the recommended items.

Though the children offer the old gentleman\textsuperscript{11} an IOU (50), they are nevertheless functioning as ‘beggars’, such as those Gubar describes. Gubar posits that the children ‘entreat all kinds of favours from adults outside of their own family’ (425). While Gubar discusses how child protagonists in Nesbit’s texts attempt to ‘steal back their own selfhood’ from those who have colonized childhood (\textit{Partners} 425), her observation that Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis consistently look outside their family unit for assistance is pertinent. In doing so, they blur the private/public divide. Mother is furious upon hearing about how the children have asked the old gentleman’s assistance. Significantly, she tells the children they “... mustn’t go telling everyone about our affairs – it’s not right” and discourages the children from behaving in such a manner again (53-4). However, Bobbie soon asks Dr Forrest to charge a reduced rate for his consultation (58-9). While the children work to remove the boundary between public and private, Mother conversely seeks to maintain it.

Mother’s experience of domestic space is pertinent. While Three Chimneys is, for her, a place of work, she is rarely depicted undertaking traditional domestic labour. Instead, Mother primarily writes stories to sell to newspapers and periodicals. While Mother remains shut in her room at Three Chimneys and writes each day, rarely emerging to journey into the public world, she is not wholly isolated: Mother participates in public life through her writing. While Chamutal Noimann asserts that Mother seems ‘ashamed of her occupation’ and ‘hides behind

\textsuperscript{11} Significantly, the children identify him as a presumably wealthy ‘gentleman’ when they first see him.
closed doors’ (379), this is not the case. Mother’s choice to write is pragmatic — she is able to provide financial support to her family through writing fiction¹². In contrast, Christopher Parkes reads Mother’s writing as an ‘opportunity’. Mother’s influence ‘widens considerably’ as she joins the wider commercial economy, sending her stories into the public domain through the postal system (121). Hence, the postal system forms a liminal space through which Mother may partake in life in the public sphere. While she remains physically in the domestic, Mother undertakes a somewhat transgressive journey into public space.

The text’s presentation of Mother’s desire to maintain a division between private and public space reveals the manner in which the text is conflicted about the connection between domestic and public space. While Mother urges the children to maintain privacy, her improved health reveals the manner in which she benefits from the gifts the old gentleman provides (53). Similarly, Mother reveals her own conflicted feelings, telling the children she does not approve of them asking for the gift, but that she appreciates the old gentleman’s kindness: “It’s you I don’t approve of, my darlings, not the old gentleman” (54). Hence, Mother does not encourage the children to seek the intrusion of the public represented by the gift, but nevertheless appears to appreciate the gift and the public intrusion it represents.

Perks’ birthday represents a similar example in the text, but serves as an important example of the text’s ideologies pertaining to class. While The Railway Children carefully delineates the degrees of privacy associated with the middle-class home, Perks’ working-class home is not awarded the same degree of privacy. Bobbie’s, Peter’s and Phyllis’ middle-class status awards them a privileged ability to traverse both working-class and middle-class domestic space.

Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis decide to organise a birthday party for Perks. Perks reveals that he no longer celebrates his birthday due to his need to ‘keep’ ‘the kids and the missus’ (118), and his failure to do so inextricably connected to his class and socioeconomic status. While he is ‘approachable’ and ‘confidential’, Perks is nevertheless ‘[n]ot so grand as the station master’ and is ‘less powerful

¹² Noimann also neglects Nesbit’s allusion to the fact that a large portion of Mother’s writing does not consist of fiction, but rather, of letters written in a bid to exonerate Father (165).
than the old gentleman’ (118). The importance of class distinctions in the text is highlighted as Mother corrects Bobbie’s speech. While Bobbie quotes Perks’ colloquial ‘kids and the missus’, Mother quickly corrects her: ‘You mean his wife and children’ (132). This class differentiation is a central tenet of Nesbit’s text – Julia Briggs asserts that class distinctions are ‘reassuringly well regulated and rigid’ in *The Railway Children* (244).

The children’s decision to organise and host a birthday party for Perks highlights tensions that appear when public space intrudes on private space. Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis ask fellow villagers to donate gifts to give Perks so he may celebrate (134-5). While Perks’ wife is pleased by the gifts, Perks is insulted, and regards the gifts as ‘“charity”’ (134-41). Perks’ reaction to the gifts reveals his shame: he regards the children with ‘withering glances of gloomy despair’ and tells the children they have ‘“disgraced”’ he and his wife in the neighbourhood (142-3).

Perks’ anger and humiliation results from the lack of privacy associated with his (working-class) family life. Here, the public – in the form of the gifts the children have collected for Perks – intrudes on the private. The private, in turn, also becomes public: Perks claims he has been ‘disgraced’ and that his respectability has been threatened (143). By expressing the conviction that he is ‘“not going to begin these sort of charity goings-on at [his] time of life”’, Perks is refusing to partake in the blurring of the line between public and private.

For Perks, personal pride and respectability depend upon privacy. The connection between Perks’ pride and his desire for privacy is also revealed as he listens to the cards the children read to him explaining the villagers’ motives for presenting him with the gifts. While Perks initially refuses to listen to the sentiments expressed on the cards, claiming the only cards he wishes to see are luggage labels ‘“in [his] own walk of life”’ (143), the cards suggest to Perks the possibility of relaxing the rigid distinction between public and private. Perks learns that despite his wife taking in washing he is far from being a ‘“laughing-stock”’ (143). Perks learns that he has earned the respect (and often gratitude) of his neighbours: Mr James, the blacksmith, says he presented his gift in order for Perks to see how well-respected he is; the butcher said he respected the fact that Perks ‘“paid his way”’ and ‘the old turnpike woman’ was grateful for work Perks had completed for her in the past (145). As Perks listens to the sentiment expressed in the cards – importantly, ‘“nobody said anything about charity or anything horrid
like that”’ (145) – he becomes reconciled to the boundary between his private home and the village at large being broken down.

While Perks’ eventual acceptance of the gifts, and the fact that ‘[a]ll sorts of people were made happy by that birthday party’ (147), appears to suggest a progressive loosening of the division between the public world and the private home, it is important to note the role the middle-class children played in facilitating this change. The Railway Children posits a moderately progressive loosening of divisions pertaining to privacy in the home, but nevertheless maintains bourgeois protocols to make such a loosening acceptable.

**Interconnected Domestic and Public Space: Anne of Green Gables**

L. M. Montgomery’s 1908 text *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) also elaborates on the interconnectivity of domestic and public space. Anne Shirley becomes immersed not only in the Green Gables homestead, but also in the surrounding community after she is adopted by siblings Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. Susan Drain emphasises that such acceptance in the wider community is paramount if Anne is to belong at Green Gables (120). Like other Golden Age domestic texts, the interconnectedness of domestic and public space is evident in *Anne of Green Gables*. Green Gables is presented as a site where ideals held by the wider community and the ideologies traditionally associated with domestic space converge. However, Montgomery’s text is significant due to the fact that domestic space is never private. *Anne of Green Gables* presents homes which are literally and metaphorically thrown open to the public world.

Green Gables functions as a notable example of this even before Anne arrives. Though Green Gables is somewhat isolated, ‘built at the furthest edge of [the] cleared land … barely visible from the main road along which all the other Avonlea houses were so socially situated’ (9), its connections to the wider community are inescapable. The tasks which often characterise private domestic space become public in Montgomery’s text: importantly, Rachel Lynde notes the cleanliness of Marilla’s yard as well as her house (9-10). There are many examples of overlap between domestic and public space in Montgomery’s novel. The gossiping Rachel Lynde sets the tone for the novel as she watches Matthew Cuthbert drive past her window (8-9). Rachel’s ‘all-seeing eye’ (8) both looks out
of her own window and into the figurative windows of all the other houses in Avonlea – notably, into Green Gables as she asks Marilla about adopting an orphan boy to help Matthew complete farm work (11).

The most important instance of public space entering domestic space is represented by Anne herself. As an orphan, Anne connotes the public sphere as she arrives at Green Gables. Anne’s status as an outsider – and one of the very few instances in the text where the public entering domestic space causes anxiety – is highlighted at the opening of the text. Marilla informs Rachel that she will ‘feel easier in [her] mind and sleep sounder at nights if [they] get a born Canadian’ and will not accept any ‘London street Arabs’ as candidates for adoption (12). Her comment reveals her uneasiness about the idea of allowing what she perceives as an outsider into her home. Similarly, Rachel regales Marilla with horror stories about adoption, notably detailing how one child put strychnine in the family’s well (13).

Claudia Nelson’s detailed study Little Strangers: Portrayals of Adoption and Foster Care in America, 1850-1929 (2003) charts the manner in which attitudes toward adopted children altered throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She discusses the anxiety associated with adopted children and outlines how adopted children in the late Victorian and Edwardian era reflected wider social concerns. Importantly, orphans were often associated with the public sphere due to their status as outsiders separated from familial domestic space, but orphans in institutionalised care were also connected to other social concerns. Likened to machines, these children reflected the anxieties attached to new technologies (98). Orphans were often perceived to have turned into ‘mechanical devices’ and were associated with a profound lack of individuality (98). Anne, however, is distanced from such conceptions of orphanhood. Though Matthew and Marilla seek a boy to work, and Anne herself completes work at Green Gables (Nelson 78-9), the ‘freckled witch’ (19) Marilla and Matthew adopt is highly individual. Montgomery’s conflation of Anne – an orphan – with domestic space serves as an important example of the manner in which the text blends domestic and public spaces.

The interconnectedness of domestic spaces and the wider world has important implications for readings of domestic space which focus on ideas of gender. Scholars attribute great importance to Green Gables (and, indeed, its
surrounds\textsuperscript{13}, most often characterising this domestic space as distinctly feminine. While some are critical of this association between Montgomery’s female characters and their homes, others praise Montgomery’s presentation of femininity (and, hence, domesticity\textsuperscript{14}). T. D. MacLulich views Montgomery’s presentation of domestic spaces unfavourably. She posits that Montgomery has a “‘domestic imagination’”, exalting work in the domestic sphere as the highest to which women may aspire (89). She states that in depicting domestic spaces, Montgomery ‘makes her writing espouse standards of decency and decorum that would please even Mrs. Rachel Lynde, the vigilant arbiter of Avonlea society’ (99). Similarly, Gillian Thomas focuses on the manner in which Anne changes as the “Anne” stories progress, contrasting the young ‘spirited individualist’ against the adult Anne who enjoys the ‘secondhand’ social status of a doctor’s wife and becomes engulfed within a ‘dense social network of family and rural community’ (23-5). Conversely, Carol Gay understands this community as celebrating ‘the traditional women’s values of love, warmth, sensitivity, imagination and quiet endurance’ (107). For Gay, the model of femininity enacted within the text’s domestic spaces serves to highlight the strength and ‘sisterhood’ Avonlea women embody (106).

Monika Hilder contrasts these two schools of thought about the presentation of domestic space in \textit{Anne of Green Gables} and identifies a binary: the ‘oppositional responses’ to Montgomery’s presentation of domestic space identify either ‘patriarchal oppression’ or ‘female liberation’ (212). Scholars are often polarised in their readings of domestic space in \textit{Anne of Green Gables}, but a key factor that also emerges from these readings is the distinct lack of any demarcation between domestic and public space. Such interconnectedness of spatial domains is especially evident in both Gay’s (1992) and Drain’s (1992) readings of the text, where both scholars conceive of the development of Anne’s feminised selfhood as emerging not only from her experiences within domestic

\textsuperscript{13} Notably, Marilyn Solt attributes the enduring popularity of \textit{Anne of Green Gables} to the settings Montgomery evokes (57).

\textsuperscript{14} Notably, the terms ‘femininity’ and ‘domesticity’ are often conflated in Anne scholarship.
space, but also from the community at large, which is inextricably intertwined with Green Gables.

However, the lack of a strict divide between domestic space and the wider world does not diminish the importance of Green Gables and other homes in Montgomery’s text. Anne’s quest for a home is fundamental to the narrative, and she mourns the potential loss of a home when she learns Matthew and Marilla desired a boy: “‘I might have known it was all too beautiful to last ...’” (25). The home Anne attains in Green Gables paradoxically both liberates her from the troubled homes of her childhood and ensconces her in a new domestic space.

Green Gables is, in some ways, a unique example of domestic space. Notably, it symbolises an equitable model of property ownership divorced from the traditional model which Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar identify (83), as siblings Matthew and Marilla live together. However, in rearing Anne, Marilla still emphasises the importance of traditional domestic tasks. Marilla sets Anne the task of sewing patchwork squares so she may acquire proficient needlework skills (78-9) and teaches her to cook (104). A large proportion of the tasks Marilla attempts to teach Anne are strongly linked to ideas of traditional femininity, where women complete tasks such as sewing, ironing and baking. It is worth noting, however, that Margaret Anne Doody understands Anne learning to complete these tasks as pragmatic. Notably, Anne must be able to sew if she is to clothe herself (Doody, Artifacts, 438-9) and have the ability to prepare food in a rural community where she is expected to be ‘largely self-sufficient’ (Doody, Food, 443).

Just as Marilla teaches Anne the tasks associated with domestic space, in a sense moulding Anne so that she fits into the domestic, Anne moulds the domestic space in order to suit her own needs. Anne is not necessarily unique in her ability to alter domestic space – the eponymous Pollyanna Harrington and her ‘glad game’ provides another example – but Anne exerts an especially potent influence over domestic space. Marilla comments that Anne, ‘a real bright little thing’, makes Green Gables seem ‘a different place’ (56). Anne initially believes the walls of the

---

15 It is also worth noting that the model of femininity Marilla promotes is strongly informed by Calvinist ideals. Marilla’s initial refusal to allow Anne to have puffed sleeves, instead providing her with ‘serviceable’ (78) dresses, suggests her ideological stance.

16 Importantly, Anne must acquire elaborate needlework skills in order to produce fashionable dresses with the ‘puffed sleeves’ she desires (79).
East Gable room, where she sleeps, must ‘ache over their own bareness’, and notes the hard pincushion, bare floor and ‘icy’ window covering (29), but she later decorates the room (212), utilising maple branches (101). Anne’s ability to alter the domestic spaces within Green Gables is profound:

In all essential respects the little gable chamber was unchanged. The walls were as white, the pincushion as hard, the chairs as stiffly and yellowly upright as ever. Yet the whole character of the room was altered. It was full of a new vital, pulsing personality that seemed to pervade it and to be quite independent of the schoolgirl books and dresses and ribbons, and even of the cracked blue jug full of apple blossoms on the table. It was as if all the dreams, sleeping and waking, of its vivid occupant had taken a visible although immaterial form and had tapestried the bare room with splendid filmy tissues of rainbow and moonshine. (133)

The changes that have taken place are ‘quite independent’ of Anne, and are somewhat intrusive: Anne’s ‘pulsing personality’ fills and ‘pervade[s]’ the room, and her dreams tapestry the walls. Joe Sutliff Sanders argues that Anne creates such changes within Green Gables by utilising affective discipline (2011). Sanders states that Anne, like many of her literary counterparts, functions as an agent of affective discipline, exerting control over Marilla especially. Sanders’ assertion that Montgomery’s novel contains a dual narrative of Anne becoming “of Green Gables” and Green Gables itself becoming “of Anne” (96) also highlights Anne’s ability to influence place in the text.

Importantly, Anne’s experiences within domestic space also serve to demonstrate the interconnectedness of public and domestic spheres in the text. Paradoxically, Anne’s experiences demonstrate this interconnectedness most explicitly when she is confined to Green Gables on two notable occasions. Firstly, after Anne responds angrily to Rachel Lynde’s claim that Anne is ‘terrible skinny and homely’ with ‘hair as red as carrots’, Marilla punishes Anne by sending her to her room until she agrees to apologise to Mrs. Lynde (56-61). Muriel A. Whitaker identifies the prevalence of such punishment in the novel. She raises the idea that ‘Isolation is the favorite punishment inflicted by Marilla … being banished to one’s room, being forbidden to attend parties and picnics, being ostracized’ (15). While
Anne’s isolation is not always as a result of punishment. Whitaker’s observation is nevertheless significant. In this instance, Anne is granted freedom once she agrees, on Matthew’s bidding, to make a false apology to Rachel. Though Anne is repentant, she regards her apology as a dramatic performance, and Marilla notes that she enjoys the experience (62-6). Anne’s easily attained freedom seems to mock the idea of her confinement. While this may have ramifications for a reading of gender in the text – Montgomery seems to question the ideals which enclose Anne, and women in general, within domestic spaces – it functions as a metaphor for the construction of domestic space in general in the text. Anne cannot remain separated from public space within domestic space because domestic space itself is not divorced from public space. The mutual interaction between the two spatial domains renders such segregation impossible.

Similarly, public space permeates domestic space when Anne breaks her ankle. After attempting to walk along the ridge-pole of her best friend Diana Barry’s kitchen roof, Anne falls and breaks her ankle (149-51). While she is physically confined to her room, she receives a number of visitors. Importantly, these visitors connect Anne to the public world—the children ‘tell [Anne] all the happenings in the juvenile world of Avonlea’ (152), and Anne’s adult visitors include representatives of public institutions. Notably, the Minister’s wife Mrs. Allan and Superintendent Bell both visit Anne (153). Anne’s confinement must be contrasted against that of Katy Carr, from Susan Coolidge’s 1872 text _What Katy Did_. While Katy is confined for four years (admittedly as a result of a serious injury) and her confinement is inherently associated with her attainment of ‘moral maturity’ (Foster and Simons 156), Anne’s confinement serves only to demonstrate the interconnectedness of public and domestic space – Marilla merely comments that Anne’s fall has not injured her tongue in any way (153).

While the majority of Montgomery’s text celebrates the interconnectedness of domestic and public space, there is one instance in the text where this interconnectedness is revealed to have negative ramifications. The failure of the Abbey Bank has a very negative effect on Green Gables – Matthew dies and Marilla’s and Matthew’s savings are irretrievably lost (234). While the connection between domestic and public spaces does not create any problems for the majority of the text, the failure of the Abbey Bank intrudes upon, and creates irreparable damage within, Green Gables. However, despite this instance, Montgomery’s text
celebrates the interconnectivity of domestic and public space. Importantly, the close of the text sees Anne poised on the threshold of her bedroom window, gazing contentedly at the public world (245).

Re-establishing Primogeniture: The Secret Garden

Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911) addresses domestic space in a manner that is different to *The Railway Children* and *Anne of Green Gables*. While Nesbit’s and Montgomery’s texts focus on the interaction between ostensibly private domestic space and the public, *The Secret Garden* ultimately prioritises the transformation of sickly Colin Craven into the future master of Misselthwaite Manor. Mary Lennox plays an integral role in this process, fulfilling a mothering role as she directs Colin toward a suitable model of male subjectivity.

‘Tyrannical and selfish’ (3) Mary Lennox is sent to live with her uncle Archibald Craven at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire after her parents die of cholera in India. Mary learns about a secret garden at Misselthwaite, which has remained closed for ten years, after Archibald’s wife Lilias died. After Mary unearths the buried key to the secret garden, she works in it along with Dickon, a ‘moor boy’ (58), becoming healthier and stronger as the text progresses. Importantly, Mary also discovers she has a cousin, Colin Craven, whose presence had been hidden from her. Sickly and pampered Colin believes – along with his father – that he will not live to reach adulthood. As Mary and Colin work together in the garden, both children are emotionally and physically transformed by the text’s close, when a healthy Colin gains the ability to walk and, importantly, to win a race against Mary (171).

While many scholars emphasise the primacy of the garden in facilitating Mary’s and Colin’s physical and psychical rejuvenation in the text17, Misselthwaite Manor18 also plays a notable role. Scholars acknowledge the unique

[17] Such readings are numerous: Darcy 2009, 1995; Adams 1986; Evans 1994; Wilkie 1997; Morgan 2011; Pemberton 2011; Marchant 2011. While these readings do not all focus solely on the garden, they all emphasise its intense importance – often, at the expense of Misselthwaite Manor itself.

[18] Misselthwaite Manor comprises the house and connecting garden, but not the moor. Misselthwaite Manor is located on Missel Moor near the village of Thwaite (12-13). I will refer to the house simply as ‘Misselthwaite’ in subsequent references.
construction of the ‘labyrinthine’ (Adams 42, Morgan 87) manor house. Notably, Christine Wilkie reads Misselthwaite as incredibly stifling:

The house is deformingly constricting, death-inducing, and cavernous, and it embodies a superfluity of laws, orderliness, and government. It is hierarchical and class-ridden and its dark corridors harbor dark thoughts and corruption and decay. (79)

Similarly, Jane Darcy equates Misselthwaite with ideas of isolation (81), as she states that it belongs to a group of Edwardian texts which contrast images of happy, healthy children (such as Dickon) against ‘unhappy and neglected’ children who are sequestered in large houses (81). Both Gillian Adams and Lori N. Brister likewise connect Misselthwaite to ideas of isolation (Adams 47, Brister 101), but Adams also highlights – along with Alun Morgan (87) – how the house facilitates the growth of Mary’s imagination (47).

These readings of Misselthwaite highlight its status as a ‘queer place’ (10). Indeed, Lori N. Brister examines Misselthwaite in her discussion of queerness in Burnett’s text19. Brister suggests that Misselthwaite exemplifies the ‘ambiguous border condition’ (101) Mary and Colin embody. The manor is also inherently contradictory – while it contains symbols of Indian culture, it is located in the Yorkshire Moors. Similarly, the house brings Mary and Colin together, yet embodies the qualities that contributed to their isolation, and which the garden later ‘serves to cure’ (Brister 101). However, the queerness of the house is also inextricably connected to the absence of its master. Martha – Mary’s servant –

19 Brister notes that the word ‘queer’ appears in The Secret Garden sixty-one times, but importantly, asserts that it would be anachronistic to read this idea of queerness as pertaining to anything other than a sense of oddness (99).
attributes her position “‘upstairs’” to the lack of a “‘grand Missus’” (16) at Misselthwaite. Martha comments about the oddness of the house:

‘... this is a funny house for all it’s so grand. Seems like there’s neither Master nor Mistress except Mr. Pitcher an’ Mrs. Medlock. Mr Craven, he won’t be troubled about anythin’ when he’s here, an’ he’s nearly always away.’ (17)

The presentation of domestic space in *The Secret Garden* involves preparing Colin Craven – who is ‘virtually imprisoned’ in the sickroom (Brister 101) – to adopt the role of ‘Master’ (173) of Misselthwaite. In preparing Colin for this role – socialising him – Mary acts as a mother. This understanding of Mary’s and Colin’s differing roles, and the emphasis on Colin’s dominance, is common in readings of *The Secret Garden*: notably, Meredith R. Ackroyd asserts that Colin becomes the ‘dominant father of the manor’ at the text’s close (46).

The sense of oddness which pervades Misselthwaite is intensified by the Gothic imagery which is a seminal feature of the text. Misselthwaite is unquestionably reminiscent of the Gothic – it is “‘a big grand place in a gloomy way’” (10), and is located on the “‘wild, dreary’” moor (14). Charles Butler and Hallie O’Donovan have identified Gothic tropes such as ‘forbidden passages, locked doors, tragic secrets, powerlessness and incarceration’ (129) in the text, and Jerry Phillips classifies Misselthwaite as a quintessentially Gothic house (172-3). This indebtedness to the Gothic has important implications both for the text’s presentation of place and the ideals it presents pertaining to gender. Elizabeth Imlay discusses the essentially spatial nature of the Gothic, where ‘rooms and enclosures’ imprison characters, and ‘structures of containment and escape ... mirror states of psychological distress and release’ (10). Colin is symbolically connected to the Gothic due to his enclosure in the sickroom, but importantly, his enclosure also serves to feminise him. The Gothic imagery of *The Secret Garden* also has implications for the close of the text, which has proved contentious among scholars as Mary ‘fades quietly in the background’ (Paul 158). Ideas of place and gender are conflated in *The Secret Garden*, presenting a model of domestic space that is inherently gendered, and ideas of gender that are innately spatial. As Mary and
Colin negotiate their respective gender roles, they concomitantly negotiate their place within Misselthwaite.

Mary’s and Colin’s respective transformations figuratively evoke domestic space. After Mary is directed toward a traditionally feminine role, characterised by its emphasis on mothering, she assists Colin in developing a traditional male subjectivity, and assisting him to attain the ‘considerable power and authority’ (Doolittle 31) reserved for the male head of the household. Mary is socialised though the ideological work of the gaze, and it is vital to note the gendered dichotomy inherent in this gaze. Laura Mulvey’s *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* provides a model for reading the manner in which the gaze functions in Burnett’s text. Mulvey notes that in ‘a world ordered by sexual imbalance’ the act of looking has been split between ‘active/male and passive/female’ (19). While the woman functions as (erotic) spectacle for both the characters within the film and the audience, man is unable to ‘bear the burden of sexual objectification’ (20). John Berger similarly argues that women constantly survey themselves (46-7) and summarises the gendered split inherent in looking to state that ‘men act and women appear’ (47). These gendered divisions associated with the gaze are paramount to Mary’s (and later to Colin’s) socialisation in *The Secret Garden*.

Both Mary and Colin are initially caught within a damaging figurative gaze that they must shun in order to progress toward the normative gender roles they later embody. After Mary is moved from this figurative gaze, and is placed within the literal gaze, she treats Colin similarly and facilitates the development of his traditionally masculine subjectivity. The manner in which Mary assists in shaping Colin’s subjectivity is reminiscent of mothering. Notably, Meredith R. Ackroyd notes that Mary’s response to her experience of mothering is to ‘mother [Colin] in turn’ (57)20, and Michelle J. Smith asserts that ‘Mary’s function resembles that of a mother whose imperial responsibility it is to raise healthy children’ (126).

Mary’s experience of the figurative gaze is awarded prominence from the beginning of the text. Notably, Mary’s Ayah (her maid and nanny) is made to understand that, in order to please Mrs. Craven, Mary must be kept out of her

---

20 Maureen M. Martin (150) and Michelle Beissel Heath (90) have a similar understanding of this maternal process.
mother’s sight (3). However, once Mary arrives in England, she is placed under the literal gaze, which commences her socialisation. Characters who survey Mary encourage her to survey herself: Martha, a ‘Yorkshire rustic’ (19), asks why Mary does not dress herself (18-19) and Ben Weatherstaff, a gardener who exercises the ‘Yorkshire habit’ of speaking with ‘blunt frankness’ likens Mary to himself, emphasising her plainness and sourness (25-6)21. Mary internalises this gaze, first likening herself to a painting of a ‘stiff, plain girl’ (34) and eventually chooses to become ‘quite still’ as she is gazed at (112), instead of feeling herself change uncontrollably (68).

As Mary is experiencing this process of socialisation she meets her cousin Colin. Mary directs her attention toward reinventing Colin as her binary opposite: an ‘active/male’ (Mulvey 19). Mary utilises the gaze as the means through which she socialises Colin. Colin is initially presented as unfit to function as master of Misselthwaite. Importantly, Jerry Phillips understands Colin’s subjectivity as inextricably connected to Misselthwaite, with his fears of developing a hunchback functioning as ‘a none too subtle way of stating that he carries the paralysis of the Craven estate on his back’ (179). Importantly, his imagined hunchback exemplifies Colin’s feminised state: Colin is connected to a characteristically Gothic model of femininity through his ‘insane tempers’, ‘helpless limbs’ and descriptions of his imminent death (119).

Colin’s attempts to exercise power within the household are also futile. While male subjectivity need not be characterised by violence – notably, Maureen M. Martin highlights how Colin rejects Ben’s suggestion that he will become a boxer (146) – masculinity was presented as synonymous with power throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers discuss the father’s legal right to punish and his concomitant responsibility to protect his family (4), with both punishment and protection implying power. Megan Doolittle also notes the father’s inviolable power within the family, resulting from his position as both its literal and symbolic centre. This power was

21 It is worth noting the nationalist concerns evident in these descriptions of Martha and Ben. For Smith, *The Secret Garden* suggests that ‘... the production of the idealised English child requires not only that he or she be raised in England’s climate but that the health-giving benefits of its natural environment be combined with the virtues of its civilisation’ (123).
so pervasive it was invisibly built into wider social institutions (Doolittle 31). Claudia Nelson details how the ability to influence others functioned as a marker of manhood (Boys 57-8), and though this seems a fairly benign form of power, it is power nonetheless.

Colin’s lack of power within the household is revealed by his relationship to the servants of Misselthwaite. Mary notes, as she rushes to confront Colin during a tantrum, that ‘... all the grown-up people were so frightened ...’ (102). As Mary yells at Colin, Mrs. Medlock, Martha and the nurse stand still, ‘...huddled together near the door staring at her, their mouths half open. All three had gasped with fright more than once’ (103). Their behaviour reveals the futility of Colin’s attempts to exercise power: the nurse comments, “‘No one can do anything with him’” (my emphasis, 102). Rather than stirring them to action, Colin’s outbursts paralyse the staff with fear. While Gwyneth Evans asserts that Colin’s authority over the staff at Misselthwaite is never called into question (21), his inability to instigate any action among them belies her claim: he is able to terrorise but cannot exert effective power. Maureen M. Martin emphasises this idea, commenting that ‘the authority of a helpless invalid on his way to the grave has little substance’. Martin states that Colin is only able to ‘grasp the reins of power, domestic and political, that he will inherit’ as he ‘heals’ (144).

Mary heals Colin utilising the gaze. Colin passionately resists the gaze when he first meets Mary (74), and at this stage of the text, his relationship to the gaze constitutes a paradox: by refusing to be looked at, Colin inadvertently typifies ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ (Mulvey 19). Mary soon moves Colin from the damaging figurative gaze, which is focused on his imminent death, into the literal gaze. Mary urges Colin to focus instead on the possibility of living (86-7) and also utilises the gaze as a socialising tool as Colin throws a tantrum complaining of a developing lump on his back. Mary looks intently at his back, before pronouncing that she is unable to see a lump (104). Utilising the gaze, Mary leads Colin to eschew harmful figurative gazes and embrace the literal gaze. Colin’s new relationship to the gaze suggests his newfound influence at Misselthwaite, with his authoritative demands to be looked at (130, 132, 138) highlighting his power.

Colin’s meeting with Mr. Roach, the head gardener, reveals the manner in which Colin’s subjectivity has been altered as a result of Mary introducing him to the gaze. After this meeting Mr Roach describes the elusive Colin as a ‘‘young
Rajah’’ with a ‘‘fine lordly way’’ about him (120-1). However, Burnett interestingly suggests that Colin’s appropriation of power is incomplete. Mr Roach comments, ‘‘You’d think he was a whole Royal Family rolled into one – Prince Consort and all’’ (121, my emphasis). A Prince Consort is not the monarch, but is married to a reigning queen (Gerzina, Secret Garden, 121). While Burnett suggests that Colin now holds more power than he did at the beginning of the text, he is still symbolically removed from the image of power indicated by the (female) monarch.

Mary completes another vitally important task as she mothers Colin, telling him he is ‘queer’ (136). Colin declares that he does not wish to be queer and is not going to be (136). Colin works to eradicate the queerness which characterises him for the majority of the text and becomes more prominent in the narrative – Elizabeth Lennox Keyser comments that Colin ‘dominates’ the final third of The Secret Garden (2). This domination has proved contentious for scholars, many of whom assert that Mary fades from the narrative: Linda T. Parsons somewhat simplistically attributes Mary’s absence to her remaining in the feminine space of the garden, but other scholars have conducted more sophisticated readings. Notably, Lissa Paul (158-62), U. C. Knoepflmacher (25), Michelle Beissel Heath (90) and Elizabeth Lennox Keyser (12-13) all correctly note that Mary becomes subordinated as Colin is awarded priority. However, these readings still neglect the pivotal connection between Mary’s absence and her mothering role. Importantly, Michelle J. Smith’s and Anna Krugovoy Silver’s readings both highlight this connection. Smith asserts that any reading which states that Mary is dismissed at the end of Burnett’s text ignores the fact that Mary enabled Colin’s transformation (126). Similarly, Silver claims that ‘the novel does not validate Colin so much as it underscores his health as an example of the healing power of mothering’ (200).

While Smith’s and Silver’s readings provide a more nuanced account of Mary’s absence than other readings of the text, their emphasis on Mary’s mothering nonetheless situates her firmly in the domestic. Mary completes a traditionally feminine role as she has facilitates the formation of Colin’s masculine subjectivity. This subjectivity, and the ideas of ownership it implies, has also been addressed by numerous scholars. Notably, Gwyneth Evans states that the ‘healing of souls and bodies’ which Mary’s mothering promotes affirms the social order. Misselthwaite’s tenants, servants and females respect Colin’s ‘triumphant entry’ into his ‘ancestral home’ (21). Similarly, Lori N. Brister asserts that the novel ends with
‘gender roles reinforced [and] patriarchy restored’, and emphasises the model of ‘normative domesticity’ such a conclusion promotes (116). Anna Krugovoy Silver notes that The Secret Garden opens with an image of Mary and closes with an image of Colin (199), indicating his prominence.

The implications of The Secret Garden’s connection to the Gothic become clear with both Mary’s absence at the end of the narrative and the emphasis placed upon her femininity. The Gothic renunciation of the feminine is apparent in the final section of the text as Mary is absent. Barbara Creed’s The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis provides a useful model for reading Mary’s absence, for although Creed focuses on horror films, she details how the feminine – specifically in relation to mothering – is renounced under patriarchy. Creed argues that it is woman’s maternal functions which facilitate her presentation as monstrous. Notably, Creed asserts that while woman is not monstrous in herself, the project of the horror film (and Gothic narratives such as The Secret Garden) is to perpetuate the idea that woman’s monstrosity arises from her difference from man (83).

Importantly, while this patriarchal ideology ‘denigrates’ woman, it must nevertheless be communicated, and hence endorsed, through her (Creed 165). As Mary mothers Colin, inducting him into the literal gaze and encouraging him to appropriate characteristically male power, she communicates this patriarchal ideology. However, in order for Mary’s and Colin’s relationship to progress normally under the dictates of patriarchy, Mary must be distanced from Colin at the conclusion of this project (83). Mary’s absence at the end of the text symbolically suggests this separation between Mary and Colin/mother and son. Having fulfilled her mothering role, in ensuring the socialisation of Colin’s power, Mary is distanced from him.

Colin’s mastery over the domestic space is indicated at the close of the text as he walks toward the house. With ‘his head up in the air’, walking ‘strongly and steadily’, ‘Master Colin’ (173) emanates the power Mary’s mothering has awarded him. Mary’s and Colin’s gender roles are inextricably linked to the domestic space.

22 Interestingly, Christine Wilkie also highlights how Colin is connected to the public at the novel’s close. Wilkie asserts that Colin is ‘everything institutional’: an athlete, lecturer and scientific discoverer (81).
of Misselthwaite. As Mary is socialised she adopts a model of femininity characterised by its emphasis on mothering. In turn, Mary mothers Colin, directing him toward a subjectivity which will allow him to function effectively as master of Misselthwaite, reinforcing the structure of primogeniture. Domestic space is figuratively evoked in *The Secret Garden* through the model of normative gender it facilitates.

While Nesbit’s *The Railway Children*, Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* and Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* all evoke images of domestic space, the three texts differ in their focus. However, in presenting the (ostensibly) private domestic, these texts also present images of public space. As *The Railway Children* awards the middle-class children Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis the ability to traverse the divide between public and private, the text nevertheless emphasises ideas of privacy surrounding the middle-class home.

Conversely, Montgomery does not represent any such divide in *Anne of Green Gables*, depicting a community which is inherently domestic, and images of domestic space which are married to the public. Burnett’s text differs in its focus, but also engages with public ideals pertaining to domestic space. As Mary is socialised and mothers her cousin in turn, assisting in the production of his traditionally masculine subjectivity, Burnett evokes a model of domesticity characterised by its similarity to the ideal of the Angel in the House. While Mary recedes into the domestic, Colin is free to move into the public world as ‘everything institutional’: a lecturer, athlete and scientist (Wilkie 81). These varied images of domestic space may be attributed to the Edwardian provenance of the three texts. Though they are undeniably informed by Victorian models of domesticity, *The Railway Children, Anne of Green Gables* and *The Secret Garden* question the prevalence of such ideals in the Edwardian era.
Chapter Two: Domesticated Natural Spaces

Natural spaces feature prominently in a number of Edwardian\footnote{While some scholars – such as Morna O’Neill – discuss the Edwardian era as spanning the reign of Edward VII between 1901 and 1910 (O’Neill 1), I am utilising Samuel Hynes’ definition of the period. Hynes asserts that the beginning of the period belongs ‘roughly to the turn of the century’ and that the ‘certain’ and ‘sudden’ end of the ‘Edwardian Age’ occurred on August 4, 1914 (14). Interestingly, Hynes also comments that although the First World War ‘speeded the changes from Victorian to modern England, it did not make them’ (5). Hynes asserts that ‘[v]irtually everything that is thought of as characteristically modern already existed in England by 1914: aircraft, radio-telegraphy, psychoanalysis, Post-Impressionism, motion picture palaces, the Labour party were all Edwardian additions to the English scene (5).} Golden Age texts. Notably, L. M. Montgomery’s \textit{Anne of Green Gables} (1908), Frances Hodgson Burnett’s \textit{The Secret Garden} (1911) and Kenneth Grahame’s \textit{The Wind in the Willows} (1908) see characters engage with natural spaces which are characterised by liminality. This liminality is represented in myriad ways in the texts. For example, Grahame’s River Bank serves to emphasise the ‘pleasures of the cage’ (Gubar 26): as Rat and Mole stare through a window at a ‘little curtained world’ and, specifically, at a bird in a cage, ‘the larger stressful world of outside Nature [is] shut out and forgotten’ (49). While they are ostensibly part of the River Bank, Rat and Mole (and, indeed, other characters from the text) occupy domesticated spaces within the natural world. This chapter will discuss such liminal natural spaces.

The natural spaces in each of these texts are imbued with ideas of liminality. It is important to note once again that the idea of liminality is inherently spatial. Turner describes how the ‘ritual subject’ or ‘“passenger”’ ‘passes through a realm’ (\textit{Forest of Symbols} 94, my emphasis) as part of a process of transition in various rituals. Michael Joseph also discusses the spatial nature of the liminal, asserting that ‘“[l]iminal space”’ functions as a ‘flexible concept’ which can refer to both literary time/space and to ‘something more abstract’: namely, ‘borderland[s]’ through which the protagonist/s pass ‘to reenter structure’ (139). The “natural spaces” – often gardens – depicted in \textit{Anne of Green Gables}, \textit{The Secret Garden} and \textit{The Wind in the Willows}, are inherently liminal. Significantly, these spaces are not wholly domestic, nor do they represent nature proper. This interconnectivity between domestic space and nature adverts to what Turner describes as the
‘peculiar unity’ of the liminal (Forest of Symbols 99), and also evokes the ideology surrounding Edwardian gardens, such as those featured in many of the texts this chapter will discuss.

The Edwardian garden is inherently liminal. It is also important to note that some scholars regard the Edwardian age – or Edwardian ‘garden party’ (Hynes 4) – itself as inherently liminal: notably, Samuel Hynes asserts that the Edwardian era ‘was a time of transition … when old and new ideas dwelt uneasily together’ (5), and posits that the Edwardian era ‘stands in an odd pivotal position between the nineteenth century and the twentieth: it was not quite Victorian, though conservatives tried to make it so, nor was it altogether modern, though it contained the beginnings of many ideas that we recognize as our own’ (vii). Seth Lerer also discusses the ‘tension between Victorian domesticity and Edwardian change’ (271). This liminality is also reflected in gardens of the period. Anne Jennings states that Edwardian gardens were characterised by a unity of “inside” and “outside”, as gardens served to connect the house to the wider natural world (9). Plants were trained to grow around windows and doors, and garden beds were placed at the base of house walls ‘to integrate house and garden even further’ (Jennings 11). Indeed, David Ottewill asserts that Edwardian gardens did not function as a ‘spectacle’ to be viewed from the house, but rather existed as a succession of ‘outdoor rooms’ (2).

This idea of connectedness between the house and garden – or, rather, domestic and natural spaces – is indebted to the ideology of the Arts and Crafts movement. Ottewill states that the Arts and Crafts movement saw a ‘reverence for nature’ combined with design based on ‘traditional crafts’ (97). The site on which a house was to be built was awarded special consideration during the design process. Most houses were constructed with materials sourced from the local landscape, and many elements of Arts and Crafts design – such as trellis screens and pergolas – functioned to ‘merge house and garden’ (Ottewill 97). This unity of

---

2 Seth Lerer asserts that the Arts and Crafts movement also had a profound impact on the appearance of texts for children: ‘The technologies of book and newspaper production dovetailed with a sensibility reared on the Pre-Raphaelites, the Arts and Crafts movement, and Art Nouveau. It is as if the great aesthetic movements of the later nineteenth century would find their afterlife in children’s books; as if John Millais, William Morris, and Aubrey Beardsley would find themselves morphed into children’s book illustrators Ernest H. Shepard and Arthur Rackham’ (257).
domestic/internal and natural/external spaces represents the ‘peculiar unity of the liminal’ (Forest of Symbols 99) Turner discusses: while ostensibly external, Arts and Crafts gardens were neither “inside” nor “outside”. The Edwardian gardens featured in the texts – and, indeed, the “natural” spaces with which they merged – are often neither wholly natural, nor wholly domestic.

Importantly, the inherent liminality represented by these natural spaces also signals the pastoral status of nature in these texts. Paul J. Alpers discusses the confusion which surrounds the pastoral mode and asserts that there is ‘no principled account of [the pastoral] on which most people agree’ (8). Alpers highlights the tension which exists between the idea of the pastoral as either an ‘historically delimited’ or ‘permanent’ mode (8). Terry Gifford argues that the term ‘pastoral’ can be understood in three ways: as an historic mode, as an ‘area of content’ which ‘refers to any literature that describes the country with an explicit or implicit contrast to the urban’ and, finally, the pastoral as a ‘pejorative’ term used to criticise works which present a reductive view of the landscape and the people who live and work within it (1-2). Importantly, the pastoral represents a domesticated (and potentially urbanised) understanding of nature: John David Moore asserts that ‘[i]n pastoral the comforts of domesticated interiors are extended and included in a landscape’ (46).

Gifford argues that the pastoral construct ‘always reveals the preoccupations and tensions of its time’ (82). Importantly, Gifford’s discussion of the pastoral also highlights the liminal position of pastoral discourse: Gifford asserts that pastoral discourse has ‘retreated from both the sophisticated discourse of the court and the illiterate discourse of the real shepherd’ and exists ‘somewhere between the two’ (46).

The trope of ‘retreat’ and ‘return’ is a central tenet of the pastoral, and adverts to the inherently liminal status of the pastoral mode as it evokes the return to structure associated with the Turnerian liminal. Terry Gifford states that ‘Pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat which may, as we have seen, either simply escape from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, “our manners”, or explore them’ (46). Gifford also asserts that this retreat is paradoxical, and inextricably linked to the idea of return. The pastoral removes the reader from their contemporary culture and depicts an arcadia, but in doing so, addresses ‘anxieties and tensions’ – and delivers insights – about the culture from which it
‘originates’ (Gifford 82). These insights (which also form the paradox of the pastoral) function as a “return”: in depicting an arcadia, the pastoral comments on culture. Significantly, this return can be implicit in a pastoral text that appears to be wholly escapist. In accessing the arcadia represented in the text, the reader resists – and, paradoxically, conjures – the return (Gifford 82).

In discussing the pastoral, it is important to address William Empson’s 1935 text *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1974). Empson’s definition of the pastoral is broad, and encompasses many texts:

> The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). (11)

Consequently, Empson’s pastoral not only includes representations of “natural” spaces, but also includes a wide variety of texts – significantly, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* texts. Empson’s reading of the *Alice* texts reveals the way in which a wide variety of texts can be classified as pastoral, even if they do not explicitly address ideas of “nature”: notably, Empson states that Carroll evokes the pastoral through ‘[t]he obvious parody of Wordsworth’ which he asserts is represented by ‘the poem of the White Knight’ (262).

Just as pastoral texts comment on the culture from which they originate, many of the natural spaces depicted in the texts this chapter addresses explore ideas (and, in some cases, tensions) that featured prominently in the Edwardian era. Significantly, *The Wind in the Willows, The Secret Garden* and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* all address what Hynes describes as the (Edwardian) ‘fascination with pagan deities’ (146) as all three texts evoke Pan, a ‘particularly omnipresent figure of the period’ (Hynes 146). *Anne of Green Gables* departs from this fascination with pagan ideas and focuses more closely on the

---

3 *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871).
interconnectedness of domestic and natural spaces. Natural spaces are also associated with ideas of liminality in *The Secret Garden*. While many scholars have examined the way in which the eponymous secret garden functions in the text, this chapter will chiefly focus on Missel Moor. While Grahame’s evocation of Pan is important in the text, *The Wind in the Willows* also addresses ideas of liminality by making the connection between domestic and natural spaces explicit. Finally, it is also important to note that the natural spaces represented in the texts this chapter explores share thematic concerns; for example, *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden* both address Edwardian ideas of class and gender in their representations of natural space. The natural spaces represented in these texts are inextricably connected to ideas of liminality.

**The ‘Friend and Helper’: Representations of Pan in Edwardian texts for Children**

Two of the texts explored in detail in this chapter share a significant similarity. Both Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* and Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* evoke the Greek god Pan. Importantly, Barrie’s eponymous Peter Pan also evokes the Greek god, most significantly in the 1906 text *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. The presence of Pan (or the presence of a representation of Pan in *The Secret Garden*), serves to highlight the characteristically Edwardian way in which these texts engage with “natural” spaces. Pan complicates the representation of natural spaces (and, at times, domestic spaces) by linking ideas of “inside” and “outside”. Importantly, the evocation of Pan in these three texts also attests to their pastoral status.

Seth Lerer describes Pan as a ‘literary fascination of the [Edwardian] period’ (271). Indeed, Brian Stableford highlights a number of texts that evoke Pan (a number of which are Edwardian) – notably, Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894); E. M. Forster’s “The Story of a Panic” (1911) and Saki’s “The Music on the Hill” (1911). Patricia Merivale addresses the intense interest in Pan between 1890 and 1926 (vii-ix), and similarly, Gillian Beer asserts that ‘the figure of Pan himself was potent for Edwardian creativity’ (208). Stableford highlights the way in which Pan became a ‘uniquely useful symbol in late-19th- and early-20th-century fantasy’ (743), although Samuel Hynes discusses the way in which such
‘Edwardian Pans’ are ‘domesticated’ and did not always appear ‘in forms that would have been recognizable to the Greeks’ (146).

Pan ‘was the god of woods and shepherds, and he had the feet and legs of a goat’ (Merivale 1). Importantly, Merivale also states that Pan’s connection to woods and shepherds comprises ‘the irreducible statement of his identity from which all other statements of his role in literary history must be seen to proceed’ (1). Brian Stableford’s discussion of Pan matches the ‘concrete’ (1) figure Merivale discusses: Stableford asserts that Pan ‘was a horned and goat-legged Arcadian shepherd-god’ who played seductive music on pipes fashioned from reeds (743). In her discussion of Pan statuary, Gillian Beer argues that Pan is often represented as ‘virile’, and ‘naked and threatening’ (206), and Carrie Wasinger discusses Pan as a figure of ‘deadly terror’ (228). Stableford concurs with Beer’s and Wasinger’s discussion of Pan as a threatening figure, highlighting how Pan’s shout ‘had the ability to infect adversaries with the unreasoning terror of “panic”’ (743). Importantly, Pan is also a liminal figure: Beer asserts that Pan ‘challeng[es] the gap between man and animal’ (206), and Stableford argues that Pan is often evoked in order to explore ‘the changing relationship of town and country’ (743).

While Pan is often represented as a threatening figure, Merivale asserts that a benevolent Pan is present in prose fiction – for example, in *The Wind in the Willows*. Merivale writes that this benevolent Pan figure is ‘the logical development of the whole pastoral, Arcadian tradition in English literature’ (134). Indeed, Barry B. Powell states that ‘pastures’ derives from Pan’s name (emphasis in original, 190) and that Pan, ‘“the feeder”’ who ‘makes the shepherd’s flocks get fat’ (190) ‘wandered in the wild hills of Arcadia’ (191). Powell also asserts that ‘Pan … appear[ed] in the pastoral tradition … which celebrated country life as an idealized antidote to the refined but corrupt ways of the city’ (192). Other scholars also highlight how the benevolent, and hence pastoral, (Peter) Pan is evoked in Barrie’s texts: Gillian Beer describes Sir Peter Frampton’s statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens as ‘sylvan’ (206); Kayla McKinney Wiggins asserts that the link between Barrie’s Peter Pan and the traditional fertility figure represented by

---

4 Powell also addresses this idea, detailing how ‘the nymph Syrinx, whom [Pan] desired … ran from him, until she was changed into a reed’ (190). Pan then cut down the reed bed as he searched for her, and fashioned a ‘pan-pipe, or “syrinx”’ from the reeds (190).
the god Pan is ‘ambiguous at best’ (89), and while Carrie Wasinger asserts that Barrie’s Peter Pan is ‘an avatar of the pipe-playing Grecian goat-god’ (227), she also highlights how the ‘pastoral setting of Kensington Gardens implies the Arcadian myth’ (227).

Grahame evokes this benevolent Pan in one chapter of The Wind in the Willows titled “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn” (72-80). The chapter sees Rat and Mole search for Otter’s missing son Portly (72). Rat and Mole row upstream at night to search for Portly, and, after Mole hears “beautiful and strange and new” (75) music, he redirects their boat toward a backwater (75). As light gradually begins to appear, Mole also begins to hear the ‘heavenly’ music and it ‘possesse[s] him utterly’ (75), and the two animals enter a dreamlike state. Rat and Mole eventually see Pan (77), with Portly lying at his feet. However, their awareness fades as Pan ‘bestow[s] … the gift of forgetfulness’ (77). Rat and Mole take Portly back to his father, but all three animals are aware of a sense of loss (78-9). The only indications of Pan’s presence are ‘certain hoof-marks’ (78) and some “far-away music” (79), which Rat deciphers⁵, but the two animals cannot comprehend (79-80).

Grahame’s evocation of Pan highlights ideas of liminality, as Grahame’s Pan embodies both aspects of violence associated with more traditional representations of the Greek god and ‘benign’ (Wasinger 228; Merivale 139) aspects of Merivale’s ‘benevolent’ Pan (134). Grahame’s Pan is characterised by contrasts, and it is in the relationship between these contrasting qualities that ideas of liminality are most apparent:

---

⁵ Rat comments, “‘And hark to the wind playing in the reeds!’” (79). Importantly, the reeds in which this ‘far-away music’ (79) is playing evoke the reeds from which the traditional Pan’s flute is fashioned: ‘… he played seductive music on pipes made from the reeds into which the nymph Syrinx had been turned in order to escape [Pan’s] amorous advances’ (Stableford 743).
in that utter clearness of the immanent dawn, while Nature, flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns, gleaming in the growing daylight; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously, while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners; saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supple hand still holding the pan-pipes only just fallen away from the parted lips; saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward; saw, last of all, nestling between his very hooves, sleeping soundly in utter peace and contentment, the little, round, podgy childish form of the baby otter. (77)

While some aspects of this introduction evoke images of the traditional Pan likely to inspire “panic”, they are tempered by ‘benign’ (Wasinger 228; Merivale 139) qualities. Pan’s ‘stern, hooked nose’ is contrasted against his ‘kindly eyes’; his ‘half-smile’ is contrasted against his ‘rippling muscles’ (which carry potential for cruelty), and Pan’s animalistic ‘shaggy limbs’ are ‘disposed in majestic ease’ – indeed, Portly is ‘nestling between [Pan’s] very hooves’. Jane Darcy asserts that these contrasting qualities, which ‘offset’ each other, represent ‘a mixture of the beneficent and the fearful sides of nature’ (215). Merivale argues that this section of the text highlights the way in which Grahame’s ‘Friend and Helper’ represents a model of (Christian) fatherhood (138-9) and posits that Grahame’s Pan ‘…releases animals from traps like a Good Shepherd; he protects the lost baby otter until it is rescued’ (141). Grahame’s text explicitly distances this evocation of Pan from more traditional representations by highlighting the fact that Mole does not feel panic/terror, but ‘Awe’: ‘[i]t was no panic terror – indeed [Mole] felt wonderfully at peace and happy’ (76).

Grahame’s Pan is also associated with liminality by the time of day at which Rat and Mole encounter him. The two animals meet ‘The Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ (72) in the liminal period between night and day, in the ‘utter clearness of the imminent dawn’ (77). Significantly, Pan vanishes as ‘the sun’s first rays, shooting across the level water-meadows, [take] the animals full in the eyes and [dazzle] them’ (77). It is also significant to note that Grahame’s Pan inspires an
even greater appreciation of nature in both Rat and Mole. After Pan’s music ‘[e]ntrance[s]’ Rat and ‘possesse[s] [Mole] utterly’ (75), the two animals enter a dream-like state. While they are in this state the animals develop an even stronger appreciation of nature: ‘Never had they noticed the roses so vivid, the willow-herb so riotous, the meadow-sweet so odorous and pervading’ (76).

This new appreciation of nature serves to link Grahame’s benevolent Pan to Burnett’s evocation of Pan in *The Secret Garden*. Burnett evokes Pan through the character of Dickon. A number of scholars have discussed Dickon’s similarity to Pan. Notably, György Tóth reads Dickon as a ‘Pan-like figure, a free spirit of the Yorkshire Moors’ (144); Lori N. Brister also links Dickon to Pan (107); Ulf Boëthius asserts that Dickon’s flute connects him to Pan (191); Christine Wilkie links Dickon to pagan traditions (78) and Adrian Gunther also reads Dickon as a ‘pan (sic) figure’ (164).

Significantly, Mary’s introduction to Dickon is similar to the circumstances under which Rat and Mole discover Pan in *The Wind in the Willows*. Mary hears ‘a low, peculiar whistling sound’ (57) – similar to the music Rat, and then later Mole, hear – and searches for its source (57) just as Rat redirects the boat toward the backwater in order to pursue the sounds he hears (Grahame 75). Like Grahame’s Pan, Burnett’s representation of Dickon also evokes Merivale’s benevolent Pan:

A boy was sitting under a tree, with his back against it, playing on a rough wooden pipe. He was a funny looking boy about twelve. He looked very clean and his nose turned up and his cheeks were as red as poppies and never before had Mistress Mary seen such round and such blue eyes in any boy’s face. And on the trunk of the tree he leaned against, a brown squirrel was clinging and watching him, and from behind a bush nearby a cock pheasant was delicately stretching its neck to peep out, and quite near him were two rabbits sitting up and sniffing with tremulous noses – and actually it appeared as if they were all drawing near to watch him and listen to the strange low little call his pipe seemed to make (57).

Burnett’s Dickon/ Pan resembles the mythical Pan – as Ulf Boëthius asserts, Dickon’s pipe symbolically connects him to traditional representations of Pan (191) – but Burnett’s Pan lacks any element of terror. Dickon’s voice is ‘low’, he
has a ‘smile spread all over his face’ (57), and the quote above indicates the way in which the animals are drawn to him. Importantly, Grahame’s benevolent Pan inspires some feelings of trepidation in Rat, but Burnett’s Dickon/Pan puts Mary at ease. While she is initially ‘rather shy’ (57), Mary soon ‘[forgets] that she had felt shy’ after she ‘look[s] into [Dickon’s] funny face with the red cheeks and round blue eyes’ (58). Importantly, Mary’s first encounter with Dickon – like Grahame’s Pan – also increases her appreciation of nature, just as Grahame’s Pan leads Rat and Mole to view the River Bank in a novel way (Grahame 76). Dickon imparts wisdom pertaining to nature which serves to connect Mary to the gardens surrounding Misselthwaite Manor. Notably, Dickon assures Mary that the robin likes her (58–9), provides her with gardening tools (58) and tells Mary about the flower seeds he provided for her (59).

Importantly, Seth Lerer characterises both Grahame’s Pan and Burnett’s Dickon/Pan as inherently liminal. Lerer asserts that ‘Mole’s Pan and Mary’s Dickon both lie at the nexus of the natural and supernatural worlds. Each one brings the creatures into harmony, like a little local Orpheus, taming the animals into an audience’ (258). While both of these Pan figures ‘lie at the nexus of the natural and supernatural worlds’, and are hence liminal figures, they are nevertheless largely ‘benevolent’ (Merivale 134) figures who function as a ‘Friend and Helper’ (Grahame 77). In contrast, Barrie’s (Peter) Pan is a liminal figure who becomes a threatening force in the Peter Pan texts. While Carrie Wasinger posits similarities between Grahame’s Pan and Barrie’s Pan, asserting that both act as ‘patron saint[s] for lost children’ (228), Barrie’s evocation of Pan contains threatening elements.

My discussion will focus chiefly on Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, in which

---

6 Dickon’s affinity with animals will be addressed in another section of this chapter.
7 It is interesting to note Rat’s ambivalence in this section of the text. While Rat initially denies being afraid of the ‘Friend and Helper’, his feelings are complex:

‘Rat!’ [Mole] found breath to whisper, shaking. ‘Are you afraid?’
8 My reading here is in stark contrast to Samuel Hynes’ reading of Peter Pan. Hynes links Barrie’s (Peter) Pan with the ‘domesticated’ images of Pan associated with the Edwardian era: ‘… Barrie, as someone remarked, had robbed Pan to pay Peter’ (146).
9 Wasinger refers to Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens here, and cites the fact that Peter protects Maimie Mannering after she is locked in Kensington Gardens at night as evidence of his kindly behaviour (228).
Barrie utilises imagery that clearly links both Peter Pan and Maimie Mannering to the mythical Pan.

Peter Pan’s characterisation as a ‘Betwixt-and-Between’ (*Kensington Gardens* 17) attests to his liminality. This liminality is also significant in Barrie’s evocation of Pan as Peter fluctuates between a benevolent Pan and a Pan-figure who is linked to ideas of terror. Christine Roth argues that Peter Pan’s liminality is associated with his links to the god Pan. As ‘incarnation of the Greek god Pan’, Peter is ‘both immortal spirit and fleshy boy’ embodying ‘sexual passion and unsullied youthfulness’ (54). Indeed, scholars link the traditional Pan’s association with sexuality to Barrie’s Peter Pan far more often than they do to either Grahame’s or Burnett’s Pan: notably, Carrie Wasinger discusses this idea extensively (2006).

Scholars have discussed the link between Peter Pan and the mythical Pan extensively. Karen Coats asserts that Barrie’s Pan inspires the “panic” associated with the mythical Pan, and posits that Neverland remains relatively calm while Peter is absent, but dramatically alters when he returns (15-16). Similarly, Kayla McKinney Wiggins asserts that Peter Pan is a ‘fierce enemy’ like his ‘namesake’ (89). Wiggins also cites Peter’s influence over nature – notably, his ability to wake the sun – as evidence of his connection to the Greek god (89). Like Coats and Wiggins, Karen McGavock highlights the way in which Peter Pan is linked to the ‘deadly terror’ (Wasinger 228) associated with the god Pan:

Barrie is … true to the spirit of the original conception of Pan as a devilish raider of childhood, a plunderer or abductor of children. In *Peter Pan*, Barrie explains that Peter Pan does not benignly find children who [have] “fall[en] out of their perambulators when the nurse is looking the other way” [101]; he steals them. (McGavock, 206)

Importantly, this criticism refers primarily to Barrie’s novel, *Peter and Wendy* (1911) and play, *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* (first produced in 1904, and first published in 1928). Scholars have also examined the way in which Barrie represents Pan in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* – notably,
McGavock asserts that Barrie ‘render[s] the connection [between Peter Pan and Pan] explicit’ by depicting Peter riding a goat and playing pipes (197).

Peter’s pipe and goat are indeed seminal to his representation as a Pan figure in Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. Importantly, Peter fashions his pipe out of reeds (18), just as the mythical Pan did (Stableford 743; Powell 190). This pipe highlights Peter’s liminality in the text. Peter gains the ability to deceive the birds by ‘“playing leaping fish”’ or ‘play[ing] the birth of birds’ (prompting ‘the mothers’ to ‘turn around in their nests’) on his pipe (18-19), signalling his status as a ‘“half-and-half”’ (16). Peter’s pipe awards him the ability to ape sounds from the gardens, symbolically linking him both to nature and, importantly, to his ‘avatar … the pipe-playing Grecian goat-god’ (Wasinger 227). It is important to note that the Pan-figures in each of the three texts discussed in this section share an ability to engage animals with his piping, but only Barrie’s (Peter) Pan deceives animals (and, indeed, humans10) through the use of his pipe. This deception is linked to Wasinger’s discussion (which I address above) of the way in which Barrie evokes a ‘devilish’ Pan (206). Interestingly Barrie’s text also evokes—and tempers—Pan’s ‘seductive’ (Stableford 743) behaviour when Peter ‘play[s] a beautiful lullaby’ and later a ‘play[s] [his mother] a lovely kiss’ on his pipe (38-9). It is also important to note that Peter plays his mother a ‘kiss’ in order to avoid touching her, so in this case, (Peter) Pan is distanced from the mythical Pan’s ‘lustful’ and ‘lecherous’ qualities (Powell 190).

Peter’s goat is also linked to his representation as a Pan-figure in Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. Maimie Mannering, who becomes trapped in Kensington Gardens after the ‘Closing of the Gates’ (45) is seminal to this representation. Maimie encounters Peter Pan, and the pair share adventures in the gardens—notably, the fairies build a house around Maimie as she lies sleeping in the snow (53-4)11—but Maimie chooses to return to her regular life instead of staying with

---

10 ‘And think of the music of his pipe. Gentlemen who walk home at night write to the papers to say they heard a nightingale in the Gardens, but it is really Peter’s pipe they hear’ (Barrie 29).
11 The significance of this image—and its links to ideas of mortality—is explored in the previous chapter.
Peter (62). Significantly, Maimie has a toy goat with which she frightens her brother Tony at night:

And by and by when they were alone with their night-light she would start up in bed crying ‘Hsh! what was that?’ Tony beseeches her, ‘It was nothing – don’t, Maimie, don’t!’ and pulls the sheet over his head. ‘It is coming nearer!’ she cries. ‘Oh, look at it, Tony! It is feeling your bed with its horns – it is boring for you, O Tony, oh!’ and she desists not until he rushes downstairs in his combinations, screeching. (42)\textsuperscript{12}

Barrie clearly evokes Pan’s (sexually) threatening qualities here. Importantly, Carrie Wasinger explicitly links the ‘sexual threat’ of this passage, with the goat (231). When Maimie gives the goat – and, as Wasinger asserts, the sexual threat associated with it (231) – to Peter (63)\textsuperscript{13}, his similarity to Pan is strengthened even further. After Maimie advises Peter to ask the fairies to turn the goat into ‘one convenient for riding on’ (63), Peter is able to ride through ‘the pastoral setting’ (Wasinger 227) of Kensington Gardens ‘playing sublimely on his pipe’ (63-4).

While Peter is truly associated with Pan in this section of the text, ideas of liminality are still present. Peter often ‘jumps off his goat and lies kicking merrily on the grass’ but still has ‘a vague memory that he was a human once’ (64).

The evocations of Pan in \textit{The Wind in the Willows}, \textit{The Secret Garden} and \textit{Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens} (as well as in the other \textit{Peter Pan} texts) serve to highlight the pivotal role natural spaces play in Edwardian texts. In evoking an ‘Arcadian shepherd-god’ (Stableford 743), these texts also signal the importance of natural (pastoral) spaces in the period at large. The following sections will discuss three texts which utilise natural spaces to discuss various ideas pertaining to liminality: L. M. Montgomery’s \textit{Anne of Green Gables}, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s \textit{The Secret Garden}, and finally, Kenneth Grahame’s \textit{The Wind in the Willows}.

\textsuperscript{12} Tony clearly experiences “Panic” here.
\textsuperscript{13} Importantly, Wasinger also asserts that Maimie transfers the ‘sexual threat’ associated with the goat from the domestic to the fantastic at this point in the text (231).
‘Scope for imagination’: Natural Spaces in *Anne of Green Gables*

The natural spaces L. M. Montgomery evokes in *Anne of Green Gables* are inextricably connected to ideas of liminality. Natural spaces feature prominently in Montgomery’s text. These natural spaces encompass many different outdoor spaces in which Anne spends time: notably, the Cuthbert farm surrounding Green Gables, Lovers’ Lane, Violet Vale, the Birch Path (88), the Haunted Wood (134) and the Lake of Shining Waters (22). Elizabeth Rollins Epperly discusses the way in which Anne ‘celebrates the joyous beauty of the natural world’ (7), and similarly, Marilyn Solt (1992), Emily Cardinali Cormier (2010) and Val Czerny (2010) emphasise the pivotal role natural spaces play in Montgomery’s text. Significantly, Irene Gammel asserts that Anne challenges the popular Romantic method of appreciating nature in a merely aesthetic sense, instead engaging in an intense sensory connection with the natural world that ultimately leads to the creation of Anne’s ‘embodied self’ (231). Marilyn Solt emphasises the intense connection Anne shares with natural spaces in the text. Solt posits a psychic connection between Anne and the Prince Edward Island landscape, asserting that the blossoms Anne observes as she journeys toward Green Gables represent the way in which Anne herself will blossom as the text progresses (62).

The intense sensory connection Gammel discusses is highlighted by the way in which Anne invests natural spaces with imaginative qualities in the text. Anne invests natural spaces with imaginative – and intensely personal – significance. One of the most notable examples in the text includes the names Anne awards the natural spaces she encounters. Anne begins the process of naming the natural spaces around her as soon as she begins the journey to Green Gables with Matthew. As they pass through ‘the “Avenue”’ – a ‘stretch of road four or five hundred yards long, completely arched over with huge, wide-spreading apple-trees, planted years ago by an eccentric old farmer’ (21), Anne is captivated by the beauty of the natural space. Anne ‘lean[s] back in the buggy … her face lifted rapturously to the white splendour above’ (21). However, it is worth noting that this site of “natural” beauty is actually man-made: the ‘beauty’ that seems to ‘strike [Anne]
dumb’ is the work of ‘an eccentric old farmer’ (21). Anne’s experience prompts her to rename ‘the Avenue’: it quickly becomes ‘the White Way of Delight’ (22). Similarly, Anne renames ‘Barry’s Pond’ on the same journey:

‘Oh, I don’t like that name, either. I shall call it – let me see – the Lake of Shining Waters. Yes, that is the right name for it. I know because of the thrill. When I hit on a name that suits exactly it gives me a thrill.’ (22)

This ‘thrill’ suggests the imaginative connection Anne creates as she names – and engages with – natural spaces. Indeed, Anne locates her imaginative tendencies in natural spaces a number of times throughout the text – notably, as she asks Rachel Lynde permission to go into her garden: “…may I go out into your garden and sit on that bench under the apple-trees while you and Marilla are talking? There is so much more scope for imagination out there” (65). Similarly, Anne utilises her imagination as a means through which to engage with a path used to guide cows to a pasture and move wood in winter (89). Anne divests the path of its prosaic qualities and names it ‘Lovers’ Lane’. Anne’s explanation of the natural space is significant:

‘Not that lovers ever really walk there,’ she explained to Marilla, ‘but Diana and I are reading a perfectly magnificent book and there’s a Lovers’ Lane in it. So we want to have one, too. And it’s a very pretty name, don’t you think? So romantic! We can imagine the lovers into it, you know. I like that lane because you can think out loud there without people calling you crazy.’ (89)

Anne’s description of ‘Lovers’ Lane’ highlights her tendency to alter natural spaces according to her imaginative vision. While Anne largely leaves the natural spaces

---

14 Indeed, Anne does not encounter a single “natural” space in which humans have not intervened. This human intervention renders all of the natural spaces featured in Anne of Green Gables liminal. The liminal nature of the natural spaces in the text is linked to Turner’s ‘peculiar unity’ of the liminal: ‘…that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both’ (Turner 99). For example, ‘The Avenue’ is neither natural nor man-made, and yet is both.
in the text untouched physically, she invests them with meaning which is fostered by her own imagination – notably, she imagines the lovers into Lovers’ Lane.

Anne’s tendency to imbue the text’s natural spaces with her creations renders them liminal. The division between the (sometimes prosaic) reality of the natural spaces, and the imaginative ideas with which they become imbued, is tenuous. Natural spaces in the text gain significance as figments of Anne’s imagination, but importantly, they also exist within the reality of the textual world. Anne invests the natural world surrounding Green Gables with such imaginative qualities from the first morning she wakes up in the East Gable Room. Anne engages with the natural world through her bedroom window (31) which, as the threshold which purportedly separates the domestic and natural world, is an important liminal space in itself. After opening the stiff window (31), Anne sees a ‘huge cherry tree… so close that its boughs tapped against the house’; a ‘big orchard … showered over with blossoms’ and ‘lilac trees purple with flowers’ (32). Anne’s view extends toward a ‘green field lush with clover’, toward ‘scores of white birches’, and finally, toward ‘a sparkling blue glimpse of sea’ (32).

Significantly, Anne regards natural spaces as ripe for imaginative investment: ‘[t]here [is] scope for imagination’ (31) in the myriad natural spaces she sees through her window.

While this ‘scope for imagination’ (31) allows Anne to engage closely with the natural spaces she encounters, there are two notable events in the text when Anne’s imaginative investment in natural spaces carries negative consequences. Anne’s experiences in the ‘Haunted Wood’ (134) and in the ‘Lake of Shining Waters’ (22) depict the work of ‘A Good Imagination Gone Wrong’ (131) as she encounters both imagined and real danger through her imaginative investment in these natural spaces. This imaginative investment renders these spaces highly liminal, as their presence in the text becomes inextricably linked to the narratives Anne imposes upon them.

Anne imbues the ‘Haunted Wood’ (which is, in reality, a spruce wood) that lies between Green Gables and Orchard Slope (134) with images of ghosts. Anne

——

15 Significantly, this is the title of the chapter detailing Anne’s experiences in the ‘Haunted Wood’ (131-6).
expresses fear when Marilla tells her to go through the wood to Orchard Slope (the Barry household) and ask for a sewing pattern at dusk (134). Anne’s fear stems from the fact that she has invested the natural space with imaginative creations, and rendered it liminal. Anne and Diana imagine the wood is haunted in order to alter one of the “commonplace” (135) natural settings surrounding them:

‘We just got this up for our own amusement … A haunted wood is so very romantic, Marilla. We chose the spruce grove because it’s so gloomy. Oh, we have imagined the most harrowing things. There’s a white lady walks along the brook just about this time of night and wrings her hands and utters wailing cries. She appears when there is to be a death in the family. And the ghost of a little murdered child haunts the corner up by Idlewild; it creeps up behind you and lays its cold fingers on your hand — so. Oh, Marilla, it gives me a shudder to think of it. And there’s a headless man stalks up and down the path and skeletons glower at you between the boughs. Oh, Marilla, I wouldn’t go through the Haunted Wood after dark now for anything. I’d be sure that white things would reach out from behind the trees and grab me.’ (135)

Anne links each of her imaginative creations to a specific portion of the spruce wood. The ‘white lady’ walks near the brook, the ‘ghost of a little murdered child’ is near ‘Idlewild’ (a ring of birch trees Anne named (79)), and skeletons are located ‘between the boughs’. However, Anne’s imaginative investment in the spruce wood creates a negative experience in the natural space. As she is faced with the prospect of walking through the spruce grove she begins to ‘plead’ and ‘cry’ (135) as she holds the natural space in ‘mortal dread’. It is not, however, the ‘Haunted Wood’ per se that frightens Anne — rather, it is the liminal status of the space that she finds threatening. As Anne travels through the ‘Haunted Wood’, objects associated with the natural place take on new — and frightening — meaning. A ‘white strip of birch bark’ makes Anne’s heart ‘stand still’ and the ‘long-drawn wail of two old boughs rubbing against each other’ causes her to perspire with fright (136). It is the uncertainty which surrounds these liminal objects which renders them
frightening – indeed, Anne vows to be “cont-t-tented with c-c-commonplace places” in future (136).

While investing the Haunted Wood with imaginative ideas proved frightening, Anne was not placed in any physical danger. Conversely, Anne’s decision to enact the journey of Elaine the Lily Maid, from Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885) (549-85) encompasses a very real threat to her safety. In acting out Tennyson’s poem, Anne once again imbues a natural space – in this case, the Lake of Shining Waters – with imaginative significance\(^\text{16}\). Indeed, Ann F. Howey asserts that Anne re-writes Tennyson’s text through her imaginative play (86). Anne and her friends re-enact the poem after studying it at school (177-184), but as Anne is ‘enjoying the romance of her situation to the full’ (179), the flat\(^\text{17}\) in which she is floating begins to leak (179), and she finds that she is in a ‘dangerous plight’ (180). As Anne passes a bridge she is able to climb from the flat and cling to one of the piles (180).

Anne is placed in a liminal position in this section of the text. Importantly, Anne’s physical position is liminal: she is in the middle of a lake and clinging to a bridge – specifically, one of the beams supporting it (180). However, Anne’s position within the natural space is also rendered liminal here through her own

\(^{16}\) It is important to note the influence of Romantic ideas here, and indeed, throughout the novel. Anne’s experience of nature is profoundly influenced by Romantic ideas (Epperly 10). Epperly asserts that ‘Montgomery’s heroines’ (and I assert Anne in particular) ‘[trail] Wordsworthian clouds of glory’ and that they ‘thrill to the beauty and splendour in the hills and fields and woods and shore and sky’ (11).

\(^{17}\) Wendy E. Barry, Margaret Anne Doody and Mary E. Doody Jones explain that ‘flat’ refers to the ‘flat-bottomed dory’ (Montgomery 178) featured earlier in the text. A ‘flat’ is a ‘small flat-bottomed rowboat used in sea fishing to go out from a larger vessel or alongshore, or in lakes and ponds’ (295).
imaginative investment in the lake. Like her experience in the Haunted Wood, Anne’s imagination once again imbues the natural space with ideas of danger:

The minutes passed by, each seeming an hour to the unfortunate lily maid. Why didn’t somebody come? Where had the girls gone? Suppose they had fainted, one and all! Suppose nobody ever came! Suppose she grew so tired and cramped that she could hold on no longer! Anne looked at the wicked green depths below her, wavering with long, oily shadows, and shivered. Her imagination began to suggest all manner of gruesome possibilities to her. (180-1)

The ‘gruesome possibilities’ Anne’s imagination suggests highlight the liminal nature of her fears. Significantly, Montgomery’s text does not specifically detail the ‘gruesome possibilities’ the natural space represents, but instead evokes ‘wicked green depths’. Interestingly, this lack of detail about potential threats in the natural is contrasted against the way in which Anne lists dire possibilities relating to her friends (180).

Anne augments the natural spaces presented in *Anne of Green Gables* with images from her own imagination, and hence, imbues them with ideas of liminality. However, as Anne’s experiences in the Haunted Wood and her experience as an ‘unfortunate lily maid’ (180) demonstrate, this liminality proves threatening in the text’s natural spaces.

**Missel Moor and Liminality: The Secret Garden**

The eponymous garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1911) is seminal to the myriad ideas the text explores. The garden is so ubiquitous in Burnett’s text that it is impossible to separate representations of natural spaces from the text’s other concerns. Notably, the garden is linked to ideas of class, Empire, mothering, gender, illness, and, finally, death. Ruth Y. Jenkins asserts that ‘[t]he novel is a tour de force of Victorian concerns that found in gardens a useful metaphor – control of the landscape, gendered roles, and competing philosophies of education and child development’ (81). The garden is, as Madelon S. Gohlke argues, the ‘symbolic center’ (895) of Burnett’s text, and is so pervasive that at

76
times it seems to function as an ‘agentive character in its own right’ (Morgan 81). The natural spaces featured in the text – the secret garden to which the title refers, the other gardens which surround Misselthwaite Manor, and Missel Moor – are characterised by liminality. Significantly, it is this liminality that allows the natural spaces to engage with myriad concerns.

This liminality of the gardens is linked to *The Secret Garden*’s pastoral status. Importantly, Gwyneth Evans explicitly addresses the text’s indebtedness to the pastoral mode, asserting that *The Secret Garden*’s emphasis on ideas of interiority signal an explicitly feminine pastoral (20). However, the natural spaces featured in *The Secret Garden* are also linked to the pastoral mode by the manner in which they are situated between ideas of the “wild” and the “tame”. The natural spaces featured in the text are tempered by their connection to the domestic, just as representations of domestic space are often complicated by their connection to various ideas of “nature”.

While certain aspects of natural spaces are introduced to domestic space in *The Secret Garden* – for example, Dickon takes wild animals into Colin’s bedroom (117) – it is also important to note the way in which natural spaces are symbolically evoked as characters give free rein to their “nature”. Scholars have examined the way in which Mary and Colin are connected to natural spaces in the text – principally, to the secret garden. Notably, Adrian Gunther asserts that while ‘all depends on the garden’ in the text, the garden, in fact, ‘depends on Mary’ (165). Similarly, Linda T. Parsons states that Mary is located ‘at the center of the garden’ with the ‘positive, life-giving power it emanates’ (259). While they are often less complimentary about the role he plays in it, scholars have also noted Colin’s connection to the garden: Gunther emphasises the way in which Colin claims ownership of the natural space (166), and Meredith R. Ackroyd also discusses Colin’s relationship to the garden (and, indeed, the manor and its associated labour) in terms of ownership (55).

However, while their connection to the secret garden is central to the text, it is also important to note the way in which Mary and Colin both evoke myriad ideas of “nature” throughout *The Secret Garden*. Both Mary and Colin succumb to their tempers: Mary ‘[sobs] unrestrainedly’ and ‘passionately’, and ‘[does] not even try to control her rage’ (18) as she yells at Martha soon after arriving at Misselthwaite. Colin’s tantrums are mentioned a number of times throughout the
text – significantly, Colin throws a tantrum that is so intense that the adults seek Mary’s assistance to calm him down ‘just because they guessed she was almost as bad as Colin himself’ (102). Mary’s and Colin’s tantrums symbolically evoke natural spaces as they link the children to savage – and, I assert, animalistic – images. However, Burnett’s animalistic characters differ from the animal/human residents of Grahame’s River Bank who follow ‘animal-etiquette’ (Grahame 10): notably, Mary stamps her foot (102-3) and Colin screams, gasps and writhes (102-3). The association between the two children and animalistic imagery is made explicit as Mary discusses Colin’s behaviour with his nurse. After Colin and Mary fight (98-9), Colin’s nurse states that ‘“if [Colin had] had a young vixen of a sister to fight with it would have been the saving of him”’ (my emphasis, 100). Burnett’s use of the word ‘vixen’ is especially significant here, conjuring an image of a (savage) female fox. Interestingly, images of wild, untamed “nature” are more clearly evoked by Mary’s and Colin’s behaviour than by representations of the natural spaces in Burnett’s text.

The natural spaces that are represented in Burnett’s text are characterised by ideas of liminality. Significantly, the Manor is intricately connected to the surrounding gardens, which are in turn linked to Missel Moor. While it is somewhat neglected in scholarship surrounding Burnett’s text, it is incredibly important to examine the moor. Like the formal gardens surrounding Misselthwaite Manor, the moor is characterised by liminality: it does not function as the ‘endless, dull, purplish sea’ (15) Mary initially sees, but is significantly linked to ideas of the domestic, and functions as a site upon which ideas of Empire are negotiated. This domestication of the moor is linked to the character of Dickon Sowerby: Dickon functions as a pivotal link between both the moor and the formal gardens surrounding Misselthwaite Manor, and importantly, between the moor and domestic spaces in the text. Consequently, Dickon also embodies ideas of liminality in the text.

The spatial relationship between the formal gardens (including the secret garden) and the moor which surround Misselthwaite Manor serves to highlight their liminal status. As she describes the ‘grand big place’ to which she is travelling with Mary, the housekeeper Mrs Medlock describes Misselthwaite Manor as being located ‘on the edge of [a] moor’ (10). This description of Misselthwaite Manor establishes its liminality from the opening of the text: Misselthwaite is not central
in this image, but is instead on the ‘edge’. Significantly, the moor is prioritised here. It is also interesting to note the way in which Mrs Medlock appears to describe the manor itself as being located on the edge of the moor – her description neglects the (assumedly extensive) formal gardens that surround Misselthwaite. It is also significant to note the first natural space Mary sees through her bedroom window – a boundary between the domestic and natural spaces in the text, which functions similarly to Anne Shirley’s window in *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery 31) – is the moor, rather than the manicured (albeit dormant) gardens surrounding the house (15). The absence of the gardens in this section of the text functions in two ways: the formal gardens are symbolically linked to Misselthwaite Manor, subsumed into the domestic space, but are also initially established as secondary to the moor.

The moor features prominently from the opening of Burnet’s text. Scholars have discussed the eponymous secret garden extensively, but have awarded the moor surrounding Misselthwaite Manor comparatively little attention\(^{18}\). While the secret garden is clearly central to the text, and facilitates Mary’s and Colin’s transition, the moor also represents a significant (liminal) space in Burnett’s text, and consequently, also deserves further critical attention. Indeed, the moor functions – just as Alun Morgan asserts the secret garden does – as ‘an agentic character in its own right’ (81).

Significantly, the moor is represented as a somewhat barren site at the text’s opening. As the pair travel across the ‘great expanse of dark’ (14) toward Misselthwaite Manor, Mrs Medlock also tells Mary that the moor

‘isn’t fields nor mountains, it’s just miles and miles and miles of wild land that nothing grows on but heather and gorse and broom, and nothing lives on but wild ponies and sheep.’ (14)

Mrs Medlock defines the moor in negative terms (by what it is not) rather than by what it is. This description serves to emphasise the paradoxical nature of the moor: while it is ostensibly a ““dreary place”’ that ““nothing grows on”’ (14), Mrs

\(^{18}\) Notably, Jane Darcy (1995) and Alun Morgan (2011) have included discussion focusing on the moor in their examinations of Burnett’s text.
Medlock’s comments also highlight the fact that the moor is undeniably a site which is characterised by (wild) life. Significantly, this ‘wild’ life extends beyond the moor: Ben Weatherstaff’s ‘blunt frankness’ is directly attributed to the fact that he is ‘a Yorkshire moor man’ (25, my emphasis).

However, the ‘wild’ (14) nature of the moor is quickly abandoned in the text as the way in which the natural space is represented begins to alter. Mary initially comments that she ‘hate[s]’ the moor (16), but representations of the natural space rapidly change. The moor becomes associated with its ability to heal Mary, and importantly, this healing precedes the healing work of the secret garden in the text:

the big breaths of rough fresh air blown over the heather filled her lungs with something which was good for her whole thin body and whipped some red colour into her cheeks and brightened her dull eyes when she did not know anything about it. (27)

While Mary was aware the secret garden existed at this point in the text (21), the healing power of the ‘rough fresh air’ is prioritised here. The moor – or, more specifically, the wind which ‘sweep[s] down from the moor’ (27) – is explicitly linked to Mary’s psychic healing as it ‘stirs’ her mind and ‘awaken[s] her imagination’ (41). Burnett’s text emphasises that there ‘can be no doubt that the fresh, strong, pure air from the moor had a great deal to do with it’ (41). Significantly, while a robin Mary befriends directs her toward the missing key (40) and toward the entrance to the secret garden, it (45) is once again the wind – which, given its prominence in the preceding text, I read as wind from the moor – that ultimately reveals the entrance (45). The moor also continues to play a vital role in the text after Mary spends time in the secret garden. Significantly, Burnett links images of the moor to the idea of health. After Mary suggests that she and Colin stop talking about death, and ‘talk about living’ (87) and ‘Dickon’ instead, the link between ideas of health and the moor is made explicit: ‘[t]o talk about Dickon meant to talk about the moor’ (87).

Dickon is presented as synonymous with nature in general, and the moor in particular, throughout The Secret Garden. Dickon is one of Martha Sowerby’s younger brothers, who, along with Mary, makes the secret garden ““come alive””
Dickon has “lived on th’ moor with [animals] so long” that he “think[s] [he is] one of them” (59): “Sometimes I think p’raps I’m a bird, or a fox, or a rabbit, or a squirrel, or even a beetle, an’ I don’t know it” (59). Dickon’s eyes are the same colour as the sky above the moor (66), he is “as strong as a moor pony” (112) and he has “chased about th’ moor in all weathers same as the rabbits does” (63). Dickon’s subjectivity is intricately bound to the moor: ‘[as] she [Mary] came closer she noticed that there was a clean fresh scent of heather and grass and leaves about him, almost as if he was made of them’ (58). These descriptions signal Dickon’s liminality, inextricably linking him to the natural space. Dickon’s behaviour also establishes him as liminal. As she discusses Dickon’s impending visit to Colin’s bedroom, Mrs. Medlock predicts that Dickon would be “more at home” than either she or Mr. Roach (the head gardener) could ever be in Colin’s room (120). Similarly, Mr. Roach comments that Dickon would be “at home in Buckingham Palace or at the bottom of a coal mine” (120). Dickon is also presented as omnipresent in the text, as Mary correctly assumes that ‘everybody who knew the moor must know Dickon’ (112).

This connection with Dickon establishes the moor as a pastoral space. The moor is pastoral in the sense that it is inextricably linked with ideas of the domestic – more specifically, the moor is imbued with the idea of “home”. Descriptions of the moor and the Sowerby cottage are often conflated in the text. The ‘moorland cottage’ (32) in which Dickon lives with his parents and nine of his ten siblings becomes synonymous with descriptions of nature at large, and the moor in particular. When they are confined to the cottage due to rain, the Sowerby children ‘tumble about and amuse themselves like a litter of rough, good-natured collie puppies’ (32). Significantly, Mary also connects the moor and the cottage a number of times throughout the text: she is equally excited about the prospect of visiting both the moor and the cottage (52) and talks about ‘Dickon and the cottage on the moor’ with Colin (89). Dickon is symbolically connected with both the moor and the cottage. This connection is also made explicit as Mary urges Colin to stop discussing his imminent death (86): ‘[t]o talk about Dickon meant to talk about the

---

19 Burnett makes a number of references to the ‘crowded’ (29) Sowerby cottage (28, 32, 87).
20 It is significant to note that neither Mary nor Colin ever visit the cottage or the moor, despite the fact that the possibility is mentioned a number of times throughout the text (32).
moor and the cottage and the fourteen people who lived in it’ (87). This emphasis on the connection between the cottage and the moor serves to domesticate the natural space.

The domestication of the moor has significant implications for the way in which the text addresses ideas of Empire. Indeed, one representation of the Sowerby cottage in particular highlights ideas of Empire:

[Martha] was full of stories of the delights of her day out. Her mother had been glad to see her and they had got the baking and washing all out of the way. She had even made each of the children a dough-cake with a bit of brown sugar in it.

‘I had ’em all pipin’ hot when they came in from playin’ on th’ moor. An’ th’ cottage all smelt o’ nice, clean hot bakin’ an’ there was a good fire, an’ they just shouted for joy. Our Dickon he said our cottage was good enough for a king to live in.’

In the evening they had all sat round the fire, and Martha and her mother had sewed patches on torn clothes and mended stockings and Martha had told them about the little girl who had come from India and who had been waited on all her life by what Martha called “blacks” until she didn’t know how to put on her own stockings. (41-2)

It is important to note how this passage contrasts the comfort of the Sowerby cottage (“home”) and hence, the moor, against India. While Martha has completed washing and baking, and the children return from the moor to a cottage ‘good enough for a king to live in’, India is associated with ideas of languor: Martha tells her (English) siblings that Mary doesn’t know how to put on her own stockings. Jane Darcy asserts that Missel Moor functions as a boundary (and, I assert, a liminal space) that serves to separate Misselthwaite from the outside world (215). Mary mistakes the Missel Moor for the ‘sea’ as she journeys toward Misselthwaite (14), which serves to highlight the significance of her return from the Empire. Maureen M. Martin addresses the tensions that exist in the text’s representation of
India/Empire, asserting that Burnett’s text symbolically separates England and India (138). Significantly, as she discusses the way in which Mary emerges from the Indian landscape in the text, Mary Goodwin suggests that

The setting of The Secret Garden spans three worlds, each of which offers its own moral climate to mirror the meteorological and topographical environment: India, a fen of deadly vapours and punishing heat that causes physical, moral and spiritual lassitude; the bleak and desolate Misselthwaite Manor in the Yorkshire moors, whose inmates languish in a Gothic maze of dark lonely rooms; and the gardens and countryside beyond the manor, alive with secret power to breathe spirit back into dying matter. (106)

I assert that the ‘gardens and countryside beyond the manor’ are not the only places that hold the power to ‘breathe spirit back into dying matter’. The moor, which is far from ‘bleak and desolate’, also fulfils a healing function in the text.

From the River Bank to the Wild Wood (and home again): The Wind in the Willows

Like the moor in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden, the natural spaces represented in Kenneth Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows are characterised by liminality. The natural spaces depicted in Grahame’s text are highly domesticated, and comprise both a retreat from, and a return to, domestic space. This trope of retreat and return, which is repeated numerous times, also signals the (hyper-)

21 These tensions will be discussed in detail in chapter four.  
22 It is important to address the status of The Wind in the Willows as a children’s text. Interestingly, Grahame’s text occupies a liminal position: while Peter Hunt highlights that it has been ‘a fixture of children’s book publishing and of child-culture’ ‘almost since its publication’ (Children’s Literature 244), he also asserts that ‘The Wind in the Willows may be the greatest case of mistaken identity in literature: it is commonly accepted as an animal story for children – despite being neither an animal story, nor for children’ (“Introduction” viii). Marah Gubar includes Grahame in her discussion of authors who utilised ‘formally complex’ narratives in the texts they wrote for children, and includes Grahame in her list of authors who discuss traditionally adult concerns such as ‘household bills and checkbooks’ in children’s texts (25). Jackie C. Horne and Donna R. White also note the presence of adult concerns, such as ‘homes, money, social position, (conveniently invisible) servants; and, above all, leisure’ in The Wind in the Willows, and suggest that Rat, Mole, Toad and Badger function as adults – albeit ‘adults of a very strange cast’ (xvi). This chapter will address The Wind in the Willows as a children’s text, despite the fact that it does not always ‘fit comfortably into the history of children’s literature’ (Hunt, “Introduction” vii).
pastoral status of Grahame’s text. While depicting highly domesticated natural spaces, *The Wind in the Willows* highlights ambivalence surrounding the idea of “home”.

Grahame’s text depicts myriad journeys away from domestic spaces, although these journeys are nevertheless characterised by their connection to ideas of “home”. Indeed, the opening of Grahame’s text depicts an escape from the confines of the domestic sphere: while Mole is spring-cleaning, and he has ‘dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his fur, and an aching back and weary arms’, he feels ‘something up above calling him imperiously’ and ‘bolt[s] out of [his] house without even waiting to put on his coat’ (5). After Mole leaves his secluded home he is greeted by ‘sunshine’ and ‘soft breezes which caress his heated brow’. Mole is ‘bewitched, entranced, fascinated’ (6) by the river he encounters, and he quickly declares his experience of the natural space to be “better than whitewashing!” (5).

However, it is important to note that the natural spaces represented in Grahame’s text – and to which Mole purportedly escapes – are also highly domesticated. Notably, Grahame’s text emphasises the importance of ‘animal-etiquette’ (10, 12, my emphasis), discusses ‘Nature’s Grand Hotel’ and the animals who are staying ‘en pension’ (92), and, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Rat and Mole forget ‘the larger stressful world of outside Nature’ as they gaze through a window at a canary in a cage and think of their own home ‘distant a weary way’ (49).

The text’s plot also makes its concern with the domestic explicit: *The Wind in the Willows* depicts a series of journeys away from, and toward, domestic spaces. Notably, Mole leaves his home (5) and meets Rat on the River Bank (7), and the pair returns to Rat’s home. Rat and Mole visit Toad at Toad Hall (17-18), and the trio embark on an ill-fated journey in a ‘gipsy caravan’ (19-20). Significantly, it is during this journey that Toad first glimpses a motor-car (22). At the close of the short journey the trio returns home once again. Similarly, Mole attempts to visit Badger in the Wild Wood, becomes lost, and, along with Rat, seeks refuge at Badger’s house. Rat and Mole subsequently return to the River Bank. Importantly, Toad’s narrative is also concerned with ideas of the domestic: after he escapes from his imprisonment at Toad Hall (facilitated by Badger, Rat and Mole) (61-7), Toad steals a motor-car (69), and is imprisoned (71), but escapes and immediately
attempts to return home once again (85). The close of the text is also explicitly concerned with the idea of home, as Mole, Rat and Badger enable Toad to return to Toad Hall.

This connection between nature and ideas of the domestic signals the pastoral status of The Wind in the Willows. A number of scholars have discussed the way in which Grahame’s text engages with the pastoral. Notably, John David Moore identifies an ambivalence which is ‘endemic to pastoral’ in Grahame’s text (48). Importantly, Moore connects this ambivalence to a number of ideas in The Wind in the Willows, such as women (52-3) and childhood (48, 51). Geraldine D. Poss also highlights the text’s pastoral status as she discusses the trope of retreat and return in Grahame’s text, emphasising the ‘spirit of divine discontent and longing’ (Grahame 6) which first lures Mole away from home and later draws him back again. Poss states that this is an example of ‘the epic pattern in little: the journey out and the journey back’ (83-4). Daniel E. Harris-McCoy also discusses the pastoral status of The Wind in the Willows, asserting that it is ‘an example of Georgian pastoral literature’ (93). However, Harris-McCoy also states that ‘a hitherto unrecognized allusion to a passage from Vergil’s Aeneid’ is present in the text (91-2). Harris-McCoy argues that this allusion ‘complicates but ultimately contributes to The Wind in the Willows as a work of pastoral literature’ (92) by ‘import[ing] a foreign entity, namely Vergil’s Aeneid and its contents, into the pastoral environment’ (93). However, Harris-McCoy ultimately asserts that this reference to Vergil’s Aeneid ultimately functions to emphasise the pastoral: addressing the human ruins which form part of Badger’s house, Harris-McCoy notes that ‘[h]uman civilization, like the Aeneid allusion [in Grahame’s text] passes quickly, while nature and pastoral abide’ (95).

The Wind in the Willows is indeed inextricably connected to the pastoral. Importantly, Mole succinctly summarises the pastoral concerns present in the text as he leaves Badger’s house:

As he hurried along, eagerly anticipating the moment when he would be at home again among the things he knew and liked, the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of the tilled field and hedgerow, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingering, the cultivated garden-plot. For others the asperities, the stubborn endurance, or the clash
of actual conflict, that went with Nature in the rough; he must be wise, must
keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid and which held
adventure enough, in their way, to last for a lifetime. (47)

In resisting the ‘asperity’ and ‘clash of…conflict’ associated with ‘Nature in the
rough’, Mole is embracing a pastoral – and, hence, domesticated – view of nature.
The ‘tilled field and hedgerow’, the ‘frequented pasture’ and the ‘cultivated garden-
plot’ (my emphasis) evoke the very images of intervention in nature that
characterise the pastoral mode. It is also important to note that, at this stage of the
text, Mole’s ‘home’, to which he ‘eagerly anticipat[es]’ returning, is actually by
the river. John David Moore notes that ‘[t]o live by the river is to live the
comfortable paradox of the pastoral – to be active yet inactive, changing yet
changeless, aimless yet purposeful’ (51). Indeed, Rat embodies this sentiment as
he describes ‘simply messing about in boats’ (7):

> Nothing seems really to matter, that’s the charm of it. Whether you get
away, or whether you don’t; whether you arrive at your destination or
whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at
all, you’re always busy, and you never do anything in particular, and when
you’ve done it there’s always something else to do, and you can do it if you
like, but you’d much better not. (8)

Significantly, this passage also highlights ideas of liminality that characterise the
text. Rat’s comment that it doesn’t matter ‘whether you arrive at your destination
or whether you arrive somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all’
foreshadows the myriad journeys on which the characters embark in the text. As
they travel through the text’s (domesticated) natural spaces, Mole, Rat, Badger and
Toad embody Moore’s ‘comfortable paradox of the pastoral’ (51), occupying a
liminal position in which they explore ideas of home.

It is also important to note that Grahame’s text emphasises boundaries. Boundaries are established near the beginning of the text: Rat displays ambivalence
about the Wild Wood\textsuperscript{23} and vetoes any travel to the ‘Wide World’: “‘Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World,” said the Rat. “And that’s something that doesn’t matter, either to you or me. I’ve never been there, and I’m never going, nor you either, if you’ve got any sense at all. Don’t ever refer to it again, please’” (10).

John David Moore emphasises that the boundaries are ‘significant’ in Grahame’s text: these borders enclose ‘an inner sanctum, a piece of countryside that for the most part is as domesticated as the homes of Rat, Mole, or Badger’ (46). Importantly, the ‘map’ Moore describes also functions to define ‘inside and outside, insiders and outsiders’ (46). These boundaries render the settings in Grahame’s text liminal, as all of the text’s settings are enclosed within a ‘safe’ and ‘innocent pastoral milieu’ (Poss 84).

Natural spaces are rendered liminal – and pastoral – through their connection to the domestic. Marah Gubar notes the ‘deep regard for the pleasures of civilised life’ (25, my emphasis) which permeates Grahame’s text, despite the fact that she situates Grahame’s text as an ‘animal story’\textsuperscript{24} (25). Mole leaves his own home at the opening of the text (5) and meets Rat on the River Bank (7). Importantly, the River is domesticated from the moment it is introduced in the text: while Rat is capable of swimming, and is “‘more in the water than out of it most days’” (14), his experience of the River is largely mediated by “‘simply messing about in boats’” (7). The liminal status of the River is also emphasised as Rat and Mole row towards a backwater for lunch. Like the River, this backwater is also domesticated: it is adjacent to the ‘foamy tumble of a weir, arm-in-arm with a restless dripping mill-wheel, that held up in its turn a grey-gabled mill-house’ (10). Importantly, the picnic Rat and Mole share also conjures ideas of domestic space as it is replete with domestic comforts such as a ‘luncheon-basket’, a ‘table-cloth’ (10) and a mustard pot (12)\textsuperscript{25}. Mole’s first journey – which sets a precedent for all of his subsequent journeys – comprises a shift from one domestic space to another.

\textsuperscript{23} “‘That? O, that’s just the Wild Wood,” said the Rat shortly. “We don’t go there very much, we river-bankers’” (9).

\textsuperscript{24} Tess Cosslet notes the ‘wildly fluctuating degrees of anthropomorphism’ in Grahame’s text (172). Grahame’s representation of animals will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

\textsuperscript{25} Rat’s picnic also includes “coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickleckedgherkinssladfrenchrollscressandwichespottedmeatgingerbeelemonadesodawater–’ (8)!
domesticated/natural space (and, a number of scholars assert, to another milieu). This trope is also repeated throughout the text – notably, as Mole and Rat travel with Toad in a ‘gipsy-caravan’ (19-20). The caravan in which the trio travels is replete with domestic comforts such as “biscuits, potted lobster and sardines” (19).

The characters’ homes also highlight the way in which ostensibly natural spaces – such as the animals’ natural habitats – are domesticated in the text. Badger’s house represents the way in which natural and domestic spaces are conflated in Grahame’s text: Rat and Mole follow Badger ‘down a long, gloomy, and, to tell the truth, decidedly shabby passage, into a sort of central hall, out of which they could dimly see other long tunnel-like passages branching, passages mysterious and without apparent end. But there were doors in the hall as well – stout oaken comfortable-looking doors’ (37-8). The dark, twisting passages suggest a “natural” habitat suited to a badger, but the ‘stout oaken comfortable-looking doors’ suggest a domestic/natural habitat suited to Badger. Like Rat’s ‘bijou riverside residence’ (6), with its ‘bright fire in the parlour’ and ‘arm-chair’ (14), Badger’s house abounds with domestic comforts: notably, Badger fetches Rat and Mole ‘dressing-gowns and slippers’ as they ‘toast themselves at the fire’ (38).

Significantly, while The Wind in the Willows evokes the idea of “home” in myriad natural spaces in the text, it also presents a sense of ambivalence toward this idea. This ambivalence is linked to the pastoral trope of retreat and return, and is especially significant in the chapter titled ‘Dulce Domum’. ‘Dulce Domum’ sees Mole return to his home for the first time after he flees it in favour of the River Bank. Importantly, Mole’s retreat from the domestic begins the action of the text:

26 Notably, Karen A. Keely asserts that Mole’s uncertainty and reliance on “animal-etiquette” in the first chapter of the text suggests upward class mobility (115). Despite asserting that Grahame is ‘inconsistent’ in representing the animals’ ‘class markers’ in the text (116), Keely asserts that Mole’s attempts at upward social mobility are evidenced through his initial meeting with Rat, and his subsequent introduction to the Otter (17-18). Similarly, Peter Hunt identifies the animals’ class markers despite their ‘superficial fur’: ‘Mole … is a householder, well-respected in his neighbourhood; Rat is a gentleman of leisure; Badger an ageing squire; and Toad, for all his anarchy, is a substantial landowner’ (245).

27 Significantly, these passages in Badger’s house resemble the ‘labyrinthine’ (Adams 42, Morgan 87) Misslethwaite Manor that Gillian Adams and Alun Morgan discuss in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden.

28 Daniel E. Harris-McMcCoy defines ‘Dulce Domum’ as “‘Home Sweet Home’ or ‘Sweetly Homeward’” (91, n.2).
‘[s]omething up above’ calls Mole ‘imperiously’ (5, my emphasis), and he is unable to resist. However, Mole’s call toward home again – which forms one of the many pastoral returns in the text – is just as strong. As Rat and Mole walk toward the River Bank after ‘a long day’s outing with Otter’ (48), ‘the summons’ reaches Mole and ‘[takes] him like an electric shock’ (49). After Rat refuses to heed Mole’s wish to return home, the ‘summons’ intensifies: ‘the wafts from his old home pleaded, whispered, conjured, and finally claimed him imperiously’ (51, my emphasis). The repetition of ‘imperiously’ (5, 51) is highly significant: it serves to unify Mole’s experiences, and encapsulates both his retreat from, and his return to, domestic space.

However, it is also important to note Mole’s contrary experiences when he reaches the domestic space. While he ‘crie[s] freely and helplessly and openly’ (51) when he is denied the prospect of returning to his own home, and ‘beam[s] at the sight of … objects so dear to him’ (51) when he enters his home once again, Mole is also anxious about his homecoming. Mole laments bringing Rat to ‘this poor, cold little place’ (54) and ‘dolorously’ tells Rat that he has no food to offer him (55). While Mole’s house is eventually imbued with domestic trappings similar to those which characterise Rat’s home on the River Bank, such as a table ‘set thick with savoury comforts’, the close of the chapter displays Mole’s ambivalence:

He saw clearly how plain and simple – how narrow, even – it all was; but clearly, too, how much it all meant to him, and the special value of some such anchorage in one’s existence. He did not at all want to abandon the new life and its splendid spaces, to turn his back on sun and air and all they offered him and creep home and stay there; the upper world was all too strong, it called to him still, even down there, and he knew he must return to the larger stage. But it was good to think he had this to come back to, this place which was all his own, these things which were so glad to see him again and could always be counted upon for the same simple welcome. (59-60)

Home functions as an ‘anchorage’ and a foil to the ‘upper world’, but Mole remains ambivalent about his return to the domestic, opting instead to return to the ‘larger stage’ of the River Bank and its surrounds. Mole’s reluctance to return to his own
home mimics the way in which the trope of retreat and return functions in the pastoral: Mole paradoxically returns to his own ‘narrow’ home each time he retreats/escapes into the domesticated natural spaces of Rat’s, Badger’s and Toad’s homes in particular, and the River Bank and Wild Wood at large.

This ambivalence about home is also evident in Rat’s narrative; in particular, Rat’s experiences with the Sea Rat (97-105). The pastoral trope of retreat and return is also present in this narrative, and becomes especially significant because the retreat and return also conjures images of the ‘Wide World’ (Grahame 10). Rat’s meeting with a Sea Rat highlights ideas of ambivalence toward the domesticated natural space he inhabits. Importantly, Rat feels ‘restless’ (92) and finds it ‘difficult to settle down to anything seriously’ (93) before he meets a Sea-Rat (97) who is travelling toward the South. Rat becomes entranced by the Sea-Rat’s stories (103), and attempts to leave his home to begin a similar journey, but is intercepted by Mole (104-5). The Sea Rat tells Rat tales of travelling on a ship (98-100), and significantly, Rat experiences a vicarious retreat as he listens to the Sea Rat’s stories:

Spellbound and quivering with excitement, the Water Rat followed the Adventurer league by league, over stormy bays, through crowded roadsteads, across harbour bars on a racing tide, up winding rivers that hid their busy little towns round a sudden turn, and left him with a regretful sigh planted at his dull inland farm, about which he desired to hear nothing. (101)

While Rat formerly vetoed any discussion of the ‘Wide World’, it now paradoxically becomes an idealised space to which he wishes to escape.

Raymond Williams discusses the way in which the pastoral ideal embodies ‘tension with other kinds of experience: summer with winter, pleasure with loss; harvest with labour; singing with a journey; past or future with the present’ (18). Terry Gifford also discusses the ‘explicit or implicit contrast to the urban’ that characterises the pastoral (2). Importantly, John David Moore cites Williams’ contention as he discusses the ‘greatest irony’ of the pastoral: the fact that ‘the creation of much pastoral vision’ depends on the ‘intrusion of the city into the country’ (59). Rat’s desire to leave the domestic space serves to highlight this
irony: having experienced the pastoral ideal, in his domesticated natural space, Rat wishes to leave it. Importantly, this vicarious ‘intrusion of the city’ (Moore 59) created by the Sea Rat’s tale signals Rat’s ambivalence toward the domestic. After Rat ‘struggles desperately’ to escape the Mole’s clutches, he ‘[seems] to [lose] all interest for the time in the things that … make up his daily life’ and he becomes ‘listless’ (104). Rat’s return to the domestic demonstrates his ambivalence. While Mole notes that Rat’s ‘cure’ has begun, Rat’s vicarious retreat and return nevertheless signal ambivalence toward the domesticated natural spaces he inhabits in the text.

This chapter discusses the way in which the pastoral is represented in selected Edwardian children’s texts. These texts evoke the pastoral in their depiction of the connection between domestic and (ostensibly) natural space. The pastoral is an inherently liminal mode, as its repeated trope of retreat and return, with its connection to the Turnerian liminal process, suggests. The texts discussed in this chapter – including Barrie’s ‘Peter Pan’ texts, Montgomery’s Anne of Green Gables, Burnett’s The Secret Garden and Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows – highlight liminal aspects of domesticated natural spaces as they elide distinctions between “domestic” and “natural” space.
In a thesis discussing iterations of liminality in late-Victorian and Edwardian texts for children, it is important to note the inherently liminal nature of the school story genre. As I will discuss in more detail below, this genre is characterised by its adherence to formulaic tropes: a child attends (boarding) school, where they initially encounter difficulties such as bullying, or enter a period of rebellion in which they flout school rules and commit misdemeanours; the protagonist may be (falsely) accused of a more serious offence, such as theft or even drunkenness, and threatened with expulsion; but after overcoming their difficulties (for example, confronting the bully or being exonerated), the protagonist continues to function as part of the school community, taking part in sport or other activities particular to the school. The pedagogical spaces addressed in this chapter are characterised by their emphasis on the liminal. As Beverly Lyon Clark writes:

The school story … is and is about a peculiarly marginal institution, a boundary institution between family and world, between private and public spheres. Schooling is, furthermore, addressed to marginal individuals, to those between childhood and adulthood … School is also curiously marginalized by its being a temporary site from the perspective of the individual. It situates the student in the position of always becoming … School is, in short, multiply a border case, a site for working out contrary impulses. Located at the fracture between adult and child, it plays out “the impossible relation between adult and child” (Rose 1), and between adults and children’s literature. (7-8)

The emphasis placed on myriad forms of learning – as opposed to pedagogy – in texts belonging to the school story genre also adverts to the educative effects of Turner’s liminal phase, in which the liminal subject gains insights about the originary culture.

This chapter will focus on school stories because of the doubly pedagogical nature of the school story genre, in which the setting represents the text’s function: Beverly Lyon Clark states that ‘[a] story about school is a school’ (7). As it depicts
characters learning lessons at school – most often outside the classroom – the school story genre also inculcates ideologies to the reader. While any text (especially children’s texts) can be said to inculcate ideologies, Clark attributes special significance to the pedagogical function of school stories. Indeed, for Clark, the overt didacticism of early Victorian texts is subsumed into the school story genre: ‘Didacticism did not disappear during the Golden Age of children’s literature in the late nineteenth century; its function was in part transferred to, in part epitomized by, the emergent genre of “the” school story, where the story about school became a school by pretending to disavow schooling’ (10).

Rosemary Auchmuty posits that the school story represents a genre ‘in which school is not just a backdrop but rather is the raison d’être of the novel’ (“School Stories” 405). Both Sheila Ray and Clark posit the importance of the boarding school setting (as opposed to a day school setting) to the genre (Ray 467; Clark 3), and Ray stipulates that this setting is usually a single-sex school (467), concurrent with the model of education at the time, in which the majority of boarding schools were strictly demarcated by gender1. However, school stories are not merely, as Bonnie Graves suggests, ‘stories whose primary setting is school’ (695). By virtue of its setting in a boarding school – often a British public school2 – the school story typically depicts a middle-class (and upper-class) milieu: Vallone asserts that

---

1 Jane Hamlett cites the ‘small radical private school Bedales’ (64) as an exception. Bedales was a co-educational (90) non-denominational school (66). However, the boarding arrangements at Bedales, in which boys slept in the ‘central building’ and girls slept in a separate boarding house, ‘successfully minimised contact between the sexes’ (90).

2 In a chapter exploring the nationalist ideologies attached to children’s fiction set in British public schools, it is important to note the differences between British school stories and other iterations of the genre. Auchmuty posits that the school story genre is ‘British in origin’ (“School Stories” 405). Vallone asserts that the genre ‘never really thrived outside of Britain’ (1810), and Ray similarly posits that ‘[a]uthors of children’s books elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon world showed little interest in writing school stories’ (470). However, as I discuss below, Auchmuty notes that British school stories were ‘freely distributed’ throughout ‘English-speaking Commonwealth countries’ (“School Stories” 410).

Clark, as well as Wells, Nimon and Parker, cite the greater prevalence of coeducational schools and a lack of boarding schools in America as a factor affecting the relative paucity of American examples of the school story (Clark 14; Wells, Nimon and Parker 631). For Clark, the ‘greater heterogeneity’ of American education meant that ‘the U.S. school story followed a different trajectory from that of the recognized British tradition’ (14). While scholars cite Louisa May Alcott’s Little Men (1871) (Clark 13) and Susan Coolidge’s What Katy Did at School (1873) (Clark 13; Ray 470) as examples, Clark nevertheless locates these texts within a wider tradition of family-based stories, and, indeed, both examples appear as later instalments in a series which did not have its impetus in a school environment (13).
The school story essentially emerged from the exclusive world of the English public school. The statement attributed to the Duke of Wellington and well-known today, that the 1815 Battle of Waterloo was “won on the playing fields of Eton,” points to the long-standing belief that wealth and social position produce the statesmen, soldiers, and financiers who will one day run the world. Many nineteenth-century British school stories, written for boys and later adapted for girls, can be traced to this selfsame fascination with the camaraderie and rituals that emerge from the exclusive environment of the boarding school. (1805)

Ironically, while this ‘exclusive environment’ is inherently pedagogical, many texts belonging to the school story genre are also characterised by their lack of emphasis on academic learning. Vallone posits that ‘[s]uch tales rarely concern curriculum, address pedagogy, or impart information; from the earliest examples of Anglo-American school stories onward, the focus has been on the emotional (sometimes physical), psychological, and social development of the child character apart from the family’s influence’ (1805). Indeed, this removal from the family’s influence attests to the inherent liminality of the school story genre. As they attend school (particularly boarding school), characters enter a liminal space characterised by its removal from the structure associated with the family home.

As I will discuss below, this removal from the child’s home, or from the domestic sphere, is key. School stories often emphasise the ‘importance of self-reliance and loyalty to peers’ (Vallone 1805) and these particular lessons become very important in the context of British imperialism as the prospect of work in the outer reaches of the empire necessitates separation from domestic space. School stories are often characterised by their adherence to a formulaic plot structure and ‘familiar ingredients’ such as ‘cricket, prefects, fagging, beatings, and a strict code of honour’ (Wells, Nimon and Parker 630). Giorgia Grilli posits that

3 For a more detailed account of the formulaic nature of the (boys’) school story genre, see Beverly Lyon Clark’s Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies and Tattling Tomboys (2001), p. 4.
the ingredients were always the same: friendships and corporal punishment, jokes and deceit, customs and traditions, a sense of belonging, protection and privilege to be worthy of which the individual had to prove his own loyalty and valour – increasingly of a (sic) athletic and moral rather than intellectual kind. Learning and study were rarely the theme of this genre, appearing if anything as a tiresome nuisance getting in the way of the boys’ lives. (659)

Indeed, Auchmuty posits that the school story formula ‘is so deeply embedded in the British cultural heritage that it is recognized even by those who never read school stories in their youth’ (“School Stories” 410). Auchmuty notes that the popularity of the *Harry Potter* franchise has been attributed to readers’ (and viewers’) familiarity with the tropes associated with the school story genre (410). These enduring tropes have been reworked in numerous contemporary texts: two recent iterations of *St. Trinian’s* films (*St. Trinian’s* (2007) and *St. Trinian’s 2: The Legend of Fritton’s Gold* (2009)) form notable examples, and boarding school settings feature in numerous texts. However, the ubiquity of the school story genre also carries with it significant ideological freight: Auchmuty posits that ‘the values of the school story were assimilationist rather than radical’ (“School Stories” 408). This emphasis on the ‘assimilationist’ nature of school stories also adverts to the Turnerian theorisation of the liminal, in which resocialisation follows traditional rituals. The school setting functions as a liminal space through which characters are inculcated into mores which ultimately serve to maintain the existing social structure.

As a result of the isolation enforced by the nature of the boarding school setting, school stories depict a microcosm in which contemporary ideologies play out. Keith Evans emphasises the pivotal role social context plays in pedagogy, and asserts that ‘[t]he aims, the extent, the organisation, the curricula and the methodology of education … reflect the existing institutions and the dominant attitudes, values and forces which characterise a particular society’ (1). Schools – and school stories – promulgate ideologies pertinent to the given time. As ideology alters, so too does the idealised student: as she charts the development of the school story genre Isabel Quigly notes a shift from the valorisation of the ‘Christian gentlemen’ associated with Dr. Thomas Arnold in the mid-Victorian period to the
production of ‘able administrators’ idealised by schools of the late-Victorian period (2-3).

In discussing the ideologies associated with the school story genre, it is important to discuss seminal texts which assisted in establishing its attendant tropes. Many scholars – including Richards (2,3) Clark (10-11), Ray (468), Auchmuty (“School Stories” 407) and Grilli (653) – posit the centrality of Thomas Hughes’ 1857 text *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* to the genre. Tom Brown attends Rugby, where he meets his friend East, and together the pair enjoy life at a public school. Tom overcomes initial difficulties, including being bullied by Flashman (178, 183-4) (which he stoically endures, so as not to flout the injunction against seeking assistance from schoolmasters (170, 173) before standing up to Flashman and ultimately fighting him (191-2)), he enjoys taking part in school activities such as swimming, fishing (200), and playing various team sports (notably Rugby and cricket). Tom and East briefly rebel, committing various misdemeanours (188), but Tom’s period of rebellion is checked by the arrival of Arthur, a new student who the Headmaster Dr Thomas Arnold places under Tom’s care in the second half of the text. Arthur functions as a significant means through which the text’s ideologies surrounding the ideal of muscular Christianity are communicated, as he inculcates moral reform in Tom (including an injunction against cribbing (323) and a renewed dedication to his faith). *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* inculcates a model of masculinity in which physicality and religious zeal are advocated in equal measure.

Another notable example of the genre is Dean Frederic W. Farrar’s 1858 text *Eric; or, Little by Little*. *Eric* is differentiated from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* by its increased sentimentality. Dieter Petzold notes the text’s ideological difference from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*: ‘[i]f *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* is informed by broad-church “muscular Christianity”, *Eric* is saturated with low-church Evangelicalism’ (18). Petzold posits that while *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* focuses on inculcating moral education as a means of socialisation, *Eric* focuses more closely on moral education that inculcates lessons pertaining to ‘Good and Evil’ (19).

4 For a more detailed discussion of the difference between Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* and Farrar’s *Eric*, see Petzold’s “Breaking in the Colt: Socialization in Nineteenth-Century School Stories” (1990).
significant example of the (boys’) school story genre. *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s* was serialised in the *Boy’s Own Paper* between 1881 and 1882 and published in book form in 1887 (Ray 468). Ray posits that *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s* popularised significant genre conventions that ‘were to become the staple ingredients of school stories: the arrival of the new boy and his adjustment to school ways, school matches, the school magazine, conflict between juniors and seniors, concerts, friendships and rivalries, and villainies and blackmail’ (468). Unlike Eric, *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s* ‘tended to downplay religion and emphasize sports’ (Vallone 1808). L. T. Meade’s *A World of Girls* (1886) offers an example of the development of the girls’ school story genre, which will be discussed in more detail below.

In discussing school stories, it is also important to acknowledge the genre’s treatment of class. As I noted above, school stories depict a middle-class milieu, but Evans notes that working-class children could only hope to receive a ‘narrowly conceived and self-contained’ elementary education; secondary education (including ‘the endowed grammar schools and private secondary institutions’) was ‘the preserve of the well-to-do’, while ‘the very wealthy’ attended public schools (8). Evans posits that ‘there developed two parallel and mutually exclusive systems of education to mirror the class-conscious nature of Victorian society’ (8). While Grilli posits that public schools following the Arnoldian model (upon which Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* was based) ‘replaced noble birth as a passport to being part of the ruling class’ (648), and the Christian gentleman became a ‘generally attainable’ (Quigly 18) ideal, the ubiquitous rigid class structures of Victorian Britain (Quigly 9-10) remained intact and evident in the public school ethos5. Unlike the model of education it depicts, texts belonging to the school story genre were widely available to, and consumed by, members of the working class. Both Vallone (1805) and Auchmuty (“School Stories” 410) note that the school story was set in a world of privilege that differed greatly from that which many of

5 Quigly asserts that ‘[c]lass was a fact of life and social history, taken so much for granted in the public schools’ heyday that only unusual people could get outside it in their sympathies. To most people of the time, even the most humane, ‘people’ meant those of their own class. Even the socialist Thomas Hughes made his Tom Brown say: ‘All boys are sent to a public school in England’, without adding, even to himself, ‘all boys like me’, and without for a moment considering the minute proportion of the boy population that was in fact like himself’ (10).
its readers inhabited. The prevalence of school stories in the periodical press assisted in disseminating their attendant ideologies to a wide audience⁶ (Grilli 655; Vallone 1805) as magazines such as the Boy’s Own Paper ‘produced endless stories cast in the same mould (sic.)’ (Grilli 655).

The school stories discussed in this chapter – Angela Brazil’s The Fortunes of Philippa (1906) and The New Girl at St. Chad’s (1912), and Rudyard Kipling’s Stalky & Co. (1899) – share a common emphasis on ideas of national identity. In the context of British imperialism, school stories depict children engaging with ideas of nationhood in both implicit and explicit ways, and in doing so, advert to the significant role imperialism will later play in their lives: Stalky & Co. offers a particularly pertinent example, in which former students working as imperial administrators visit the school, and in which the final tale (‘Slaves of the Lamp, Part II’) depicts a number of adult former students who have themselves worked as imperial administrators in turn, but the emphasis placed on health and, by extension, national efficiency, is also noteworthy in Brazil’s texts. This emphasis on nationalist ideologies – and, by extension, imperialist ideals – in school stories finds its impetus in the nationalist ideologies inculcated in public schools of the period, in which an emphasis on competition and ‘robust’ (Hamlett, At Home in the Institution 13) physicality led to an increased emphasis on organised sport, notably between 1860-1870 (Grilli 652).

Such an emphasis on nationhood even extended to militarisation in schools: Hamlett cites the ‘martial interior’ of schools toward the end of the century (Hamlett cites the presence of armouries), and posits that ‘schools were influenced by the growing drive towards national efficiency that swept Britain after the Boer War raised fears over the ability of British men to defend their nation’ (At Home in the Institution 70). While this emphasis on militarisation is obviously pertinent to Stalky & Co., it is also significant to note that both of the Brazil texts discussed in this chapter contain overt references to the possibility of war.

The texts addressed in this chapter engage with liminality in different ways. Brazil’s texts, which feature female protagonists in single-sex schools,

⁶ Vallone notes that Talbot Baines Reed has been credited with ‘popularizing [the] boys’ public (i.e., boarding) school novel in books first serialized in the … Boy’s Own Paper’ (1805).
systematically suppress aspects of liminal characterisation associated with the protagonists Philippa Seaton and Honor Fitzgerald. This suppression adverts to the importance of maintaining uncontested visions of (English) national identity: notably, Philippa, who was born in South America, loses her ability to speak Spanish, and Honor, whose liminal characterisation is inextricably connected to her Irish identity, finds those qualities that signify her ‘wild Irish’ identity (St. Chad’s, chap. 2) are suppressed through time she spends at school. Conversely, Stalky & Co. adverts to the efficacy of liminal characterisation as a means through which future soldiers and imperial administrators may effectively maintain British hegemony in the (Indian) colonies. In doing so, the text looks forward to the idealised liminality featured in Kim (1901), which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Unlike the systematic suppression of liminality that takes place in Brazil’s The Fortunes of Philippa and The New Girl at St. Chad’s, Stalky & Co. valorises the quality of “‘stalkiness’”, with its implications of wiliness (Kipling 13), and the liminal characterisation it implies.

Dramatising the Liminal: Angela Brazil’s Girls’ School Stories

The girls’ school stories discussed in this chapter – Angela Brazil’s The Fortunes of Philippa: A School Story (1906) and The New Girl at St. Chad’s: A Story of School Life (1912) – are characterised by their emphasis on liminal identities. The protagonists are distanced from the model of Englishness exhibited by their fellow schoolmates, and the texts dramatise their difference, and its resolution, through the trope of the liminal7. As previous chapters have demonstrated, liminality can

---

7 L. T. Meade’s Wild Kitty (1897) offers another example of a girls’ school story that engages with ideas of liminal characterisation. However, Meade’s text does not specifically seek to resolve it in the same way the Brazil texts I discuss in this chapter do. Kitty’s ‘wild’ characterisation and behaviour (84, 87, 145, 186, 221) are inextricably linked to her Irishness, and signal her distance from her English schoolmates: indeed, Kitty declares that she is “‘not fit for England’” (193; also 375). Kitty resists attempts to change and “‘tame’” (50) her (33-4, 50, 54, 68), but it is notable that Kitty’s ‘wild Irish’ (8) liminality must be symbolically removed from England at the close of the text, as her father concedes that she is “‘too wild for England’” (364) and she is allowed to return to Ireland.
become problematised, and Golden Age texts may suggest that liminality requires resolution: the discussion of Colin Craven in chapter one provides an example.

It is important to note that including discussion of late-Victorian and Edwardian girls’ school stories in a separate section of this chapter does not represent an attempt to further marginalise the genre of the girls’ school story, which has been subject to criticism for a perceived lack of literary merit, but to highlight its unique thematisation of the liminal. Rosemary Auchmuty discusses the way in which the girls’ school story has been treated with ‘contempt’ (A World of Girls 9), and Isabel Quigly’s discussion of the girls’ school story in The Heirs of Tom Brown: The English School Story (1985) is emblematic of the way in which girls’ school stories have been marginalised in studies of the school story genre. For Quigly, girls’ school stories ‘never achieved the status of the boys’ books’ (212), there are no girls’ school story authors whose talent reached ‘anywhere near the level of Kipling or Wodehouse, or even of Reed’ (212), and while ‘girls’s (sic) school stories have a sociological interest, telling us a great deal about their time and its attitudes … it is very hard to consider them as more than (occasionally charming) kitsch’ (212). Indeed, Quigly reads Brazil’s books as ‘inescapably silly, childish and insubstantial’ (218).

However, the girls’ school story has played a significant (and often underrated) role in the formation of the school story genre. As Kristine Moruzi and Michelle J. Smith assert, ‘Sarah Fielding’s The Governess; or, The Little Female Academy (1749) marked the beginning of the genre’ (xiii), and L. T. Meade’s A World of Girls (1886) marked another significant intervention in the girls’ school story genre. In a thesis that focuses largely on canonical texts, I have chosen to include discussion of Brazil in particular because of her lasting influence on the genre. Rosemary Auchmuty writes that ‘Angela Brazil was the pioneer and perhaps the most famous’ (A World of Girls 4) author of the school story genre. Bobbie Wells similarly posits Brazil’s ‘indisputable influence on the shape and style of the girls’ school story’ (103). Shirley Foster and Judy Simons write that Brazil ‘played a significant part in the creation of a new and highly influential literary genre … that addressed a specifically female juvenile readership’ (192), and Patricia Craig highlights that Brazil played a significant part in establishing the genre conventions
associated with girls’ school stories: namely, an ‘emphasis on sports, a lot of high jinks and much egregious slang’ (86)\(^8\).

Two examples of Angela Brazil’s (Edwardian) girls’ school stories – *The Fortunes of Philippa: A School Story* (1906) and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s: A Story of School Life* (1912) – depict protagonists born in South America (*Philippa* 9) and Ireland (*St. Chad’s*, chap. 1) respectively travelling to England to attend school. The birthplace of each of the protagonists signals their distance from traditional models of English (feminine) subjectivity, toward which they are directed as they spend time at English girls’ boarding schools. Importantly, these schools also inculcate ideologies surrounding national identity. In each text, school is presented as a microcosm of society at large: notably, *The Fortunes of Philippa* sees a character declare that “‘a boarding-school is the world in miniature’” (38). As part of the texts’ projects of depicting these new students – *The Fortunes of Philippa*’s eponymous Philippa Seaton and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s*’ Honor Fitzgerald – slowly adapting to school mores and assimilating into their respective school communities, the interstitial categories they occupied before attending school are strictly suppressed.

This suppression reflects anxieties pertaining to both gender and national identity. Both Philippa and Honour are depicted at the opening of each text as falling below the contemporary standard of femininity: Philippa’s father laments the fact that there is ‘something wrong about [her]’ (*Philippa* 7) and Honor’s mother similarly notes her ‘tempestuous’ daughter’s ‘strong, uncontrolled character’ and ‘troublesome’ nature (*St. Chad’s*, chap. 2). While their emphasis differs slightly, both *The Fortunes of Philippa* and *The New Girl at St Chad’s* chart the process of the female protagonist achieving a desired model of femininity. While *The Fortunes of Philippa* presents the development of good manners (*Philippa* 38-9, 54) and traditionally feminine accomplishments such as sewing, flower arranging and serving afternoon tea appropriately (*Philippa* 43, 54) as seminal aspects of the curriculum at The Hollies, *The New Girl at St. Chad’s*...  

\(^8\) It is also important to note the relationship between girls’ education and its representation in literature. Moruzi and Smith write that the ‘advent of formalized girls’ schooling in the 1850s and the establishment of women’s colleges in the 1860s’, and the 1870 Education Act, increased girls’ participation in the educational environment (xvi). Wells, Nimon and Parker posit that such developments in girls’ education influenced the development of the girls’ school story (631).
depicts Chessington College as distanced from the earlier models of femininity these accomplishments imply. Indeed, the house-mistress Miss Maitland vetoes “‘early Victorian hysterics”’ but is nevertheless ‘surprised’ when Honor ‘leave[s] the tea-table without permission’, committing ‘an unpardonable offence’ in defying the ‘very complete code of etiquette observed at the house’ (*St. Chad’s*, chap. 1). Michelle J. Smith asserts that ‘the Edwardian school novels of Angela Brazil celebrated the contemporary idea of less restricted girlhood, while still providing a sense of restraint in a somewhat segregated feminine world’ (“Edwardian School Stories” 143). Both texts advert to the importance of feminine self-sacrifice and the inculcation of mores surrounding students’ duty and responsibility towards others (in particular, *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* extends this imperative to include service to the working classes). As Smith highlights, this imperative is connected to ideas of national identity and the future of the nation. Effective education aimed to ensure girls’ aptitude as future caregivers (Smith, “Edwardian School Stories” 146): Smith asserts that ‘[t]he intellectual instruction of the girl is inseparable from the moral responsibility she will take up in the home, and her ability to propagate physical health in her children’ (“Edwardian School Stories” 147).

It is important to note that *The Fortunes of Philippa* and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* depict different models of girls’ education. *The Fortunes of Philippa* is set at ‘The Hollies’, which admits only 40 students (*Philippa* 38) and is located in ‘an old-fashioned red-brick house with a trim garden, and playing-fields beyond’ (*Philippa* 40). The ‘hard’ work and ‘discipline’ (*Philippa* 40) of the Hollies is
combined with aspects of the curriculum that inculcate traditional models of femininity:

When I try to recall our system of education, I think it must have been somewhat unique, for it was an endeavour to combine the very best points of a thoroughly modern course of study with the rigid rules and exemplary behaviour of a past generation. We learnt mathematics at The Hollies, but we curtsied to our teachers as we left the room; we had chemistry classes in a well-fitted laboratory, but we were taught the most exquisite darning and the finest of open hem-stitch; we played cricket, hockey, and all modern games, but we used backboards and were made to walk round the school-room balancing books upon our heads, to learn to hold ourselves erect; we had the best of professors for languages and literature, and we were taught to receive visitors graciously, to dispense afternoon tea, arrange flowers, and to write and answer invitations correctly. (Philippa 54)

While The Hollies emphasises the importance of sport (and, as I will discuss below, physical health), the school’s ideology is carefully differentiated from that of other schools in the world of the text: notably, “Eclestone” is “exactly like a boys’ public school; they have a matron to do all the mending, and the girls play football” (Philippa 44), but the students are “most unladylike” and “behave … badly, sitting on the edges of the drawing-room tables, and gulping their tea, and bolting their cake, and talking the most atrocious slang” (Philippa 44). The Hollies places emphasis on the attainment of qualities associated with traditional models of femininity, even allowing students to wear ‘pretty dress[es]’ in place of the uniform dictated at other schools (44).

Unlike the small school ‘The Hollies’, The New Girl at St. Chad’s is set in a large public school of 200 students – Chessington College – with five Houses, one of which is the eponymous St. Chad’s (St. Chad’s chap. 3). The curriculum at Chessington College differs from that of The Hollies, with less overt emphasis placed on attaining traditionally feminine accomplishments (although they certainly feature in the text), and a far more increased emphasis on physical
activity. The curriculum at Chessington, which features classes in the morning and compulsory games (such as cricket and tennis) in the afternoon, represents

a well-arranged and reasonable division of time, calculated to include right proportions of work and play. *Mens sana in corpore sano* was Miss Cavendish’s favourite motto, and the clean bill of health, the successes in examinations, and the high moral tone that prevailed throughout pointed to the fulfilment of her ideal. *(St. Chad’s, chap. 3)*

Smith identifies Miss Cavendish’s motto as ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’ (“Edwardian School Stories” 150), and indeed, this emphasis on physical health in the school environment is highlighted in both texts: both The Hollies and Chessington College are noted for their ‘bracing’ air *(Philippa 40; St. Chad’s chap. 3)* and the ‘fresh winds’ at Chessington College ‘blow away all chance of germs, and … ensure a thoroughly wholesome and bracing atmosphere’ *(St. Chad’s chap. 3)*. The Chessington students are ‘straight and well-grown’, with ‘bright eyes’, ‘clear skins’ and ‘blooming cheeks’ *(St. Chad’s chap. 3)*, and the students at The Hollies walk each morning to drink the waters of Helston Spa *(Philippa 55)*. *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* advocates a ‘suitable diet’, allowing only ‘plain cakes’ and limiting the amount of jam students are allowed to receive from home *(St. Chad’s chap. 1)*. *The Fortunes of Philippa* also addresses the importance of students’ diet and dictates that students must finish all of the food on their plates *(Philippa 57, 150-2)*. Chessington students’ physical wellbeing is measured through “‘Health Testing’” each term, after which students are excused from lessons and “‘turned out to grass’” to complete extra physical education if they achieve an unsatisfactory result *(St. Chad’s chap. 4)*. Indeed, there is little call for the Chessington sanitorium, and the school nurse finds her employment is a ‘sinecure’ *(St. Chad’s chap. 3)*. This emphasis on students’ physical health adverts to the significance of the ‘rhetoric on national degeneration’ Smith identifies (“Edwardian School

9 It is worth noting that the text depicts Philippa’s reluctance to do so because of her ‘horror of fat’ *(Philippa 57)*.
This emphasis on the nation is evident in *The Fortunes of Philippa*’s treatment of liminal characterisation, as Philippa is transformed from a somewhat troubling product of isolation from the metropole to an idealised model of English femininity through time spent at an English boarding school. Brazil’s text sees Philippa journey from South America from England to stay with family for two years before attending school at The Hollies. The text’s depiction of Philippa’s time at school conforms to tropes associated with the school story genre: Philippa initially encounters some difficulties at school but overcomes them, and she forms a close friendship with a fellow student (Cathy) and enjoys spending numerous Summer holidays staying with Cathy and her family. Philippa has a difficult relationship with a fellow pupil (Ernestine Salt), but the pair eventually become friends after Philippa rescues her from a charging bull on a school picnic. Philippa’s father was presumed dead after a shipwreck but he miraculously escaped in time to attend her ‘Mid-summer breaking-up party’ (199) at The Hollies, and the story ends with Philippa and her father living happily in England.

The opening of the text depicts Philippa in San Carlos, South America (8-9), where she lives with her father and two servants Juanita and Tasso (a ‘mulatto nurse’ and a ‘black bearer’ respectively) (10). Philippa’s father’s position as the British Consul and coffee plantation owner (16) makes the hierarchical distinctions elaborated in the text apparent: indeed, Philippa must travel to England to be educated because she has ‘no opportunity of mixing with cultured people’ (8) in San Carlos. Philippa’s father will not allow her to ‘become very friendly with the children of his Spanish neighbours’ (16), and ‘the pretty little dark-eyed Juans or Margaritas who sometimes peeped over the cactus hedges were strangers’ (17) to her. The text’s racialised hierarchical distinctions are obvious: for example, Brazil’s text attributes the patience ‘Negro servants’ show towards children to their natural affinity with them, due to ‘having much of the child in their nature’ (13). It is outside the scope of this chapter to chart the text’s problematic treatment of race in detail, but the suppression and alteration of Philippa’s liminal identity is significant.

As I noted above, *The Fortunes of Philippa* opens with Philippa’s father stating that there is ‘something wrong about [her]’ (*Philippa* 7). While the text
appears to attribute this to Philippa’s ‘deficiencies’ (8) – “You’ve not been taught a note of music, you can’t speak French or dance a quadrille, and if it came to a question of fine sewing, I’m afraid you’d scarcely know which was the right end of your needle!” (8) – the liminality this state of uncertainty suggests is also noteworthy. While she was largely prevented from playing with ‘Spanish neighbours’ (16), Philippa can nevertheless speak Spanish fluently (28). Tasso sang her ‘long ballads in the half-Spanish half-Indian dialect of the district’ (13), and upon her arrival in England Philippa tells her cousin Lucy ‘in great indignation’ that she will maintain her ability to speak Spanish (28-9) in order to communicate with Junita and Tasso (29).

Philippa’s liminal characterisation is also suggested as she organises a game of ‘carnival’ (33) resembling a carnival she had watched in San Carlos with her father (17-18). Philippa and her cousins don costumes, among which are a ‘savage’, an ‘Indian’ and, with her face ‘blackened with coal’, Philippa’s cousin Dorothy is dressed as ‘a little negro child’ (33-4). The carnival the children depict hints at the troubling presence of the liminal in Aunt Agatha’s English home. While the children ‘rivalled in noise the wildest carnival [Philippa] had ever witnessed at San Carlos’, Aunt Agatha’s reaction to the scene signals its inappropriateness in an English milieu. The ‘tumbled heads and crumpled pinafores, the clothes strewn hither and thither, and the painted and blackened faces of her ordinarily well-behaved darlings’ (34) imply the intrusion of the savagery usually associated with the colonies in the metropole. This link to the colonies is quickly suppressed: Aunt Agatha’s ‘extreme annoyance’ lead her to speak ‘sharply’ to Philippa, who is the ‘true offender’ (34). Through Philippa’s influence, the troubling excesses of the colony are introduced to the metropole.

However, the liminal characterisation notably suggested by Philippa’s ability to speak Spanish is soon eradicated. At the beginning of the following chapter, which takes place two years after Philippa arrived in England and as she is about to attend school, she has completely lost the ability to speak Spanish: ‘Spanish I had utterly forgotten, scarcely a word remaining in my memory, and I think the foreign ways which Aunt Agatha had objected to had vanished along with it’ (36). The rapidity with which the text depicts the loss of Philippa’s liminal characterisation is significant: The Fortunes of Philippa implicitly suggests that before she may attend school at The Hollies, Philippa must lose ‘foreign ways’ (36)
that would mark her difference from the other students. The erasure of Philippa’s liminal characterisation continues as she attends school: ‘[i]t was perhaps only natural after all that my new life should in some measure erase the old one from my mind; it was what my father had desired, and if I were beginning to think that England was far more to me than the country I had left, he would be the first to rejoice over my altered views’ (143). Like *The Fortunes of Philippa’s* racialised hierarchical distinctions, the removal of Philippa’s liminal characterisation is obvious.

However, the text also surreptitiously hints at the presence of the liminal as Philippa attends school at The Hollies. In keeping with the curriculum’s emphasis on traditionally feminine accomplishments, students at The Hollies are required to take part in ‘“At Homes”’ (124), during which they notably rehearse deportment, shaking hands with their hostess, and making appropriate comments during conversation. Jane Hamlett notes that the practice of the ‘At Home’ was prevalent in contemporaneous girls’ schools and was one way in which ‘headmistresses of girls’ schools … consciously drew on elite domestic practices … to create an acceptable public profile’ (*At Home in the Institution* 161). Philippa’s response during an ‘At Home’ betrays anxieties surrounding national identity, and hints at the troubling presence of the liminal in Brazil’s text. Philippa struggles to make an original contribution to a discussion of botany:

There seemed to be nothing left. The topic, to my mind, was plainly exhausted, but I was bound to hazard some remark. In my desperation I ventured:

‘Botany Bay is a place in New South Wales where criminals used to be sent. Many of the principal families of Australia are descended from them.’

A shudder ran through the room. Though I did not know it at the time, Mrs. Marshall had been born in Australia, and I could not have uttered a more deliberate insult. She flushed a little, and glanced at me keenly. I think she either realized my complete ignorance, or thought it wiser to ignore the allusion.
'Not quite to the point, my dear,' she replied with dignity. ‘It is well to keep strictly to our subject. I had thought you would have been ready with some remark upon the orchids of your South American forests, or the orange plantations which I have heard you mention.’ (125-6)

The passage sees Mrs. Marshall’s Australian heritage become a ‘deliberate insult’ as it highlights links between the metropole and a colony; indeed, this connection even provokes a ‘shudder’ of horror from the students gathered in the room. Mrs. Marshall suggests a troubling elision of the difference between coloniser and colonised, which is emphasised by her use of the word “‘subject’”. The Fortunes of Philippa suggests a contradiction: while it is important for Britain to establish colonies in order to maintain dominance, the troubling aspects of colonies – such as their links to ideas of criminality – must be suppressed. It is notable that Mrs. Marshall directs Philippa’s conversation towards “‘orange plantations’”, which suggest Britain’s ability to own and cultivate land in the colonies.

This emphasis on botany (notably Philippa and her friend Cathy keep “‘Nature Note-Book[s]’” (80) in which they record flowers and plants they find) is also connected to imagery charting Philippa’s changes throughout the text. Philippa’s transformation is figured in terms of floral imagery with nationalist associations: her father notes that ‘the little foreign plant which he sent over so long ago to harden in our gray northern clime has taken root, and changed from a tropical blossom into an English rose’ (208). This imagery resembles the more extensive (English) rose imagery featured in The Secret Garden (1911), which will be elaborated on in the following chapter. As Smith asserts, ‘[t]hrough her transformation from blossom to rose, Philippa has acquired an acceptable English subjectivity’ (149).

The Fortunes of Philippa’s treatment of liminal characterisation also adverts to ideas of gender. Philippa’s distance from normative models of English femininity is signalled at the opening of the text (7-8), and The Fortunes of Philippa suggests a specifically gendered model of education as the means through which to remedy Philippa’s ‘deficiencies’ (8). As I have noted above, the curriculum at The Hollies emphasises the importance of traditionally feminine accomplishments surrounding women’s role in a specific social milieu: for example, students at The Hollies learn ‘[t]o hand and receive … cups prettily, and to sit drinking them in
graceful attitudes’, and the text notes that ‘Mrs. Marshall was hard to satisfy, and
to clink your tea-spoon or to flop into a chair was a desperate offence’ (126-7). The
text also adverts, as Smith notes, to the dangers of mental overexertion in girls’
education. Smith asserts that ‘[i]n pedagogical texts of the period, sufficient
physical health is coupled with the development of the intellect; and both abilities
are presented as being irreversibly damaged if not overseen in childhood, or as
detrimental to the body or mind if overexerted’ (“Edwardian School Stories” 148-9).
Philippa’s physical (and mental) health suffers as she attempts to complete her
schoolwork set by a demanding teacher. Philippa’s back aches and she fidgets (147)
as she tries to complete her work. Philippa eventually faints (160-1) and is
diagnosed with “a decided case of nervous breakdown, due to overwork” (162).
However, Philippa’s health improves after a holiday (162), and, on her arrival back
at The Hollies, she finds the offending teacher has been removed and the
curriculum altered to include ‘daily rambles over the hills or in the beautiful woods
by the river’ and reduced hours of work (163). The Fortunes of Philippa suggests
that the benefits of the model of education presented in the text, combined with the
text’s project of resolving Philippa’s liminal characterisation, produces an idealised
model of English femininity. Philippa has plans for her own ‘improvement’ after
she leaves The Hollies, and doesn’t want to ‘fritter away’ her life in an ‘aimless
fashion’ (207). Consequently, the close of the text sees Philippa ‘master[ing] the
mysteries of housekeeping’ and acting as a companion to her father, occupying
‘that dear place which [her] mother left empty long ago’ (207).

Brazil’s 1912 text The New Girl at St. Chad’s advocates a slightly different
model of girls’ education, but also seeks to resolve the protagonist Honor
Fitzgerald’s liminal characterisation. Like The Fortunes of Philippa, The New Girl
at St. Chad’s conforms to tropes characteristic of the school story genre: after
Honor travels from Ireland to attend school at Chessington College in England, she
initially experiences difficulty in submitting to the discipline of the school, and
experiences turbulent relationships with some fellow students at St. Chad’s House
(notably with Flossie Taylor, another ‘new girl’). Honor is wrongfully accused of
a prank, but stoically accepts the blame until the real culprit confesses her actions
to the monitress at the close of the novel. Honor is later accused of stealing a
sovereign from the house-mistress’s desk, after which she is shunned by all of the
other students in the house except her shy friend and room-mate Janie Henderson.
However, Honor is later exonerated after she runs away in desperation, and the real culprit (Flossie Taylor) is found to have caught the sovereign in her cuff while surreptitiously looking at her conduct report. Just as in *The Fortunes of Philippa*, Honor rescues a fellow student from a charging bull (*St. Chad’s* chap. 11.), but unlike Philippa, she also breaks bounds, although it is worth noting that these boundary transgressions are far less numerous (but far more significant) than those featured in Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* The close of the text sees Honor learning to submit to the discipline of the school.

Honor’s liminality is made obvious from the text’s opening. Honor’s status as a ‘new girl’ attests to her liminality, as her joviality and self-assurance signal her distance from the characteristically shy and reserved new girls the students usually see at St. Chad’s (chap. 1). Honor’s birthday falls on February 29th, Honor is eventually placed in a bedroom ‘between two floors’ (chap. 1) and her language, which often amalgamates disparate categories, also signals her in-between status: for example, when discussing her age, Honor declares, “‘I’m older than I look, and younger than I seem’” (chap. 1). Honor made her schoolroom at her home Kilmore Castle a ‘purgatory’ for her governesses (chap. 2) and a fellow student describes her as the “‘most contrary, queer, impossible, perverse girl [she has] ever met’” (chap. 9).

Honor’s liminality is also figured in terms of (and, indeed, signified by) her Irishness in the text. The ‘wayward, impulsive daughter of Erin’ (chap. 4) with ‘wild Irish blood’ (chap. 2) is marked by a ‘Celtic temperament’ (chap. 3) that leads to her being likened to a ‘volcano’ (chap. 4), and earns her the moniker of ‘“Paddy Pepper-Box”’ (chap. 3, 4, 10) at St. Chad’s. The project of tempering such ‘wild’ (chap. 2) qualities through education is made obvious: Honor’s mother hopes that the experience of attending Chessington College will mean that her “‘wild bird will find her wings clipped, and will settle down sensibly and peaceably among the others’” (chap. 2). Eradicating Honor’s liminality means tempering those qualities marked as specifically ‘Irish’ in the text, and while she appears to retain markers of her Irishness, the loss of Honor’s liminality is analogous to the loss of her Irish identity.

Like *The Fortunes of Philippa*, racial distinctions are marked in the text. Flossie teases Honor about her Irish heritage on her arrival at St. Chad’s, mentioning “‘pigs’”, “‘potatoes’” (indeed, Flossie places potatoes in Honor’s desk
later in the text (chap. 6)) and St. Patrick (chap. 1). While Honor is angry about Flossie’s slurs, and commits the ‘unpardonable offence’ (chap. 1) of leaving the tea-table without permission as a consequence, the text later presents these very elements as the things Honor misses most about her home (chap. 2). The New Girl at St. Chad’s mentions ‘the little barefooted colleens of Kilmore’ (chap. 10), and like Juanita and Tasso in The Fortunes of Philippa, the tenants on her father’s estate (including Mary, Biddy and Pat (chap. 2)) are sad to see Honor depart for school, viewing her impending departure with ‘characteristic Irish grief’ (chap. 2). This notion of Irishness is carried throughout the text, as Honor is consistently called ‘Paddy’ (chap. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, 17) and Honor’s schoolgirl rebellions are imbued with nationalist associations as the St. Chad’s monitress Vivian Holmes refers to her as “that wild Irish girl” (chap. 12).

Honor’s experiences at school notably take on nationalist associations when she attends chapel for the first time. In a chapter entitled ‘The Wearing of the Green’, Honor, as a ‘devoted daughter of Erin’ who is “a Nationalist to the last drop of [her] blood” and “labelled ‘Home Rule’ as plainly as can be”, is horrified to learn that the colour associated with St. Chad’s is orange (chap. 3), and that she must wear a school hat with an orange band as part of the uniform:

Honor stood turning the hat round and round, with a very queer expression on her face. She was a devoted daughter of Erin. Her country’s former glories and the possible brilliance of its future as a separate kingdom could always provoke her wildest enthusiasm; to be asked, therefore, to don the colour which in her native land stood as the symbol of the union with England, and for direct opposition to national independence, seemed to her little short of an insult to her dear Emerald Isle. There were still five minutes left before she need start for chapel, so, making up her mind suddenly, she rushed upstairs to her bedroom. She would show these Saxons that she was a true Celt! They might compel her to wear their emblem of bondage, but it should be with an addition that would proclaim her patriotic sentiments to the world. (chap. 3)

The text is careful to note, however, the ‘former glories and the possible brilliance of [Ireland’s] future’ (my emphasis, chap. 3), relegating Irish ‘glories’ to the past
and casting doubt over their possibility in the future. Honor decides to wear the hat but adds an emerald green ribbon and the shamrock one of her father’s tenants (Mary O’Grady) had given her before her departure (chap. 3). Honor attends chapel wearing her embellished hat, much to the headmistress Miss Cavendish’s chagrin, and ‘dance[s] an old-fashioned Kerry hornpipe, humming a lively Irish tune’ (chap. 3) in the quadrangle after chapel.

Honor’s ‘mad performance’ (chap. 3) leads her to the headmistress Miss Cavendish’s study, where the text’s project of eliding Honor’s difference from the other students is evident. Miss Cavendish is an ‘imposing and commanding figure’ who is ‘full of authority’ (chap. 3), and when Honor explains that she prefers to wear green because of her Irish heritage, Miss Cavendish’s response is significant: “‘We have many nationalities here, and do you imagine that every girl can be permitted to carry out her individual taste?’” (chap. 3). Miss Cavendish’s response elides cultural difference, reducing expressions of national identity to questions of “‘taste’”, and she continues to posit the efficacy of removing markers of difference between students: the students at Chessington College must wear uniforms “‘to make everybody look alike’” (chap. 3). As the school is imbued with ideas of nationhood – Miss Cavendish asserts that “‘we are a little army here. Every girl, as a member of this community, is bound to preserve its rules, which have been wisely framed, and deserve to be faithfully kept’” (chap. 3) – adherence to its ideals carry significant ideological freight.

The text makes the suppression of the qualities that mark Honor as both liminal and Irish explicit. Honor ‘[feels] for the first time that she [is] a unit in a large community and beg[ins] to have some dim perception of that esprit de corps to which Miss Cavendish had referred during their interview in the study’ (chap. 4). Honor’s ‘overflowing spirits beg[in] to be modified to the level of what was considered “good form” at Chessington’ (chap. 10), and she ‘fall[s] in with the general tone of the College, and acquir[es] the mental shibboleths of her schoolfellows’ (chap. 10). Indeed, the close of the text depicts Honor as greatly
changed from the girl who was characterised by her ‘heedlessness’ (chap. 2) at the beginning of the term:

The Honor who returned to Ireland next day was indeed changed from the one who had left home in disgrace only thirteen weeks before—so much more thoughtful, sympathetic, and considerate, with such higher ideals and nobler aspirations, that she scarcely seemed the same: an Honor who could tread softly in her mother’s room, and give the required tenderness to that dear one who was to be spared so short a time to her; an Honor who, while keeping all her old love of fun, could forget self, and turn her merriment into sunshine for others. Character is a plant of slow growth, and she was not yet all she might be; but she had set her foot on the upward ladder, and whether at school, or at home, or in after years, life to her would always mean a conscious effort towards better things. (chap. 18)

Like *The Fortunes of Philippa*, *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* suggests that school has equipped Honor to adequately care for the people surrounding her. The suppression of the aspects of Honor’s subjectivity that signified her liminality formed a significant part of this process: because she is no longer wild Honor may ‘tread softly in her mother’s room’ (chap. 18); her ‘love of fun’ has now been tempered into an idealised model of self-sacrifice, and while the text highlights that Honor returns to Ireland, she is greatly changed.

*The Fortunes of Philippa* and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* are significant due to their treatment of interstitial categories, which, in both texts, are systematically suppressed. Just as Philippa loses the ability to speak Spanish, the close of *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* suggests that the elimination of Honor’s problematic ‘wild’ (chap. 2) liminality has allowed her to attain a model of subjectivity that will allow her to care for her frail mother. Significantly, the close of each of the texts also adverts to the emphasis on militarisation that is made explicit in *Stalky & Co*. While the pedagogical spaces of *The Fortunes of Philippa* do not explicitly contain any reference to war, the text highlights that Cathy’s younger brother George, with whom Philippa spent a number of holidays, harbors the ‘great desire … that a war should break out to give him an opportunity of displaying his courage’ (208). *The New Girl at St. Chad’s*, published two years
before the advent of the First World War, depicts ‘military drill and flag signalling’ as a new addition to the end-of-term showcase for family and friends, and it is ‘taken up with enthusiasm’ by the students. Indeed, one student declares that such preparation ‘might come in useful if there were a war’ and means to teach neighbours the drill during her holidays (chap. 18). As they complete the drill the students show ‘a readiness and promptitude of action worthy of a regiment’ (chap. 18), as they form ‘the College motto: “United in effort”’ and elicit praise from the gathered parents for ‘the excellent discipline prevailing throughout’ the display. Such ‘discipline’ is depicted in both texts as a product of the protagonists’ education, and a worthy replacement for the problematic liminal characterisation both Philippa and Honor formerly displayed.

**School as Preparation for Empire: *Stalky & Co.***

Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* (1899)\(^{10}\) is a notable example of a school story that inculcates the importance of national identity in the setting of a contested British Empire\(^{11}\). T. W. Bamford adverts to the intersections between public schools, school stories and the empire (243-4), and while Bamford is sceptical of the perceived efficacy of former public-school graduates as imperial administrators (241-3), he nevertheless asserts that school *stories* played a seminal role in promulgating imperialist ideologies. Dieter Petzold notes the changing ideology associated with contemporary pedagogy and states that ‘[t]he new age of economic and imperialist expansion demanded new virtues, such as ambition and initiative, discipline and team spirit, readiness to take up responsibility, and a talent for leadership’ (17). Importantly, Musgrave posits that Kipling advocated a specifically *imperial* nationalism, distanced from the nationalism associated with earlier school stories by authors such as Thomas Hughes (178-9). This section will similarly argue that in the late-Victorian (and Edwardian) era – and especially in

---


\(^{11}\) The following chapter will address contemporary anxieties surrounding British imperial expansion in more detail.
Stalky & Co. – conceptions of nationalism necessarily encompass imperialist ideologies. While Stalky & Co. appears to defy school story conventions, the tales depicting Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk’s exploits at “the Coll.” (Kipling 39) ultimately enlist pedagogical space as a means through which to inculcate imperialistic ideologies.

Many scholars posit Kipling’s special significance in communicating imperialistic ideologies in Stalky & Co. The setting of the text in a school mirrors its pedagogical function as it depicts “the Coll.” (Kipling 39) as inextricably connected to the outer reaches of the British Empire. Quigly reads Stalky & Co. as a school story ‘in which school life is shown as directly parallel with life in the Empire; a training directly related to the life that lay ahead for many public schoolboys at the end of the nineteenth century’ (116). Indeed, Don Randall asserts that the school setting of Stalky & Co. is ‘a carefully delineated microcosm of the British Empire’ (91).

However, in a chapter addressing pedagogical space, it is important to note that Stalky & Co. resists easy categorisation as a school story. Scholars have debated Stalky & Co.’s indebtedness to, and adherence to, school story genre conventions. Martin Green asserts that Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk ‘set themselves positively against traditional images of school piety’ (274); Quigly posits that Kipling does not deal with the usual school story subject matter (110) and Wells, Nimon and Parker locate Stalky & Co. as part of ‘a series of anti-tradition novels critical of the idealised, false world of unreal public schoolboy heroes’ (631). Ulrike Pesold reads Stalky & Co. as a ‘a unique reinterpretation of the genre’ (63): indeed, Pesold posits that the collection of tales that comprise Stalky & Co. represent ‘an early series of anti-school stories’ (63, my emphasis). Pesold posits that while Kipling ‘uses many of the characteristic elements of the typical school story, he subverts the genre either by negating these elements or by turning them upside down’ (63-4). Pesold attributes this difference in form to the College’s function: it is distanced from fictional (and, indeed, real) public schools by virtue of the fact that its purpose is not to prepare students for future University studies, but rather to specifically prepare students for entry into Sandhurst or the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (64).

Sheila Ray similarly posits that Kipling ‘turns the traditional formula on its head’, but importantly, also notes the ‘irony’ inherent in this iteration of the school
story (469). For Ray, Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk’s acts of ‘smoking, breaking bounds, collaborating on their prep and generally setting themselves up against authority’ serve to establish them as ‘just the kind of resourceful and self-disciplined young men that the public schools aimed to produce’ (469): in rebelling against authority throughout the text, the trio are learning the self-sufficiency required for ideal soldiers and imperial administrators. Richards similarly posits the importance of the boys’ ‘guerrilla warfare’ against their masters, which imbues them with ‘initiative, courage, resourcefulness and self-discipline’ as preparation for later work in the Empire (Happiest Days 148). Vallone posits that Stalky & Co. mounts a challenge against the school story genre by ‘[emphasising] that ultimately, the cruel, unfair, demanding, petty world of the academy is closer to the real world of war and empire than the enclosed, essentially comic, worlds offered in conventional school stories’ (1808).

Like Ray, Richards and Vallone, Petzold posits the educative effects of the school story setting, even while he notes Stalky & Co.’s apparent ‘departure’ from some conventions of the school story’ (19). Indeed, Petzold asserts that ‘Stalky & Co. is no less about education than … [Tom Brown’s Schooldays and Eric], albeit in a thoroughly secularized context’ (19-20). Don Randall similarly notes that Stalky & Co. is inherently concerned with education even as it appears to renounce it. Randall states that Stalky & Co. ‘wastes no time in showing that the subversion of the conventional codes informing the fictions of the school and the schoolboy will occur simultaneously with the production of alternative, delinquent codes. The contents of such familiar topics as ‘character’ and the public-school ethos are being rewritten; the process and the purpose of schooling implicitly subjected to revaluation’ (94). Kipling’s text inscribes new genre codes as it ascribes the didactic characteristics of the genre to outmoded examples: notably, Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk often deride Farrar’s Eric for its sentimentality and its unrealistic depiction of school life (62, 72). Like its namesake, Kipling’s text is inherently ‘stalky’ (Kipling 13): just as Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk manipulate the rules of the “‘Coll.’” (Kipling 39) and its surrounds to suit their own ends, Stalky & Co.
surreptitiously rewrites the rules of the school story genre to suit its own (imperialist) agenda.

This quality of “‘stalkiness’” (Kipling 13) is elaborated on, and celebrated, throughout *Stalky & Co.*. Scholars have noted the plot structure of Kipling’s text, in which there is ‘no consecutive narrative’ (Quigly 109); Quigly and Petzold read *Stalky & Co.* as ‘a series of sketches’ and ‘a cycle of short stories’ respectively (Quigly 109; Petzold 19). These stories follow the exploits of Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk at the College, which prepares students for entry into the Army (often via Sandhurst) or other forms of imperial service. It is important to note that the College is not a public school (121, 186), but is instead “‘a limited liability company payin’ four per cent”’ (186). Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk appear to challenge the mores of school stories: notably, they are largely dismissive of their counterparts’ enthusiasm for games; they flout, knowingly misinterpret or, at times, deftly manipulate rules; they are objects of suspicion for the majority of the staff at the College (29, 99) and show a distinct lack of deference to prefects, masters and the school sergeant alike (however, it is noteworthy that the boys acknowledge the authority of the Head). In particular, the house-masters King and Prout often note the trio’s difference from the traditional school-story ideal. King describes Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk as “‘unboylike, abnormal and … unsound’” (99), and Prout’s

---

12 I have consulted the text of the OUP edition of *The Complete Stalky & Co.* (1987/2009) in this thesis, but I will only discuss the chapters Isabel Quigly’s ‘Note on the Text’ identifies as being published before or during 1899, when Quigly notes that *Stalky & Co.* first appeared in book form … published by Macmillan in Great Britain, and by Doubleday and McClure in the USA’ (xxx). Quigly lists the following sections as they appeared in the 1899 edition of the text:

‘In Ambush’
‘Slaves of the Lamp, Part I’
‘An Unsavoury Interlude’
‘The Impressionists’
‘The Moral Reformers’
‘A Little Prep.’
‘The Flag of their Country’
‘The Last Term’
‘Slaves of the Lamp, Part II’

I will also advert to ‘Stalky’, which appears as the first chapter in the 1987/2009 OUP edition of *The Complete Stalky & Co.*, but did not appear in the 1899 edition of the text. Quigly notes that ‘Stalky’ was published in *The Windsor Magazine* and *McClure’s* in December 1898, so was contemporaneous with the other *Stalky* stories published in the 1899 edition. For a more detailed discussion of the original publication dates for *Stalky & Co.*, please see Quigly’s notes to the OUP edition of the text (pp. xxix-xxx).
similar views about the trio attest to their distance from the ideal of boyhood usually promulgated by the school story genre: ‘Boys that he understood attended House-matches and could be accounted for at any moment. But he had heard M’Turk openly deride cricket – even House-matches; Beetle’s views on the honour of the House he knew were incendiary; and he could never tell when the soft and smiling Stalky was laughing at him’ (37). It is worth noting that the house-masters’ uncertainties also advert to the trio’s liminality: they are “unboylike, abnormal and … unsound” (99, my emphasis), with the prefixes ‘un’ and ‘ab’ implicitly suggesting interstitial categories. Prout’s observation also evokes interstitial categories: through their failure to be ‘accounted for at any moment’ (37), the trio occupies a realm of uncertainty, and Prout’s inability to judge Stalky’s motives adverts to the value of “stalkiness” (13) which is valorised in the text.

Each of the stories in the text emphasises the importance of “stalkiness” (13). *Stalky & Co.* defines this quality as being ‘clever, well-considered and wily, as applied to plans of action’ (13), and indeed, ‘Corkran’ makes his transition to the eponymous ‘Stalky’ in the 1898 tale of the same name, in which he cunningly rescues classmates who had been caught playing a trick on a neighbouring farm, and ultimately manages to both trap and place the blame for the trick on the farmers themselves. Indeed, this quality of “stalkiness” emerges as a dominant feature in the text, as the final tale (which depicts a number of students from the tales as adults with varying roles in imperial service) adverts to the efficacy of “stalkiness” (13) in the imperial project.

As Quigly asserts, each of the stories in *Stalky & Co.* ‘is a carefully constructed tale of come-uppance’ (Introduction, xix). Each story is characterised by its emphasis on ideas of retribution, though not, *pace* Lynne M. Rosenthal, ‘justice’ (Rosenthal 23)13. In addition to the exploits in “Stalky”, “In Ambush” sees Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk procure a hideaway in the cliffs on a local Colonel’s estate – after feigning interest in joining the College’s Natural History Society (29) in order to extend the area in which they are allowed to wander – before framing

13 John Kucich notes critics’ ‘outrage’ can be connected to the text’s emphasis on retribution – specifically, its emphasis on bullying (36). Quigly charts the ‘frenzy of indignation, of moral, social, even literary outrage’ (110) with which *Stalky & Co.* was met: for more detail, please see *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p. 110.
teachers who pursued them as trespassers on the estate. “An Unsavoury Interlude” sees the trio shoot a cat and secrete it under the floorboards of King’s (a rival house-master’s) house as revenge for King insinuating that the boys, along with other members of Prout’s house, smelled. “The Impressionists” sees the boys wreak extraordinary havoc in their house (including leading their house-master Prout to falsely believe that an extensive money-lending scheme permeates the House) after they are evicted from Number Five Study in a bid to prevent them colluding on their work. After a prefect questions the trio’s right to leave the College grounds in “The Last Term”, they arrange for a woman in the village to kiss him in the street, then subsequently shame him at the prefects’ meeting that was called to rebuke Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk for their behaviour. Father Gillett, with whom the trio are on friendly terms, notes how “the punishment fits the crime” (98) in each case. Indeed, Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk are presented as having an uncanny aptitude for revenge: as Father Gillett asserts, “every time that any one has taken direct steps against Number Five Study, the issue has been more or less humiliating to the taker” (97).

*Stalky & Co.* engages with the liminal in myriad ways. As Beverly Lyon Clark argues (and as I discussed above), the school story genre is inherently liminal: school represents a border condition in which the ‘student [is] in the position of always becoming’, and school itself is ‘a peculiarly marginal institution, a boundary institution between … private and public spheres’ (7). Indeed, Carole Scott adverts to the ‘marginal’ (Clark 7) nature of the College in *Stalky & Co.* as she posits ‘the absence of a clear dividing line between the “Coll.” and the “real world,’” and notes ‘the disordered hierarchy and unstable rules that operate in the school’ (65). In explicitly preparing students for entry into other institutions – the text repeatedly adverts to the “extra-tu” (186, 188, 190, 207, 209, 211) and ‘cramming’ (183; also 121, 125, 127, 186, 209) required – such as Sandhurst (187) and ‘Cooper’s Hill’14 (260), the College does indeed function as a ‘boundary institution’ (Clark 7). As I will discuss in more detail below, *Stalky & Co.* betrays a preoccupation with the boundaries within which the students may move, and the text dramatises the tension between the teachers (and, at times, the farmers and

---

14 Quigly’s notes identify ‘Cooper’s Hill’ as the Royal Indian College of Civil Engineering.
landowners) who enforce these boundaries and the students who consistently challenge them.

However, it is in the trio’s apparent failure to adhere to the rules of the College and its surrounds that the liminal becomes most evident. This disregard for rules suggests a removal of structure that is characteristic of the liminal. This removal of structure is evident in the “‘stalkiness’” (Kipling 13) that is lauded in the text and from which, as I noted above, the eponymous Stalky gains his name. The ‘wily’ cunning implied by “‘stalkiness’” (Kipling 13) suggests a lack of fixed categories: stalkiness involves eliding distinctions, and the canny manipulation of circumstances. Notably, the trio’s stalkiness awards them an uncanny but imperceptible ability to influence other students. After they are evicted from their study in “The Impressionists”, the house-master Prout and the prefects Harrison and Craye discuss the influence Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk have exerted on the House. Significantly, this influence is figured in terms of uncertainty: while Prout notes that “[t]he tone of the House seems changed” (109, my emphasis), he is careful not to “impute” any direct influence to the trio (109). While they don’t have proof, Harrison and Craye note the correlation between the boys’ arrival in the form-rooms and the “‘perceptible lack of reverence’” and “‘lower tone’” (109) of the House. They note that Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk “are rather influential” and “have a knack of upsettin’ things in a quiet way that one can’t take hold of” (110). This “‘perceptible lack of reverence’” adverts to a lack of due regard for the rules of the school. Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk’s failure to adhere to rules is characteristic of the way in which structure is removed in the liminal. As I will discuss below, the boys consistently break rules and flout authority.

Significantly, the liminal emerges from this tension between school rules and the individual agency exhibited by Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk in challenging them. Just as the liminal ultimately serves to maintain structure, the trio’s – and especially Stalky’s – blatant disregard for rules at school (indeed, the very “‘stalkiness’” the text celebrates) later serves to reinforce the larger social structure of the Empire, as the lessons inculcated in the text (which I will discuss below) are extrapolated onto the Empire in the interests of maintaining British hegemony. As I noted above, Sheila Ray posits the ‘irony’ associated with the fact that the trio’s failure to adhere to school rules actually serves to inculcate lessons in ‘resourceful[ness]’ and ‘self-discipline’ that encompassed the very aims of
contemporary (public) schools (469). Petzold and Scott also note that the boys’ lack of due respect for school rules and for authority at the College (and its surrounds) inculcates lessons which later serve them well as they work in the colonies (Petzold 20; Scott 63). The liminality of the College helps maintain the larger structure of the British Empire.

In discussing liminality in *Stalky & Co.*, it is important to acknowledge two especially pertinent contributions to studies of the text. Carole Scott posits the importance of ‘combat zone[s]’ (53) in her 1992 article “Kipling’s Combat Zones: Training Grounds in the Mowgli Stories, *Captains Courageous*, and *Stalky & Co.*”. For Scott, each of these texts ‘features a testing ground for the protagonist, a combat zone with its own set of laws, code of behavior, mode of being, and appropriate style of language’ (53). In the case of *Stalky & Co.*, this combat zone inculcates ‘codes of behavior’ (58) as it creates ‘an ordered, all-male structure whose shaping power turns boys into men’ (66). However, unlike the codes of behavior featured in the *Jungle Books* and in *Captains Courageous*, Scott posits that the apparent ‘order’ of the College ‘is permeated with a sense of uneasy rambunctiousness where the expected structural order is consistently sabotaged, and various codes of behavior vie with each other for supremacy’ (62). This sabotaging of the ‘structural order’ evokes the liminal, and while Scott doesn’t explicitly draw upon Turner’s theory, she posits that the combat zones which structure her discussion function as ““otherworlds”, in which ‘rites of passage’ (66) dramatising the transition from childhood to adulthood (66-7) take place. Scott posits that ‘Kipling creates his own ritualized arenas in which the boys can prove themselves’ (67, my emphasis). The ‘ritualized arenas’ created by Scott’s ‘combat zones’ evoke the liminal as they dramatize the way in which Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk negotiate the authority of the College and, later, the wider authority of the British Empire.

Don Randall’s *Kipling’s Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (2000) also attests to the significance of the liminal in *Stalky & Co.* It is worth noting that Randall draws upon Scott’s ‘combat zones’ (90) in his discussion of *Stalky & Co.*, and Randall reads the combat zone (Randall 90) of the College as specifically imperial. While the following chapter will discuss Don Randall’s text in more detail, the text offers a significant reading of *Stalky & Co.* that highlights both its pedagogical nature (both in its form and its function) and its significant
link to notions of empire. Randall posits the centrality of the hybridised adolescent boy\textsuperscript{15} in Kipling’s fiction, who he asserts becomes both analogous to and emblematic of the imperial project and its attendant anxieties. Randall’s analysis of the text posits that Kipling emphasises the interconnectivity – as opposed to the popular belief in the separation – of the ‘stable, metropolitan culture and a changeful periphery’ (90). For Randall, Kipling presents the British Empire as ‘one great, intimately interconnected assembly, a relatively seamless whole’ (90). As the following chapter will discuss, I assert that this interconnectivity is highly conditional and ultimately serves to support British hegemonic claims to imperial territory, but in the context of \textit{Stalky & Co.}, Randall’s reading of Kipling’s synthesising view of empire is significant. Randall asserts that the setting of the school ‘explores imperial issues within the context of the “home front”’ (89) and elides differences between the colonies and the metropole.

However, Randall notes that in eliding these differences between the metropole and the colonies, Kipling also destabilises the notions of difference upon which conceptions of empire rest: ‘Kipling’s perspective upon imperial globalization troubles imperial inscriptions of borders and barriers between races and cultures – the very borders and barriers that serve as cornerstones of racist and Eurocentric imperial ideology’ (90). In keeping with the emphasis Randall places

\textsuperscript{15} Randall posits that ‘this figure recasts as “adolescence” the doubts, anxieties, incertitudes, and ambivalencies that begin, in this period, to trouble British imperial subjectivity and ideology’ (“Resituating the Empire” 163). For a more detailed discussion of the importance Randall attributes to male adolescence in Kipling’s oeuvre, please see \textit{Kipling’s Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity} (2000).
on the hybridised adolescent to Kipling’s depiction of the imperial project in general, the figure of the schoolboy becomes pivotal in *Stalky & Co.*:

Undermining the distinctions dividing the center from the periphery, Kipling generalizes the imperial reality to include the world of school and in so doing splits the identity of the schoolboy, making of him a little imperialist and a little savage, an agent and a subject of imperial authority. To mend or ‘suture’ the split identity of the imperial schoolboy, Kipling must produce the boy as a hybridized imperial subject. His schoolboy imperialist therefore emerges not as the unified subject of a self-sovereign British metropolitan culture, but rather as a site of unsettling resemblance, as a figure produced by the mutually transformative confrontations of British and non-European cultures. (Randall 106-7)

While the ‘schoolboy imperialist’ is ‘a site of unsettling resemblance’, Randall notes that the hybridised adolescent serves to uphold British hegemony *through* this very resemblance to subjects of colonial rule. For Randall, Stalky functions as a highly effective imperial administrator as his very ‘“stalkiness”’ (Kipling 13) allows him to both embody and effectively negotiate the border condition required to maintain dominance.

This border condition is evidenced by *Stalky & Co.*’s preoccupation with depictions of liminal space. This concern with liminal space is chiefly addressed as Stalky, M’Turk and Beetle consistently transgress the boundaries – referred to as ‘bounds’ in the text (Kipling 30) – surrounding the College. This preoccupation with liminal space prefigures the liminal space of the British Empire which the characters will later, as “Slaves of the Lamp, Part II” demonstrates, occupy: as Randall asserts, *Stalky & Co.*’s depiction of the boys challenging the boundaries of the College depicts them ‘tak[ing] up empire-building on a small scale’ (93). This act of challenging the boundaries of the College is evident in “Stalky” (1898)\(^\text{16}\), which depicts Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk rescuing fellow schoolmates from a barn

\(^{16}\) As footnote 12 highlights, “Stalky” did not appear in the 1899 edition of *Stalky & Co.*, but was contemporaneous with the other *Stalky* stories published in the 1899 edition of Kipling’s text (Quigly, notes to text xxix).
in which they have been locked after attempting to shift a farmer’s cattle in retaliation for being chided for riding his horses without permission. (Trapping the farm workers in the barn in the process of rescuing their fellow students, before freeing them and subsequently receiving tea and a letter to the house-master excusing their tardiness to ‘call-over’ (Kipling 25), is a testament to the importance of “stalkiness” (13) in the text, and, as I noted above, ultimately earns Corkran the moniker of ‘Stalky’ (27).) “Stalky” establishes a militaristic tone – Ulrike Pesold asserts that “[t]he whole action of the story resembles the advance of a group of soldiers into enemy territory” (85) – and utilises military terminology and tactics as it depicts the trio following their fellow students. Corkran (Stalky) remarks that the students have not “‘thrown out any pickets’” (13) and notes their lack of knowledge about “the lie of the country” (14); the ‘natives’ laugh like ‘Inquisitors’ (18) after they have caught the offending students; and after surreptitiously watching the farmers Corkran ‘retreated … followed by his army’ (18). This militaristic language adverts to the larger imperial project in which the students will later put these lessons to good use.

However, “In Ambush” is especially significant as it dramatises the act of violating thresholds. “In Ambush” depicts Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk establishing a new hut after their covert hut behind the College was discovered by their house-master Prout (29). After Stalky arranges for the trio to join the Natural History Society in order to extend the bounds in which they can ‘wander’ (30), they journey to Colonel Dabney’s estate near the College. The boys ignore numerous signs prohibiting trespassing and follow a ‘fox-track’ through the furze on ‘all fours’ to a small clearing on the edge of a cliff (32). However, Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk see a keeper, who shoots at them after he mistakes them for a fox as they crawl back through the fox-track (33). M’Turk is outraged that the keeper attempted to shoot the fox (a vixen (35)), and journeys to the house to confront Colonel Dabney (34-5). After he initially confronts the trio and accuses them of poaching, Colonel Dabney agrees about the keeper’s conduct (36), and demotes him, while awarding Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk the right to enter his land at any time (36).

The trio arouse their house-master Prout’s and rival house-master King’s suspicion upon their arrival back at the College (37-8), and their suspicions (along with those of the school Sergeant, Foxy) grow as the boys continue to surreptitiously journey to their hideaway on the cliff edge (41). After Prout, King
and Foxy follow the boys (who remain unseen) onto Colonel Dabney’s estate, Stalky suggests to the newly-appointed keeper that the (adult) trio are poachers (42). Both the keeper and Colonel Dabney then confront the three adults and accuse them of poaching as Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk surreptitiously listen from within the Lodge-keeper’s house (43). After Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk return to school in high spirits, the teachers mistake their levity (and their hiccups (45), resulting from laughing at Colonel Dabney accusing their teachers of poaching) as evidence of drunkenness (47), the punishment for which is ‘expulsion after a public flogging’ (47). After they taunt Foxy with the implication that the situation is not as clear as it appears, the trio are taken to see the Head, who acknowledges that they have technically adhered to all school rules and punishes them anyway by issuing six “lick[s]” apiece (52).

“In Ambush” offers an example of Stalky & Co.’s preoccupation with liminal space by depicting numerous boundary transgressions. While these boundary transgressions are characteristic of the school story genre (for example, Tom Brown crosses to the forbidden side of the river to poach fish and is confronted by an angry keeper (Hughes 200-207)), it is also important, particularly in Stalky & Co., to note the way in which boundary transgressions are inextricably connected to ideas of empire. The British Empire is metonymized into the College as it fulfils its purpose of preparing students for work in the Army and affiliated institutions, and the text adverts to the politics of negotiating imperial space as it dramatises disputes about the space surrounding the College. Randall notes the frequency with which the trio flout the rules surrounding ‘bounds’ (Kipling 30), and highlights the way in which this disregard for boundaries is linked to ideas of empire:
Not at all a matter of occasional and sporadic lapse, being out of bounds is, for these boys, characteristic. Just as clearly, to establish oneself out of bounds is to take up empire-building on a small scale: opportunistic and industrious, the boys venture out to discover and appropriate alien space as their own, submitting untamed, virgin land – the ‘furze-hill’ – to the rule of domestication and utility. Yet if ‘right-minded’ (that is, delinquent) boys appear in the guise of little imperialists, they also appear as little savages: their ‘palaces of delight’ are decidedly primitive structures, ‘huts’ or ‘little lairs’, barely more hospitable than the original landscape; not radical reconstructions, not decisive transformations of that landscape, but mere modifications ‘full of stumps, odd root-ends and spikes’. Evidently, the wild space of the furze, which will later be characterized, not so surprisingly, as ‘jungle’ (33), imposes itself on the boys as much as they impose themselves on it. The characters dominate space but, at the same time, discover themselves in creative relation with it; space impacts upon character in such a way as to create indeterminacies and ambivalences in the coding of identities – are the boys in the furze little imperialists or little savages or both at once? (93-4)

As Randall highlights, this act of building huts problematises distinctions between the students of the College, and the subjects of the British Empire over which they will rule as adults. Building ‘huts’ (Kipling 29) at the College elides the distinction between ‘imperialists’ and ‘savages’ (Randall 93) that students are being (and will later, on their entry to Sandhurst or ‘the Shop’ (Kipling 209)) be trained to uphold. While it is important to acknowledge the indebtedness of “In Ambush” to ideas of empire, the story also dramatises interstitial categories in a more general sense. As I suggested above, the act of trespassing on a neighbouring estate signals Stalky & Co.'s indebtedness to the tropes of the school story genre, but these tropes are significantly revised in “In Ambush” as features of the school story genre – the authority of teachers and the distinction between “right” and “wrong” – are problematised.

“In Ambush” highlights the importance of liminal space from its opening sentence: ‘[i]n summer all right-minded boys built huts in the furze-hill behind the
College – little lairs whittled out of the heart of the prickly bushes, full of stumps, odd root-ends, and spikes, but, since they were strictly forbidden, palaces of delight’ (29). These huts, as Randall argues (93), advert to the students’ position as colonisers due to the symbolic association of the College with the wider empire, but the act of building huts on the furze-hill is also rendered liminal by virtue of being ‘strictly forbidden’ (29). However, it is worth noting that it is ‘right-minded’ (29, my emphasis) boys who build these forbidden huts. “In Ambush” suggests that the very act of defying rules, or transgressing boundaries, is in itself what makes boys ‘right-minded’ (29) (this emphasis on defying rules at the opening of “In Ambush” serves to establish a paradoxical relationship between truth and falsification that is elaborated at the conclusion of the story). Petzold asserts that Stalky & Co. suggests ‘the boys’ fight for freedom [from school bounds] is good for them because it sharpens their wits, preserves their vitality, and cultivates their spontaneity, self-confidence, and resourcefulness’ (20). This emphasis on defying the authority of the boundaries surrounding the College (I will discuss defying the authority of masters in more detail below) is characteristic of the school story genre, but “In Ambush” problematises the dichotomous relationship between “right” and “wrong” that is promulgated in earlier examples of the genre – notably, in Farrar’s Eric.

The liminal nature of the space to which the boys journey in “In Ambush” is noteworthy. The ‘Pleasant Isle of Aves’ (39) lies in a forbidden section of Colonel Dabney’s estate (which is itself outside the normal bounds of the College, although, as new members of the Natural History Society, the bounds in which the trio may wander are extended), and it is located on the edge of a cliff. Indeed, the means through which Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk gain access to ‘Aves’ (53) suggests a relationship between the liminal space of the text and liminal characterisation. Just as Randall posits that the act of building huts in the furze elides differences between the boys as ‘imperialists’ or ‘savages’ (93), the act of journeying to Aves suggests the animalistic nature of the trio, as they must crawl on ‘all fours’ along a ‘fox-track’ (32) in order to reach the ‘Pleasant Isle of Aves’

---

17 I will subsequently refer to this space as ‘Aves’ (Kipling 53), just as the narrator does at the close of “In Ambush”.
which suggests avian life. Indeed, the trio are rendered animalistic as the keeper mistakes them for the fox at which he (controversially) shoots in the text. As they travel to Aves, the trio elide the distinction between animal/human. This emphasis on liminal characterisation is significant, as it adverts to the efficacy of “stalkiness” (Kipling 13) which I discussed above, but also because it prefigures Stalky’s liminal characterisation at the close of the text.

“In Ambush” elides both physical and hierarchical boundaries between the trio of students and the trio of schoolmasters as both groups trespass on Colonel Dabney’s estate. The difference between the two groups of accused poachers – Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk; and Prout, King and Foxy – is problematised as the uncanny repetition of groups of three suggests similarities between the students and the schoolmasters. Repetition features significantly in “In Ambush”: both trios ignore Colonel Dabney’s notice-boards (32) and are chastised by Colonel Dabney for doing so in turn (34; 42); Colonel Dabney’s dialogue is repetitive, as he uses the same phrases multiple times to berate the groups (“Don’t attempt to deny it” (34, 43); “Damnable! Oh, damnable!” (34, 44); “ruin the reputation of an archangel” (36, 43)); and the trio of students repeatedly visit their cliffside hideaway while evading capture by the schoolmasters who are pursuing them.

“In Ambush” subverts the school story genre by undermining the authority of the schoolmasters as both students and schoolmasters vie for the right to occupy forbidden (liminal) space. Ulrike Pesold asserts that Stalky & Co. depicts both the students and staff of the College engaged in boundary transgressions as they show little regard for the sanctity of the surrounding farmers’ properties (76). Indeed, Pesold notes that “The Impressionists” sees the teachers discussing the school’s reputation among the farmers of the area (76): this reputation is “most unsavoury”, as Hartopp admits to “raid[ing] seven head of cattle”, “gate-lifting” and “poaching” (Kipling 99). “In Ambush” elaborates on this lack of moral distinction between students and masters as Colonel Dabney chastises the masters, mocking them after King states that the schoolmasters “stand in loco parentis” (44). Colonel Dabney states, “I’ve not forgotten my Latin either, an’ I’ll say to

18 This, of course, also represents the schoolmasters as occupying a liminal state: they stand in the place of parents for the students of the College, but nevertheless are not the students’ parents.
you: ‘Quis custodiet ipos custodes?’ If the masters trespass, how can we blame the boys?’” (45). Quigly’s textual notes translate Colonel Dabney’s Latin phrase as “‘Who will guard the guards themselves?’” (notes to text, 300), and Colonel Dabney’s comments elide the hierarchical differences between students and schoolmasters as both groups are presented equally flouting the boundaries of the Estate.

It is also worth noting the way language signals characters’ liminality in “In Ambush”. The most significant image of liminality comes from references to M’Turk’s Irish identity, and these references serve to highlight the connection between liminal space and liminal characterisation. M’Turk’s father ‘[holds] many acres in Ireland’ (32), and as M’Turk confronts Colonel Dabney his ‘Irish dialect’ (which ‘Stalky and Beetle had carefully kicked … out of [him]’ four years previously) emerges (35). It is important to note that M’Turk’s Irish identity adverts to his liminality. Stalky & Co. mentions to M’Turk’s ‘Irish’ identity numerous times (the epithet is rarely complimentary): Beetle calls M’Turk an “‘Irish Biddy’” (59), King claims that he “‘mistrust[s] the dark Celt’” (57) and resents his “‘Hiberian sneer’” (38); and Prout is resentful of a name applied to him by the ‘dark and scowling Celt with a fluent tongue’ (108).

As the trio leaves Colonel Dabney’s house after their meeting, M’Turk hums the opening line of ‘The Wearing of the Green’ (Quigly, notes to text 299), but quickly returns to his ‘English’ (37) speech. Stalky’s and Beetle’s responses to the song suggests the importance the text places on prioritising English identity. While Stalky & Co. dramatises and celebrates interstitial categories – indeed, inculcates the importance of “‘stalkiness’” (13) – Stalky & Co. depicts Stalky and Beetle as intolerant of signifiers of hybridised identities that unsettle notions of “Englishness”:

‘Oh, Paddy dear, and did ye hear the news that’s goin’ round?’

Under other circumstances Stalky and Beetle would have fallen upon him, for that song was barred utterly – anathema – the sin of witchcraft. But seeing what he had wrought, they danced around him in silence, waiting till it pleased him to touch earth.
The tea-bell rang when they were still half a mile from College. M’Turk shivered and came out of dreams. The glory of his holiday estate had left him. He was a Colleger of the College, speaking English once more. (37)

While Stalky will later signify an idealised form of liminality as he works in India in “Slaves of the Lamp, Part II” (and, indeed, the next chapter will demonstrate that the eponymous Kim amalgamates both Irish and Indian identities for the benefit of the British Empire), M’Turk’s Irishness is the one form of liminality that is problematised in Stalky & Co. Colonel Dabney is likewise marked as Irish in the text, and “In Ambush” highlights that Colonel Dabney, like M’Turk, becomes ‘more and more Irish’ (44) when he is enraged. While teachers, as I noted above, make brief references to M’Turk’s Irish identity throughout the remainder of the text, Stalky & Co. suggests that M’Turk’s carefully delimited Irish identity must be subordinated to his position as an (English) ‘Colleger’ (37), and may only emerge to assist the trio in their exploits.

The trio’s liminality is also dramatised through their use of language. M’Turk’s ability to shift language and identity transcends the usual emphasis on the efficacy of “‘stalkiness’” (13): when speaking to Colonel Dabney, M’Turk ‘[tells] his tale alternately as a schoolboy, and, when the iniquity of the thing overcame him, as an indignant squire’ (35). This shift in M’Turk’s identity between student/squire presents him as ‘the landed man speaking to his equal – deep calling to deep – and the old gentleman acknowledge[s] the cry’ (35). Stalky’s “‘stalkiness’” (13) is revealed by his uncanny ability to alter his language: he adopts ‘broad Devon’ as his ‘langue de guerre’ (this also adverts to the militaristic elements of “In Ambush”) in order to convince Colonel Dabney’s newly instated keeper that the three schoolmasters are poaching (42). Stalky once again affects a ‘broad Devon’ accent in order to curry favour with the Lodge-keeper’s wife: “‘Us’ll take un with us when we’m finished here. I reckon yeou’m busy. We’ll bide here an’ – ’tis washin’ day with yeou, simly … We’m no company to make all vitty for. Niver yeou mind us. Yiss. There’s plenty cream’” (43). (Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk also affect this accent as they convince Mary Yeo to kiss Tulke in “The Last Term” (264-5)). The trio returns to the College ‘jodelling’ (37) after their confrontation with Colonel Dabney, and their use of language also adverts to
their liminal characterisation as they are accused of ‘*suppressio veri and suggestio falsi*’ (53) – Quigly’s textual notes identify these charges as ‘suppression of the truth’ and ‘suggestion of the false’ (301) – at the close of “In Ambush”. Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk embody a liminal position between the putative categories of truth and falsity, and their deft manipulation of language to suit their agenda foreshadows their actions in the wider empire later in the text.

Language also serves to elide hierarchical distinctions between students and teachers in the text. Pesold notes that ‘Stalky, M’Turk and Beetle refuse to acknowledge … hierarchy, respecting neither teachers nor prefects, but only the Head’ (74), and this refusal is evident in “In Ambush” through the monikers the trio apply to their teachers. Mr Prout is awarded the moniker of ‘Hoofer’ due to his large feet (29), and this nickname shifts numerous times. ‘Hoofer’ (29) becomes ‘Heffy’ (30, 40, 41) ‘Helffles’ (39), ‘Hoophats’ (39) and ‘Heffelinga’ (40) throughout “In Ambush” alone. Foxy, the school sergeant, similarly becomes ‘Foxibus’ (45, 48) and ‘Foxibusculus’ (49). Indeed, the trio utilise language in order to elide hierarchical distinctions as they withhold language toward the close of “In Ambush”. The trio fail to tell their schoolmasters that they had been granted permission to visit Colonel Dabney’s Estate, instead affecting “injured innocence” (46) as they await punishment. King’s passing reference to ‘incipient drunkards’ once again evokes the uncanny trios featured in the text as Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk make the same appeal in rapid succession: “I appeal to the Head, Sir.” “I appeal to the Head, Sir.” “I appeal to the Head, Sir.”’ (Kipling 47).

This appeal to the Head – Headmaster Bates – signifies perhaps the most significant evocation of the liminal in “In Ambush”, as it suggests both the ultimate deference to authority and the return to structure that is characteristic of the (Turnerian) liminal. As I noted above, Pesold highlights the fact that Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk defer to the authority of the Head throughout Kipling’s text (74), but show scant regard for the authority of their other schoolmasters. This takes on special significance in “In Ambush”, as the Head’s intervention attests to the intensely liminal nature of the story by reinstating structure at the story’s close. Despite the fact that he acknowledges Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk have technically adhered to all school rules in visiting Colonel Dabney’s Estate, and are not guilty of the charges of drunkenness that had been levelled against them (52), the Head declares that he will “execute [the trio] without rhyme … or reason” (52) by
administering six “‘lick[s]’” apiece (52). The trio thanks the ‘amazing man’ for their punishment (52-3), and the Head awards Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk the use of his Library, and offers them advice: “‘When you meet a variation from the normal – this will be useful to you later in life – always meet him in an abnormal way’” (52).

The Head’s authority to administer punishment “‘without rhyme … or reason’” (52), and the trio’s notable deference to this authority, signals the Head’s importance in Stalky & Co.’s depiction of the liminal. As Turner notes, the subjects undergoing a rite of passage must display ‘passive or humble’ behaviour, and ‘they must obey their instructors implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint’ (Ritual Process 95). “In Ambush” not only sees Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk accept the arbitrarily administered punishment, but thank the Head for it (53). As John Kucich notes, the close of this story ‘features an emblematic encounter between Stalky’s gang and the Head that glamorizes the latter’s boundless power to punish’ (37). The Head’s intervention at the close of “In Ambush” temporarily ends the trio’s liminal boundary transgressions for ‘one suffocating week’ until they journey to Aves once again (53).

This pattern of the Head’s intervention ending liminal transgressions continues throughout Stalky & Co. The close of “The Impressionists” sees Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk washing blood from their wounds that have, once again, been inflicted as a result of what the Head admits as a “‘flagrant injustice’” (117). This punishment also explicitly signifies the Head’s authority: as he canes the boys, the Head notes that “‘sooner or later one comes – into collision with the – higher authority, who has studied the animal. Et ego – M’Turk, please – in Arcadia vixi’” (117). Quigly’s translation of the final section of the quote also attests to its connection to the liminal. Quigly translates the Head’s Latin phrase as ‘I too have lived in Arcadia’, and suggests that it adverts to the Head’s own youth (notes to text 307). In this context, the phrase “‘Et ego … in Arcadia vixi’” (117) implies a ritual that the Head, too, experienced in his youth, and which he must perpetuate in turn. However, it is important to note that the ability and authority to effectively administer corporal punishment – and, I assert, symbolically maintain the structure of the College – is reserved for the Head alone. When the Head is ostensibly absent from the College in “A Little Prep.” and unexpectedly discovers Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk out of bounds, he delegates their (corporal) punishment to Mr. King (183).
However King, it transpires, is ‘no expert in the gentle art’ and Beetle remarks that “‘desire doth outrun performance’” (184). King’s ability to administer punishment is marked as inferior to the Head’s ability to do so.

In discussing the Head’s significance as a figure who maintains structure through arbitrary punishment, it is important to note John Kucich’s discussion of the sadomasochistic nature of the Head’s authority in *Stalky & Co.* The Head’s punishments are imbued with a sadomasochistic element: as Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk compare their wounds from one of their punishments, the text notes the ‘thoroughness, efficiency, and a certain clarity of outline that stamps the work of the artist’ (117). However, Kucich does not focus on an overtly sexualised masochism in *Stalky & Co.*, but instead notes how sadomasochistic power structures are imbued with ideas of (middle-)class relations, and in turn model power structures that are associated with the wider empire. Kucich posits the importance of ‘magical groups’ (35) to this model of power, and suggests that the trio exist in a ‘magical group’ with the Head, whose authority is valorised by their deference. Kucich notes that, in the context of the College, the text differentiates between “‘bad’ bullying—that is, bullying by those weak in intelligence or ineffective in their abuse of power’ (36), and “‘good’ bullying’ (36), such as that exhibited by the Head, which inculcates lessons about leadership that can be extrapolated onto the wider empire after students leave the College. Both Kucich (36-7) and Pesold (70-1) cite the reverence with which Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk regard the Headmaster, and indeed, the close of “A Little Prep.” sees the ‘Old Boys’ display similar reverence for the Head (199-200). However, while discussions of the Head’s authority do indeed advert to the sadomasochistic elements of his apparently inviolable power, it is most important to note the way in which the Head’s intervention signifies the continuous play of the liminal in *Stalky & Co.*

The trio’s refusal to acknowledge any authority except the Head is also key to *Stalky & Co.*’s depiction of the way in which the lessons Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk learn at school are extrapolated onto the British Empire. The link between the school and the British Empire is made explicit in “Slaves of the Lamp (Part I)”

(54-71) and “Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)” (279-297): Randall writes that the two settings ‘are rendered as analogous manifestations of the one all-encompassing imperial world to which both pertain’ (102). “Slaves of the Lamp (Part I)” sees Stalky hide and surreptitiously catapult stones at the local carrier, Rabbits-Eggs (59), as King berates Beetle in his office (65). Rabbits-Eggs mistakenly believes that King is throwing stones at him (66) and retaliates by abusing King and throwing stones into his office from the road below (66). Beetle then exacerbates the damage to King’s office after his departure (66-7). “Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)” sees Stalky’s adult former schoolmates share a story about how Stalky replicated this trick on a much larger scale in India (Stalky is notably absent from the group). While he is trapped in a stone fort after being subjected to an ambush (284-5), Stalky capitalises on “‘blood-feuds’” between two rival groups, the Malôts and the Khye-Kheens, who have united to fight British imperial soldiers and prevent them gaining territory (285). Stalky incites violence between the two groups by killing a Khye-Kheen man, cutting the Malôt symbol into his chest, and leaving his body for the Khye-Kheens to find and “‘draw inferences’” (286-7).

“Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)” emphasises Stalky’s liminal characterisation. This characterisation both elaborates on aspects of liminality that are addressed in earlier stories in Stalky & Co. and emphasises the efficacy of liminality in maintaining imperial rule. Stalky’s schoolboy activities prefigure his activities in the colonies, most notably in the way in which he replicates his trick of instigating conflict between Rabbits-Eggs and King, but also in terms of his liminal characterisation. For example, in the same way that “In Ambush” highlights Stalky’s ability to adopt ‘broad Devon’ in order to curry favour with the (42) keeper and the Lodge-Keeper’s wife (42-3), Stalky’s superior ability to manipulate language awards him an advantage in India. Dick Four, a former student of the College, notes that Stalky “‘jabbered Pushtu and Punjabi in alternate streaks’”, and comments on Stalky’s ability to “‘make puns in Pushtu’” and “‘top off [his] arguments with a smutty story’” (288). Stalky’s deft manipulation of language, and the advantages it awards him, results in him becoming an object of admiration and assists him in maintaining control in the colonies: Dick Four also details how
“Rutton Singh grabbed [Stalky’s] boots”\textsuperscript{20} (287) and mentions some of the men he “‘seduced into service’” (291).

Stalky’s liminal characterisation ultimately results in a crystallisation of imperial rule at the close of “Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)”. “Slaves of the Lamp (Part I)” depicts Stalky, Beetle, M’Turk and other students (including Dick Four) rehearsing an ‘Aladdin’ pantomime (54-6). The students’ roles in the play advert to their later roles as imperial administrators: as Randall highlights, ‘erstwhile Aladdins and Abanazars appear … as captains of Native Infantry, as functionaries of the Indian Political Service and the Telegraph Department’ (102). The emphasis on performativity this rehearsal implies also evokes the liminal\textsuperscript{21}, but importantly, the staging of this Orientalist pantomime adverts to the later staging of Stalky as a (liminal) Orientalist hero in “Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)”. Importantly, this staging occurs after an authority figure intervenes to reintroduce structure. When Stalky’s actions in the colonies escalate – notably, he makes promises to the Government that he will be unable to fulfil (294) – the intervention of authority, and the re-introduction of structure, resembles that of the Head in earlier Stalky stories and once again adverts to the play of the Turnerian liminal in the text. Stalky is berated by his superior for his actions, and the text evokes the earlier discipline of the College as Stalky’s chastisement is likened to those he used to receive from King: Abanazar notes that Stalky was “‘sent up for his wiggin’ like a bad little boy’” (295).

“Slaves of the Lamp (Part II)” suggests that the reintroduction of structure, signalled by the “‘wiggin’” (295) Stalky received, strengthens the wider structure of the British Empire. The schoolboy Orientalist pantomime depicted in “Slaves of the Lamp (Part I)” is metamorphosed into a tableau of imperial rule. M’Turk sees Stalky in the liminal space of the “‘Jullunder doab’”\textsuperscript{22} (296). Stalky is “‘sitting on the one chair of state with half the population grovellin’ before him, a dozen Sikh babies on his knees, and a garland o’ flowers round his neck’” (296). Just as the

\textsuperscript{20} Quigly’s textual notes outline that Rutton Singh ‘made obeisance’ (324) to Stalky.

\textsuperscript{21} This liminal rehearsal also reveals anxieties pertaining to gender. Beetle wears ‘[a] gray princess-skirt borrowed from a day-boy’s mother and a spotted cotton-bodice unsystematically padded with imposition-paper’, and when he discovers their pantomime rehearsal, King expresses horror: “‘What’s the meaning of this; and what, may I ask, is the intention of this – this epicene attire?’” (56).

\textsuperscript{22} Quigly’s notes identify a ‘doab’ as ‘a tongue of land between two rivers’ (325).
intervention of the Head serves to reinforce structure at the close of “In Ambush”, the wider authority of the British Empire serves to impose structure on the adult Stalky’s liminality. Importantly, Stalky’s liminality also serves to maintain this wider structure of the empire: while Stalky may try to suppress laughter (295) as his commanding officer chastises him just as a Headmaster would (Musgrave 178), Stalky’s actions, and the liminality they imply, nevertheless serve to maintain the wider structure of the British Empire. Indeed, “Slaves of the Lamp, Part II” ends with the injunction that “India is full of Stalkies” (296), which, as Quigly asserts, serves to universalise British rule in the colonies (Quigly 116). Both at school and in the colonies, liminal “stalkiness” (13) serves to maintain the wider structure of the British Empire.

The texts addressed in this chapter demonstrate a gendered difference in how the liminal is treated within a pedagogical setting. While Brazil’s girls’ school stories, *The Fortunes of Philippa* and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s*, embark on a project of eliminating troubling markers of liminal difference, *Stalky & Co.* functions as an example of a boys’ school story that adverts to the importance of cultivating liminal identities. These gendered differences in the treatment of the liminal are also imbued with notions of place: while the girls’ school stories discussed in this chapter move Philippa and Honor physically and symbolically toward the metropole, *Stalky & Co.* moves Beetle, M’Turk and especially the eponymous Stalky away from the metropole toward the colonies. The idealised model of liminal “stalkiness” (Kipling 13) that Stalky embodies significantly prefigures the idealised liminality that will be discussed in the next chapter. Just as Stalky’s liminal qualities signal his effectiveness as a future imperial leader, the following chapter will notably discuss how Kim’s liminal qualities are harnessed in service of the British Empire.
Chapter Four: Empire

Representations of empire feature heavily in Golden Age children’s texts. M. Daphne Kutzer asserts that Empire was ‘woven into the fabric of British life, and hence into the fabric of British children’s fiction’, particularly during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (xiv). Consequently, Kutzer states that ‘[f]inding a critique of empire in a children’s text is rare’ (xiii): indeed, imperial ideology functioned as an ‘accepted truth’ throughout much of the Edwardian period (Kutzer xv). Golden Age children’s texts necessarily engage with empire at the height of British imperial expansion, but this chapter will examine the way in which Golden Age texts mobilise the trope of the liminal to address anxieties about national identity: namely, the fear of ‘contamination by absorption into native life and customs’ that Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin identify (“Going Native” 106).

In Culture and Imperialism (1993), Edward W. Said argues that narrative fiction plays a fundamental role in establishing and communicating ideas about empire. Said writes that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. As one critic has suggested, nations themselves are narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. (Culture and Imperialism xiii)

Said posits an inextricable relationship between narrative and empire: narrative (in myriad forms) plays a fundamental role in establishing and maintaining ideologies
that facilitate imperial expansion. Texts establish, replicate and promulgate discourse that serves to reinforce imperial rule: “‘they’ were not like ‘us’, and for that reason deserved to be ruled” (Said, Culture xii). While Said asserts that ‘grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial subjection’ (Culture xiii), this chapter focuses on children’s texts produced in Britain at the height of British imperial expansion. Therefore, the texts addressed in this chapter promulgate imperialist ideals and, I argue, evoke the liminal so as to mitigate concerns regarding national identity in the context of British imperialism.

The imperialist ideals presented in Golden Age children’s texts rest upon a differentiation between a (European) ‘self’ and an ‘other’. Said’s seminal 1978 text Orientalism discusses this difference between ‘the Occident’ and the ‘Orient’. Said argues that Orientalist discourse has established a ‘basic distinction between East and West’, which has in turn informed ‘elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient’ (2-3). Orientalist discourse serves both to separate the Orient from European culture, and to define European culture: the Orient is ‘one of [Europe’s] deepest and most recurring images of the Other … [and] has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience’ (Said, Orientalism 1-2). For Said, ‘European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self’ (3). Significantly, Orientalism functions as the ‘Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’ (3). This idea of authority through representation is key: the perception of Europe’s innate authority over the Orient/other facilitates imperial expansion.

Stephen Howe states that ‘[t]he terms “empire” and “imperialism” have, at their most general, been used to refer to any and every type of relation between a more powerful state or society and a less powerful one’ (13). Howe notes that just as conceptions of empire ‘have changed across the past century from general approval to near-universal distaste’ (10), ““Imperialism”, as a word, has gone imperial; [and] “colonialism” has colonized our languages’ (10-11). As Kutzer notes, ‘[t]he words empire, imperialism and colonialism are tricky terms’ (xvii), and consequently, it is important to differentiate between them. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin assert that imperialism ‘in its most general sense
… refers to the formation of an empire’ (111). Said writes that the term “imperialism” means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory’. Conversely, “colonialism”, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory’ (Culture and Imperialism 8).

This chapter will utilise Said’s definition of imperialism as a system of ideas that underpin the practice of colonial expansion. Said highlights that imperial ideology plays a fundamental role in the formation of empire:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as “inferior” or “subject races”, “subordinate peoples”, “dependency”, “expansion”, and “authority”. (Culture and Imperialism 8)

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin similarly write that the ‘colonial world became one of a people intrinsically inferior’. This enforced inferiority is rationalised as a ‘natural state’ with the autochthonous inhabitants of colonized nations constructed as ‘outside history and civilization’ (“Colonialism” 41). Colonialism establishes a ‘rigid hierarchy of difference’ between colonizer and colonized, and establishes a system which is ‘deeply resistant to fair and equitable exchanges’ (“Colonialism” 40-1). The ideology of imperialism and the practice of colonialism result in an empire, which Stephen Howe defines in general terms as ‘a large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational political unit, usually created by conquest, and divided between a dominant centre and subordinate, sometimes far distant, peripheries’ (30). This chapter will utilise the term ‘empire’ to refer primarily to the British Empire, and in particular, to India, the ‘twin pillar of the empire’ (Jackson 85).

The British Empire reached its apotheosis during the Golden Age of children’s literature. While ‘Western powers … held approximately 35 per cent of the earth’s surface’ in 1800, ‘by 1878 the proportion was 67 per cent’ (Said, Culture 6). Said posits that while this increase represents ‘a rate of … 83,000 miles per
year’, by 1914, ‘the annual rate had risen to … 240,000 square miles’ (Said, *Culture* 6). Said states that ‘from 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth’s surface to about 85 percent of it’ (*Orientalism* 41). This model of expansion was evident in India: Ashley Jackson asserts that Britain’s hold in India ‘allowed Britain to dominate the entire Indian Ocean region’ (85), and notes that a number of campaigns spanning from the 1840s to the 1880s focused both on gaining territory and securing frontiers against the designs of other imperial powers (87-8). Jo-Ann Wallace and Stephen Slemon argue that the ‘idea of a globally inclusive, British subjectivity … rested on an embedded narrative of imperial cultural “progress” wherein non-English traditional practices and languages, celebrated as they were for their exoticism and difference, would necessarily in time give way to a “larger” and emancipatory “Britishness” that empire eventually would bestow’ (“Empire” 76).

This ‘emancipatory “Britishness”’ (Wallace and Slemon, “Empire” 76) associated with imperial expansion paradoxically evokes the liminal through its links to ‘binary logic’ (“Binarism” 19). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin assert that the ‘tendency of Western thought in general to see the world in terms of binary oppositions … establish[es] a relation of dominance’ (19). This relationship of dominance imposes and ‘actively perpetuates’ a ‘violent hierarchy’ in which ‘one term of the opposition is always dominant’ – for example, ‘colonizer [over] colonized’ (“Binarism” 19). Notably, ‘imperial binarisms’ imply a movement in ‘one direction’ – ‘a movement from the colonizer to the colonized, from the explorer to the explored, from the surveyor to the surveyed’ (“Binarism” 21).

Binary logic works to ‘suppress [the] ambiguous or interstitial spaces between categories’ (“Binarism” 18). However, this suppression necessarily evokes the liminal, which emerges in the ‘domain of overlap’ (“Binarism” 20) between categories. The ‘overlapping region[s]’ (“Binarism” 18) that emerge between the categories become ‘impossible according to binary logic, and a region of taboo in social experience’ (“Binarism” 18). These ‘overlapping region[s]’ (“Binarism” 18) are pertinent to Golden Age texts which engage with ideas of empire, as they represent a source of anxiety which must be mitigated.

This challenge is a source of anxiety in imperial ideology – Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note ‘colonizers’ fear of contamination’ as they become ‘absor[bed] into native life and customs’ (“Going Native” 106). This challenge
likewise appears in myriad ways in Golden Age children’s texts: as this chapter will demonstrate, Golden Age texts respond to this ‘fear of contamination’ (“Going Native” 106) by presenting liminal child characters who traverse liminal spaces in ways that ultimately prioritise, and reinforce, imperial rule. It is also important to note that imperialist ideologies are not limited to spatial domains explicitly associated with Empire\(^1\), but are implicit in the spatial domains this thesis has addressed so far: domestic space, pedagogical space and domesticated natural space. Clare Bradford writes that

> Children’s texts reinvoke and rehearse colonialism in a variety of ways: for instance, through narratives that engage with history in realistic or fantastic modes; through sequences involving encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters; through representations of characters of mixed ancestry; and through metaphorical and symbolic treatments of colonization. (3)

As the conclusion to this chapter will demonstrate, empire is also implicit in fantastic spaces, which will be addressed in the final section of this thesis.

This chapter contends that Golden Age children’s texts evoke empire in both implicit and explicit ways as they depict child characters engaging with liminal space, but ultimately suggest that liminality only functions as an acceptable condition if it furthers the interests of the British Empire. Consequently, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden (1911) suggests that both Mary’s and Colin’s colonial liminality must be tempered through the liminal space represented by the eponymous secret garden in order to achieve an ‘emancipatory

---

\(^1\) While it is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss the Robinsonade in detail, it is important to note the role these texts play in promulgating imperialist ideals. Said reads Daniel Defoe’s archetypal Robinsonade Robinson Crusoe (1719) as emblematic of imperialist ideas: ‘not accidentally [Robinson Crusoe] is about a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island’ (xiii). While imperialist ideologies are evident throughout the text, Friday’s arrival on the island notably naturalises ideas of European superiority and dominance as Robinson Crusoe decides to establish the ‘Savage’ (170, 172) as a ‘Servant’ (171-3). Andrew O’Malley’s 2012 text Children’s Literature, Popular Culture and Robinson Crusoe attests to the continued significance of the Robinsonade, and similar imperialist ideologies are evident in other examples of the Robinsonade genre – Michelle J. Smith highlights the way in which ‘late-Victorian and Edwardian girl Crusoes’ (164) modelled modes of femininity that accorded with empire-building projects in Britain, notably by ‘insert[ing] mothering into the imperial parent-child metaphor’ (107).
“Britishness” (Wallace and Slemon 76) with its attendant benefits of health and happiness. Conversely, Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) posits an idealised model of liminality in which liminal characters serve to paradoxically maintain British hegemony in contested spaces. Golden Age children’s texts demonstrate that the presence of the liminal is articulated differently depending on whether texts are primarily set in the metropole, or in the colonies.

**Mediated Liminality: The Secret Garden**

Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* presents myriad images of empire. Mary Lennox journeys from India to England after her parents’ deaths, and meets her cousin Colin Craven, who is awarded the pejorative title of a ‘young Rajah’ (112). Burnett’s text engages with ideas of liminality, as Mary negotiates her relationship with home/the “homeland” and spaces associated with empire. Liminality is presented as particularly problematic in *The Secret Garden*, as Burnett’s text suggests that both physical and metaphorical connections with empire foster illness, and must be tempered (and in some cases, eradicated) in order to facilitate good mental and physical health.

Scholars have paid particular attention to the role empire plays in *The Secret Garden*, with many highlighting the text’s nationalist concerns. Notably, Maureen M. Martin discusses debates surrounding ‘troubled English masculinity’ (137) in the early twentieth century, and posits that *The Secret Garden* presents the British Empire as the ‘cause of England’s national sickness’. Martin asserts that the novel ‘proposes a shift away from the rootlessness inherent in maintaining a global empire and a radical recentering of Englishness on England itself’ (137-8). Martin states that as ‘imperialism globalizes Englishness’ it also ‘necessarily dilutes it’, and ‘a clear sense of specifically English identity became harder to grasp’ as the British Empire increased (140). Lori N. Brister also notes the way in which the text’s nationalist concerns intersect with ideas of gender, and posits that *The Secret Garden* suggests that ‘[a] healthy England is dependent upon a healthy generation that promises a heteronormative, reproductive future’ (101). As Mary ‘grow[s] more English as well as more ladylike, attractive [and] fertile’, Colin ‘grow[s]
strong, ambitious and assertive’ and gains the ability to function as ‘a proper English gentleman’ at the text’s close (101).

Scholars have also paid particular attention to the way in which The Secret Garden communicates ideals pertaining to empire in its representation of domesticated natural spaces. Notably, Tóth and Mary Goodwin highlight the role the eponymous secret garden plays in communicating the text’s nationalist ideals. György Tóth asserts that ‘Late Victorians … cultivated their Empire by tending their gardens’ (121), which were incorporated into ‘the philosophy of social reform’ (120). Consequently, Tóth posits that the eponymous secret garden is ‘infused with anti-Imperialism’ (118). Mary Goodwin states that ‘late Victorian notions of childhood, education and nature converge with those of national and imperial identity’ (106), and posits that ‘English country life’ (107, my emphasis) – specifically, time spent in the secret garden – ‘puts a bloom back into sickly children’s faces, [and] it also improves them morally, socially, and intellectually’ (107). The intersections between nature and empire highlight the significant role imperial ideology plays in Burnett’s text.

Representations of domestic space are inextricably connected to ideas of empire in Burnett’s text. Maureen M. Martin asserts that The Secret Garden follows in a literary tradition where the Estate functions as a ‘synecdoche for the nation’ at large (141). Jerry Phillips reads Mary’s journey from India to England as a ‘pilgrimage’. For Phillips, it is ‘a homecoming to an ideal space and place of values [Mary] has always known but never seen’ (170), and the text emphasises the notion of a ‘homecoming’ (Phillips 170) as Mary questions whether the moor across which she journeys as she travels to Misselthwaite is a ‘sea’ (Burnett 14). Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina notes a similar idea in ‘communities remote from their origins’, as members (including children) share language and a ‘conception of “home”’, but have never seen England (28). This demonstrates the paradoxical relationship between the British Empire and the idea of “home”: Mary Lennox occupies a liminal space between the metropole and the outer reaches of the British Empire in Burnett’s text.

This liminality is problematised in The Secret Garden. Burnett’s text works to temper Mary’s and Colin’s liminality, and in doing so, communicates nationalist ideals as Mary becomes ‘more English’, as Colin Craven becomes ‘a proper English gentleman’ (Brister 101). Mary’s liminality is highlighted from the
beginning of the text. Significantly, Mary is described as ‘yellow’: ‘Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another’ (Burnett 3). Martin states that ‘Mary’s initial yellowness, her not-quite-whiteness, thus signifies not so much physical sickness as the unwholesome stain of Indianness’ (139), and Danielle E. Price asserts that Mary’s ‘birth in India has somehow infected her with the same colour skin as its natives’ (8, my emphasis), and the text implies that Mary is, as Brister argues, ‘neither Indian nor English’ (100). Mary ‘grows up accustomed to the reality of India but attuned to the spirit of England, culturally, linguistically, and ethically’ (Phillips 170). England ‘defines [Mary’s] manners, her values, her social position, her racial identity, and yet, is still only a partial truth of her day-to-day reality’. England is, for Mary, ‘near and far, everywhere and nowhere’ (Phillips 171). Mary’s (colonial) liminality is also emphasised by her relationship to her family. Mary refers to her mother as the ‘Mem Sahib’ (4), which Tóth asserts demonstrates the extent to which Mary has internalised ‘the imperial socio-political structure’ (135). Mary’s liminal characterisation is also emphasised as she reflects that she ‘never seemed to belong to anyone even when her father and mother had been alive’ (9). Mary’s liminality is linked to her colonial identity as she looks at her (English) mother ‘from a distance’ (Burnett 9): living in colonial India, Mary is symbolically distanced from “mother England” at the opening of the text.

Mary is also symbolically distanced from England as she attempts to build a garden while staying with an English clergyman and his family in India (7). Basil, the clergyman’s son, taunts Mary’s futile attempts to build a garden by awarding her a name taken from ‘[a] traditional English nursery rhyme’ (Gerzina, notes to text, 7): ‘Mistress Mary, quite contrary’ (7). The rhyme, with its English flowers ‘silver bells’ and ‘marigolds’, highlights Mary’s disconnectedness from ‘[t]he glorious garden called England’ (Phillips 171) as she can only make futile attempts at establishing a garden in India (4,7). Finally, Mary’s liminal characterisation is exemplified as she asks Basil, ‘“Where is home?”’ (Burnett 8). Burnett’s text works to ‘eradicate … or at the least temper’ Mary’s (and Colin’s) liminality by the novel’s end (Brister 100).

Before discussing further explicit and implicit representations of empire in Burnett’s text, it is important to note that that the opening of The Secret Garden
also works to establish India as Britain’s binary opposite. Martin notes the way in which Burnett’s text portrays India:

The novel consistently portrays India as a source of contamination—physical and spiritual. It encodes despotic power, moral laxity, and physical illness as inherently Asiatic, as diseases with which Mary’s submersion in the empire has infected her. The novel abounds with references to India’s unhealthiness: cholera kills Mary’s parents, the climate makes Mary lethargic and frequently sick, and neither plants nor children can grow properly there. (Martin 139)

Mary Goodwin asserts that the text represents India as ‘a fen of deadly vapours and punishing heat that causes physical, moral and spiritual lassitude’ (106). Mary’s lassitude is explicitly linked to her presence in India once she has spent time in England: while ‘[i]n India [Mary] had always been too hot and languid and weak to care much about anything’ (41), the ‘fresh, strong, pure air from the [English] moor’ gives Mary an ‘appetite’, and stirs her ‘blood’ and ‘mind’ (41). Mary also tells Archibald Craven that she had been “ill and tired” and “hot” in India (70).

Mary is associated with a degenerative moral climate in India through her treatment of ‘native servants’ (3). Mary is ‘as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived’ (3) because her servants ‘always obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything’ (3). The servants in India are presented as ‘obsequious and servile’ (16) in Burnett’s text, and Mary notes that they ‘made salaams’ and called their ‘masters’ “protector of the poor” (16). Mary also notes that she ‘always slapped her Ayah in the face when she was angry’ (16) – Martin argues that Mary is ‘tainted’ by her ‘power over native servants’ (13), and indeed, she claims that “natives … are not people – they’re servants who must salaam to you” (Burnett 18) – but the text uses this action to establish a binary opposition between India and England. While the text implies that Mary’s ‘obsequious’ (16) servants in India permitted her to slap them, Martha, a ‘Yorkshire rustic’ (19), has a ‘sturdy way which made Mistress Mary wonder if she might not even slap back’ (16). This pattern of contrasting the ‘obsequious’ Indian servants against the servants at Misselthwaite continues throughout the text: unlike Mary’s Ayah, Martha is shocked that Mary does not dress herself (17) and does not assist Mary when she
puts on her shoes (19) or gloves (33), declaring Mary’s inability to do so makes her appear “‘fair soft in th’ head’” (33); Mrs Medlock is described as a woman who would “‘stand no nonsense from young ones’” (10); and Tóth (144) notes that Ben Weatherstaff’s ‘blunt frankness’ (25) is implicitly contrasted against the earlier Indian servants who ‘made salaams’ (Burnett 16).

The implicit contrast between India and England is also evident when ‘Yorkshire rustic’ (19) Martha discusses ‘blacks’ (17). While Martha’s comments serve to indicate her ignorance in the text, they also present the text’s implicit imperialist ideologies. Martha first discusses ‘blacks’ (17) when she attributes key differences between England and India to the fact that “‘there’s such a lot o’ blacks there instead o’ respectable white people’” (17), and mistakenly assumes that Mary would be “‘a black too’” (17). While Martha’s comments function as a dubiously comic indication of her ignorance, Mary’s subsequent comments serve to reinforce the text’s presentation of a hierarchical relationship between colonizer and colonized. Mary expresses her anger by calling Martha a “‘daughter of a pig’” (17), which the text has previously established as ‘the worst insult’ one can direct at a ‘native’ (4). As noted above, Mary also states that ‘native[s]’ ‘are not people – they’re servants who must salaam to you’ (18). Martha’s comment about “‘respectable white people’” therefore becomes ironic, as Mary’s knowledge of the ‘culturally charged’ ‘epithet’ indicates her imperialist ‘aggression’ (Tóth 135), and implicitly communicates a hierarchical colonizer/colonized relationship to the implied reader. The text does not comment on the problematic colonizer/colonized relationship, and depicts Mary, as Tóth asserts, as having internalised the ‘imperial socio-political structure’ (135).

The text also presents an implicit contrast between India and England when Martha presents Mary with a skipping rope purchased by her mother, Mrs Sowerby (43). Mary gazes at it with a ‘mystified expression’ (43), never having seen one before. Martha’s response to Mary’s confusion indicates the text’s implicit imperialist ideologies:

‘Does tha’ mean that they’ve not got skippin’-ropes in India, for all they’ve got elephants and tigers and camels! No wonder most of ’em’s black. This is what it’s for; just watch me.’ (43)
Martha’s comment “‘No wonder most of ’em’s black’” once again functions as a dubiously comic indication of her ignorance. Martha (and, by extension, the text) associates the lack of skipping ropes with implied moral degeneracy in India. This is significant given the nationalist associations of the skipping-rope in Burnett’s text. It is Martha, the ‘Yorkshire rustic’ (19, my emphasis) who teaches Mary how to use the skipping-rope, which is in turn associated with healing the malaise Mary acquired in India. The skipping rope is described as “‘th’ sensiblest toy a child can have’” (43), and as she skips, Mary becomes ‘more interested than she had been since she was born’ (44). Martha attributes Mary’s increased appetite to the skipping-rope (48), and the text suggests that the skipping-rope will help Mary gain strength in her arms and legs (43). These health benefits linked to the skipping-rope systematically remove the negative characteristics associated with Mary’s time in India: importantly, the “‘healthy-minded’” (71) character Susan Sowerby recommended the skipping-rope.

The Secret Garden also communicates imperialist ideologies as Colin Craven is described as a ‘Rajah’. The epithet is applied to Colin numerous times throughout Burnett’s text, and indicates when Colin is exercising authority similar to the ‘Oriental despotism’ Jerry Phillips associates with Mary (173-4). As many scholars have discussed, and as I outlined in chapter one, The Secret Garden seeks to direct both Mary and Colin toward normative (and characteristically English) gender roles at the text’s close: significantly, Burnett’s text refers to ‘Master Colin’ (173) at its close. While Colin’s role is characterised by its emphasis on power – as Ackroyd states, he becomes ‘the dominant father of the manor’ at the close of the text (46) – the text’s project is to temper Colin’s behaviour and to teach him to rule in the correct way. Mary Goodwin asserts that ‘[i]n the society of The Secret Garden, it is not wrong to rule, or rather, not wrong to rise to the role one is born

__________

2 As I asserted in chapter one, Lissa Paul (158-62), U. C. Knoepflmacher (25), Michelle Beissel Heath (90) and Elizabeth Lennox Keyser (12-13) all assert that Mary becomes subordinated as Colin is awarded priority in the text.
to play; it is wrong only to rule in the “wrong” way’ (112). The ‘wrong way to rule … is as a “young rajah”’ (Goodwin 112).

Significantly, Colin is described as a ‘Rajah’ twice when he fights with Mary and says that he will force her to see him (98-99), and when he informs Dr Craven that he will be going outdoors against his advice (112). Colin is described as a ‘Rajah’ three times when he gives orders to his ‘servitor’ Mr Roach (120-121), and three times when he fights with Ben Weatherstaff (129-30). Jerry Phillips asserts that the ‘spiritual trajectory’ (181) of Burnett’s text is to temper such behaviour:

Despotism is a creature of the East. The spiritual trajectory of the text is to remove those aspects of the East considered unsuitable for elite social performance in an English setting. The transformation of the colonial subject anticipates a similar transformation in Master Colin, … [Mary’s] home-based cousin. Thus, it seems fair to say that both characters are disoriented, stripped of alien authoritarian political tendencies. (Phillips 181-2)

This stripping of ‘authoritarian political tendencies’ is evident in the text’s use of the word ‘imperious’ to describe both Mary and Colin. The text refers to Mary’s ‘imperious Indian’ (26) manner three times. Mary asks if Martha will be her servant in her ‘imperious little Indian way’ (7) and she is ‘imperious and Indian’ as she leads Dickon to the entrance of the secret garden for the first time (60). The text contrasts Mary’s ‘imperious Indian’ manner against her ‘soft and eager and coaxing’ (26) tone when she speaks to a robin she befriends, and Jennifer Marchant notes the robin’s attendant nationalist associations (70-1). Danielle E. Price reads this change in Mary’s tone as ‘a startling nationalistic trope’, and asserts that Mary’s ‘loss of her imperious Indian manner’ reveals her ‘anglicization’ (8).

Jennifer Marchant reads roins in general (and I assert the reading can be extended to Burnett’s robin in particular) as liminal figures, who ‘perch just on the threshold of “wild animal” and “pet,”’ (67), functioning as ‘bridges, linking the domestic and the wild, humans with other animals’ (67). Marchant asserts that the robin in Burnett’s text functions as such a bridge: while he is ‘a wild animal’, he is also “almost as friendly as [a dog]” (38) toward humans [and] flies free but makes his home in the enclosed garden’ (67).
Indeed, Mary is described as ‘imperious’ for the last time prior to showing Dickon the secret garden, and the text suggests that the removal of the moniker adverts to the removal of Mary’s colonial liminality. Just as Mary Goodwin asserts that power itself is not problematic in *The Secret Garden* (112), “imperiousness” is problematised not because of its connection to ideas of power, but because of the ‘Oriental despotism’ (Phillips 173-4) it suggests: Mary is ‘imperious and Indian’ (my emphasis, 7, 26, 60). The loss of Mary’s ‘imperious’ manner is contemporaneous with the loss of her ‘yeller’ (54, 89) skin tone, which, as I discussed above, signals her colonial liminality. Almost immediately prior to Mary meeting Dickon and showing him the secret garden for the first time, Ben Weatherstaff remarks that Mary is “‘beginnin’ to do Misselthwaite credit’” and comments that she is “‘not quite so yeller’” as when the pair first met (54). The Estate in general, and Misselthwaite Manor in particular, functions as a ‘synecdoche for the nation’ (Martin 141), so just as Mary is beginning to “‘do Misselthwaite credit’” (Burnett 54), she is “‘do[ing] [the nation] credit’” in eschewing her colonial liminality. The elimination of Mary’s colonial liminality is also revealed as Martha, like Ben, comments that Mary is “‘not nigh so yeller’” (89) as when she arrived at Misselthwaite.

The text also applies the moniker ‘imperious’ to Colin three times, and while Colin is not ‘imperious and Indian’ (my emphasis, 7, 26, 60) like Mary, his ‘imperious[ness]’ nevertheless serves to indicate his liminal condition. Colin is othered in myriad ways in the text: chapter one addressed the way in which Colin’s illness linked him to ideas of Gothic femininity, and I assert that Colin’s illness links him to a specifically colonial malaise similar to the malaise from which the text asserts Mary suffers. As I have previously discussed, links to the outer reaches of the British Empire are presented as illnesses in themselves in Burnett’s text: Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina asserts that Burnett’s text suggests that ‘the colonial experience leads to a condition that requires healing through family, nature, and magic’ (28), and argues that ‘[t]he very illnesses presented in the novels of Burnett and the Brontës were symbols of social, *racial* and familial instability’ (33, my emphasis). Gerzina also draws an explicit link between Colin’s (imagined) illness and imperial imagery, stating that ‘Charles Lamb saw the sickroom as a place where the ill person became a *monarch*, much in the way that Colin Craven *rules* his sickroom’ (35, my emphasis). Colin’s presence in the sickroom represents his
liminal condition: Colin is a ‘bedridden hypochondriac’, as Stiles asserts (309). Just as for Mary, Colin’s ‘imperious’ tone distances him from the idealised English subjectivity toward which the text directs him. Colin is ‘imperious’ when he is unwell. Colin beckons ‘imperiously’ to Dickon in the secret garden as Ben Weatherstaff peers over the wall, and chastises the three children for spending time in the locked garden (129). Colin demands ‘still more imperiously’ whether Ben Weatherstaff knows who he is (129), and ‘fix[es] his eyes on Ben Weatherstaff in his funny imperious way’ when he shows Ben Weatherstaff that he is capable of standing (132). Just as the removal of the moniker adverts to the removal of Mary’s colonial liminality, Colin is described as ‘imperious’ for the final time when he shows Ben Weatherstaff that he is able to stand (132). In gaining the ability to walk, Colin loses his ‘imperious’ nature and the links to the outer reaches of the Empire that it suggests.

The imagery associated with the eponymous secret garden also has extensive nationalist associations. Indeed, as many scholars have highlighted (and as this thesis has suggested), the very act of gardening is presented as a cure for Mary’s (and Colin’s) colonial malaise in the text: for example, Danielle E. Price argues that ‘[p]lunting hands into English soil becomes a cure for creolization’ (4). Maureen M. Martin similarly reads the act of gardening as ‘tending … the soil of Englishness’:

The nation, like the estate, the novel implies, needs its rulers to re-center their attention on the homeland, rather than pursuing imperial ventures that dissipate the nation’s energies and sense of identity and undermine its domestic virtues. They need, in a sense, to turn to gardening, a symbolic tending of the soil of Englishness. (Martin 142)

While scholars have extensively discussed the significance of gardening and the nationalist associations of the eponymous secret garden, few scholars have paid explicit attention to the floral symbolism in Burnett’s text. György Tóth notes the way in which the garden ‘retains impressions of a monarchy’ (126):
Blooming flowers are in successive pages “royal purple” and yellow (146), purple, orange and gold (148), purple, gold and white (199), again purple, gold, “violet blue”, scarlet, white and ruby (275), both purple and gold suggesting imperial colours. Images of monarchy taken from fairy tales strongly resonate with contemporary concepts of the Empire: the blossoming plum tree over Colin’s wheelchair is like a fairy king’s canopy (201), the boy’s ride around the garden “was like being taken in state round the country of a magic king and queen and being shown all the mysterious riches it contained” (202), while the old gardener tells Colin to “set [the rose] in the earth thyself’ same as th’ king does when he goes to a new place” (216). (Tóth 126)

The flora presented in Burnett’s text does indeed retain nationalist associations. Mary’s early attempts to cultivate a garden of hibiscus blossoms in India are unsuccessful (4), and her failed attempts to cultivate gardens in India (4, 6) can be read as an allegory for her lack of connectedness to the outer reaches of the British Empire. Conversely, Mary discovers that the roses in the English secret garden are “‘wick’” (61).

Roses feature extensively in Burnett’s text – indeed, Anne Stiles refers to ‘Mary’s rose garden’ (311) – and rose imagery is associated with key moments in the narrative. The branch upon which Colin’s mother Lilias Craven sat in the titular secret garden was covered with roses (the branch broke and Lilias “‘fell on th’ ground an’ was hurt so bad that the next day she died’” (30)), and Lilias’ portrait is covered by a ‘rose-coloured’ curtain (79). Mary’s curiosity about the ‘rose-trees’ Ben Weatherstaff mentions (26) informs her desire to see the secret garden (39, 41, 47). Roses serve as an index of the garden’s awakening as Mary learns that the rose-bushes are “‘wick’” (61, 115) and Dickon shows her ‘swelling leafbuds on rose branches which had seemed dead’ (93). Mary awards the roses priority as she

---

4 ‘All that troubled [Mary] was her wish that she knew whether all the roses were dead, or if perhaps some of them had lived and might put out leaves and buds as the weather got warmer. She did not want it to be a quite dead garden. If it were a quite alive garden, how wonderful it would be, and what thousands of roses would grow on every side!’ (Burnett 47).
describes the garden to Colin (106, 115), and the children discover that Ben Weatherstaff had followed Lilias Craven’s request to tend her roses if she were ever “‘ill’” or “‘away’” (133). As Tóth notes, Colin plants a rose “‘same as th’ king does’” (134) towards the close of the text, and roses feature in the dream sequence that prompts Archibald Craven to return to England (166), where he notes the ‘[l]ate roses’ upon entering the secret garden (172). Roses also feature in an allegorical representation of the text’s moral imperative (and highlight its links to the New Thought movement\(^5\)): “‘Where you tend a rose, my lad, a thistle cannot grow’” (164).

The prevalence of rose imagery in *The Secret Garden* is significant because of the flower’s nationalist associations. The rose is, as Charles Boutell asserts in his 1867 text *English Heraldry*, the ‘emblem of England’ (150). Boutell lists the rose in general, and the Tudor Rose in particular, as a prevalent symbol on a number of Royal Badges (1911, 228-9), and in the eleventh edition of *The Handbook to English Heraldry* (1914) Boutell notes the use of rose imagery in Orders of Knighthood and Insignia of Honour in two orders specifically pertaining to the British Empire. The Most Exalted Order of the Star of India was ‘instituted by Queen Victoria in 1861, to render especial honour to high merit and loyalty in the Indian Empire’ (292), and significantly, the collar of the badge features ‘heraldic roses’ (288). The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, which is the ‘second Indian Order’ was ‘instituted in 1878’ (290). The collar of this badge features ‘Indian roses’ and the badge consists of a ‘red enamelled rose’ (291).

Importantly, rose imagery also demonstrates the way in which both Mary and Colin have eschewed colonial liminality at the end of Burnett’s text. Anne Stiles asserts that ‘roses serve as an index of Colin’s transformation from hypochondriac shut-in to healthy lover of the outdoors’ (311). While roses do indeed function as an index of both Mary’s and Colin’s transformation in the text, Stiles’ reading neglects the nationalist associations of the text’s rose imagery. Mary’s ‘yellow’ (1) colouring, which functions as a marker of her colonial liminality, dissipates as she works in the garden until Mrs Sowerby tells Mary she

---

is “‘hearty’” and declares that Mary will be “‘like a blush rose’” when she grows up (160). Just as Stiles asserts that roses ‘serve as an index of Colin’s transformation’ (311), roses serve as an index of the elimination of Mary’s colonial liminality. Roses function similarly for Colin in the text. Martin’s reading of The Secret Garden suggests that Colin’s illness is inextricably connected to national identity: Colin’s ‘physical and moral feebleness offers a grim prognosis for England’s future’, and he ‘represents a worst-case scenario for English ruling-class manhood’ (143). This link between Colin’s illness and representations of national identity is highlighted as Martha Sowerby tells Mary the story of “‘[o]ne of the worst fits [Colin] ever had’” (83):

“One of th’ worst fits he ever had,” said Martha, “was one time they took him out where the roses is by the fountain. He’d been readin’ in a paper about people gettin’ somethin’ he called ‘rose-cold’ an’ he began to sneeze an’ said he’s got it an’ then a new gardener as didn’t know th’ rules passed by an’ looked at him curious. He threw himself into a passion an’ he said he’d looked at him because he was going to be a hunchback. He cried himself into a fever an’ was ill all night.” (Burnett 83)

Colin’s “‘passion’” and “‘fever’” suggest a ‘morbose effeminacy’ (Martin 144) that is at odds with the model of English ‘manliness’ (Martin 144) toward which Martin suggests the narrative directs Colin. The floral symbolism in the passage works the same way: Colin’s fears about “‘rose-cold’” and his “‘fit’” in close proximity to a rose-garden suggest his distance from the model of English masculinity the text proscribes, and highlights Colin’s liminality. However, roses are used later in the text to suggest that Colin is moving towards, and ultimately attains, an idealised ‘ruling-class manhood’ (Martin 143) – and, in doing so, Colin eschews his colonial liminality. Notably, Colin plants a rose “‘same as th’ king does when he goes to a new place’” (134), and the “‘new place’” Ben Weatherstaff mentions evokes imperialist ideas. The text also utilises rose imagery to highlight the way in which Colin’s skin tone, like Mary’s, has altered throughout the text: ‘The waxen tinge had left Colin’s skin and a warm rose showed through it’ (Burnett 150, my
emphasised). Burnett’s use of rose imagery suggests the way in which *The Secret Garden* promulgates imperialist ideals.

The abundance of imperial imagery in both the domestic spatial domain and the domesticated natural spaces of Burnett’s text highlight the significant role representations of empire play in Golden Age children’s texts published at the height of the British Empire. Burnett’s text presents both Mary’s and Colin’s colonial liminality as problematic, and as *The Secret Garden* directs both Mary and Colin toward subjectivities characterised by their nationalist associations, the text addresses anxieties surrounding national identity.

**Idealised Liminality: *Kim***

Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) is a seminal text addressing the British Empire. Like *The Secret Garden*, *Kim* addresses imperial expansion in India. Edward W. Said asserts that ‘the empire is everywhere a crucial setting’ in texts penned by Kipling⁶ (*Culture* 74), and John McBratney posits that Kipling, ‘more than any other writer or spokesman … gave to the people of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain a myth of what it meant for them to hold an extensive empire’ (xiii).

John McBratney states that Kipling ‘conceived for Britain a new image of itself as a large, various, yet interrelated cultural and geopolitical whole’ (xiii). Despite this, *Kim* depicts myriad liminal spaces and identities. These liminal spaces and characters in the outer reaches of the British Empire invariably speak to the metropole, and ‘[respond] to the drive to assert the legitimacy of British hegemonic claims, to represent the meaning of the imperial mission in the face of contestation’ (Randall 15). For Kipling, the liminal functions as a condition that serves to strengthen Britain’s hold over its (Indian) territories and mitigate anxieties about any potential loss of power: notably, Kipling evokes what Zohreh T. Sullivan reads as a ‘super colonialist’ in *Kim*; one who is ‘simultaneously of the people and yet above them’ (176).

---

⁶ Said also adverts to the emphasis contemporaneous authors such as ‘Conrad, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, R. L. Stevenson, George Orwell, Joyce Cary, E. M. Forster, and T. E. Lawrence’ place on representations of Empire (*Culture* 74).
Scholars assert the primacy of the liminal in Kipling’s work. Notably, Sullivan’s magisterial *Narratives of Empire: The Fictions of Rudyard Kipling* (1993) posits that Kipling’s oeuvre betrays the ambivalence at the heart of the colonial project at large. Sullivan notes that Kipling’s texts ‘problematize the breaking point of boundaries’, and ‘transform and cross over some of the rigid binary constructions of nineteenth-century racist and gendered thought, entering in the process fluid and luminous borderline spaces’ (8). Importantly, Sullivan notes that colonialism’s attendant anxieties become especially pronounced in such borderline spaces.

It is important to address the status of Kipling’s texts as children’s literature. The concept of childhood is central to the colonial project: Sullivan discusses Britain’s (in particular, Queen Victoria’s) position as ‘“ma-baap” (mother/father)’ to the ‘native … untrained child’ (Sullivan 3) represented by India, and imperial ideology posits Britain’s ‘colonial subjects’ as ‘dependent children needing to be led to higher moral ground’ (Kutzer 5). *Kim* occupies a somewhat liminal position within scholarship, as critics present conflicting ideas about its readership.

M. Daphne Kutzer asserts that ‘[d]espite its adolescent hero, *Kim*’s assignment to the category of children’s text is problematic, given its complexities of language, structure, and history’ (17). Said similarly locates *Kim* as a text for ‘adolescents’, which can ‘also be read with respect and interest years after adolescence’ (*Culture* 159). Sue Walsh identifies two key factors which she argues ‘disqualify *Kim* from easy categorisation as a children’s or boy’s book’ (11): the ‘complexity’ of the text’s language and its engagement with what Walsh ‘loosely term[s] “history”’ (11). Jan Montefiore notes a similar hesitation to engage with

---

7 For a detailed discussion of the way in which *Kim*’s language and engagement with ““history”” (11) are addressed by numerous scholars as they discuss *Kim*’s status as a children’s text, please see the Introduction to Walsh’s *Kipling’s Children’s Literature*, pp. 11-13. In particular, Walsh notes the implications of the way in which *Kim* has been discussed in post-colonial criticism:

Just as Edmund Wilson and Peter Hunt praise Kipling’s children’s literature for what they read as its avoidance of his ideological excesses, so the qualification of the label ‘children’s book’, by post-colonial critics such as Said and those following after him, indicates that such criticism, even while it investigates colonial constructions of identities such as race and subjects them to scrutiny, nevertheless retains vestiges of a universal, undifferentiated and unexamined ‘childhood’ that in some sense exists outside history and the culture in which it is produced. In other words, the shift away from discussing *Kim* as a boy’s book in post-colonial criticism indicates and reflects a shift in the concerns and interests of criticism, but this later politically motivated criticism is nevertheless still rooted in similar
Kipling as a children’s writer: ‘Kipling is neglected as a children’s writer because his reputation for imperialist racism and more recently, for warmongering, makes him unpopular with the adult teachers, librarians, critics of children’s literature and parents who purchase children’s books, and influence their production and consumption in the twenty-first century’ (95). I assert that the text of *Kim*, like its eponymous protagonist, vacillates between putative categories (in this case, of “children’s” and “adult’s” literature); but, unlike Kipling’s protagonist, *Kim* need not be assigned to one category, and can indeed be read as a children’s text. The publication of *Kim* under the imprint of Puffin Classics (most recently in 2011) also attests to its status as a children’s text.

*Kim* is, like its eponymous protagonist, profoundly difficult to pin down. The text seems at once to adhere to M. Daphne Kutzer’s assessment of Kipling as ‘the most jingoistic of British writers’ (28) as it depicts the machinations of the Great Game in India, and to simultaneously undermine its own ideologies as it depicts myriad states of “in-between-ness” that challenge the notion of a fixed (national) identity in the context of British imperialism. In its depictions of liminality, *Kim*, like many other Golden Age texts, adverts to the link between liminal spaces and liminal characterisation. The setting of *Kim* is, as Ann Parry asserts, ‘parochial’: the text is set in ‘a small northern area of the subcontinent’, liberal humanist conceptions of the child evident in the earlier criticism, and in the assumption therefore that a children’s or boy’s book cannot bear the weight of an in-depth political and theoretical analysis. (11)

---

8 It is interesting to note the ideological implications of the paratextual materials in the Puffin edition of *Kim*. A brief section titled ‘The Problem with *Kim*’ begins by adverting to the fact that ‘today many modern readers and critics find Rudyard Kipling’s attitude to foreigners to be patronising, even racist’ (n.p.). However, the section continues by offering (weak) examples of the way in which Kipling is ‘equally critical of the British’ in *Kim*, and ends by stating that

When *Kim* was published Kipling was reflecting a typical, even liberal, attitude to foreigners. He was considered to be something of an expert on India, having lived there, and had a great love of the country. Perhaps he has since become the victim of changing times and attitudes. (n.p.)

This final section of ‘The Problem with *Kim*’ works to mitigate the ideas presented throughout the text, and ultimately presents Kipling as a mere victim of ‘changing times and attitudes’. The Glossary entries are also somewhat problematic: in attempting to simplify terms for the implied reader (identified on the publisher’s website as ‘Middle grade (10 and up)’), the paratext glosses over many important aspects of the text: notably, ‘Sahib’ becomes simply ‘a title of respect’, with no reference to the way in which the term was used when India was under colonial rule. Importantly, this also betrays assumptions about the text’s readership.
which implicitly introduces a concern with the liminal space of the frontier (313). The principal characters, in turn, are characterised by their liminality. As I will address below, the Great Game requires characters (principally Kim and Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, or Hurree Babu) to shape-shift, and ape myriad characters for the purposes of imperial espionage. However, unlike *The Secret Garden*, *Kim* does not work to eradicate this liminal state – rather, the text posits the efficacy of liminal characterisation as a means through which to negotiate appropriate national identities in the outer reaches of the British Empire. *Kim* highlights the value placed on the liminal in texts set in the colonies, as unlike texts in which the metropole functions as the principal setting, *Kim* promotes a model of national identity characterised by individuals’ ability to shape-shift in order to maintain British hegemony.

*Kim* charts the protagonist’s transition from liminal child to ideal imperial agent. Kipling’s text follows the eponymous Kim as he journeys through India concomitantly taking part in the antithetical Search and the Great Game. While Kim initially enjoys the freedom of roaming the streets of Lahore as he lives with a ‘half-caste’ woman after his Irish parents’ deaths (3), and embarks on the Search with a Tibetan lama he encounters at the opening of the text (12), Kim’s restiveness is soon assuaged when he encounters his father’s old regiment and is subsequently enrolled in St Xavier’s School (90). The text makes it clear that Kim will utilise the talents for disguise and information-gathering that he displayed as a child to benefit the Raj: Kim’s education ostensibly prepares him for work as a ‘chain-man’ (101), but in reality Kim will, along with the Pathan horsetrader Mahbub Ali, Colonel Creighton, imperial clerk Hurree Babu and shopkeeper Lurgan Sahib, take part in imperial espionage as part of the Great Game. After Colonel Creighton grants Kim permission to leave school prematurely at Mahbub Ali’s and Lurgan Sahib’s request (145), Kim once again embarks on a journey with the lama to continue the Search, an experience which Hurree asserts will sufficiently “‘de-Englishize’” (155) Kim so that he may function most effectively as a spy. However, the Search soon serves to obscure the true purpose of Kim’s roaming after Hurree enlists Kim’s help to arrest the attempts of Russian and French colonisers to gain territory in the Himalayas. After Kim and Hurree successfully obtain the colonisers’ documents and survey instruments, Kim and the lama return to the Plains where the lama attains enlightenment, and the close of the text suggests that Kim’s future
remains uncertain. The text’s project is to render Kim’s liminality tractable, and to
make him a useful means through which to maintain British hegemony through his
work in the Great Game.

The Great Game plays a seminal role in Kipling’s text, and it adverts to the
relationship between power and representations of place. Ian Baucom asserts that
the ‘Great Game’ which structures the text refers to the ‘mapping of the
subcontinent, [which was] officially known as the Survey of India’ (351). This
‘Great Game’ was ‘an immense, protracted, and varied task’ spanning from 1767
to 1947, when India gained independence (Baucom 351). The gathering and
cataloguing of information about India was seminal to the imperial project, and
Sailaja Krishnamurth adverts to the link between information and power:

Britain’s occupation of India was not predominantly driven by military
force. From its origins in the British East India Company, the empire’s
activities in India tended towards administrative and bureaucratic forms of
power. It was a colonization which operated through the collection, archive,
and administration of information, for which geography was the key. In
order for the British to establish India as a colony, it was essential to gather
knowledge of the territory. Through the India Survey, a project which was
intended to provide ethnographical and cartographical knowledge in minute
detail, the British Empire established borders which enclosed the colonial
subject and could be defended. Through the Survey, the empire
systematically catalogued the identity of colonial India. (47)

Ian Baucom similarly notes the way in which the Survey (and the resulting maps)
worked to establish control in ‘the empire less by occupying it than by knowing it,
classifying it, and rendering it visible’ (531).

The gathering of knowledge and the subsequent production of maps in the
text adverts to Kim’s project of presenting idealised forms of liminality that
ultimately serve to maintain British hegemony. Notably, the threat Kim’s
nomadism and potential restiveness poses to the imperial project is mitigated as he
is recruited to take part in the Great Game (Baucom 353). As he takes part in the
Survey of India, Kim enters ‘a vocation in which waywardness ceaselessly converts
itself into an act of policing, and in which the wanderer continuously exchanges
identity with the theodolite’ (Baucom 352). This collection of knowledge is not limited to geography and subsequent cartography in the text – the Ethnological Survey also plays a significant role, and like the act of mapping, functions as another cover for the work that characters complete on behalf of the Secret Service. Notably, Judith Plotz highlights how ‘Colonel Creighton and Hurree Chunder Mukherjee watch India overtly through the Ethnological Survey, covertly through the Secret Service’ (119). In doing so, they contribute to a collection of knowledge through which imperial administrators come to know, and in a sense create, an India over which they can rule.

In a thesis addressing representations of the liminal in children’s texts, it is especially important to address the way in which scholars have discussed representations of the liminal in Kipling’s texts featuring child protagonists. Notably, John McBratney’s *Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space: Rudyard Kipling’s Fiction of the Native-Born* (2002) asserts the particular importance of the liminal figure (whom he always notes is male) of the ‘white creole – or, as Kipling calls him, the “native-born”’ (xiv), whose liminality awards him the ability to perform as a ‘model imperial servant and ideal imperial citizen’ (xxi). McBratney argues that Kipling’s texts necessarily confine this troubling liminal figure to the realm of childhood: '[c]onscious of the ideological heterodoxy of the country-born, Kipling confined this figure’s chameleon self-shaping to small enclaves of childhood or juvenility nestled between British and Indian cultures and ostensibly isolated from the “real world” of adult rulers of empire’ (xix). Don Randall’s *Kipling’s Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (2000) also notes the centrality of the liminal (male) child to the imperial project. Just as Said asserts that ‘[t]he liminal figure helps to maintain societies’ (*Culture* 170), Randall reads the boy as a figure who ultimately ‘serves to fortify the walls of Empire’ (16-17). While McBratney and Randall both posit that Kipling’s liminal characters are reassuringly contained within the realm of childhood, *Kim*’s model of idealised liminality also includes adults as key figures in its project of mitigating anxieties that accompany imperial expansion.

*Kim*’s and Hurree Babu’s efficacy as players of the Great Game depends on their liminality. While this liminal characterisation – which affords them both an uncanny ability to shape-shift, and ape myriad identities – carries a potential threat to British hegemony, the text ultimately mitigates this threat by putting Kim
and Hurree to use as covert collaborators with the Raj. This pattern of adapting characters’ liminality to suit the interests of the ruling colonial power differs markedly from *The Secret Garden*’s project of eliminating Mary’s and Colin’s (colonial) liminality in order to advocate a model of idealised “Englishness” in the metropole. In the context of British imperialism, liminal characterisation becomes acceptable in texts set in the colonies on the condition that it furthers the interests of the British Empire.

Kim and Hurree share notable similarities in the text, as both are characterised by their liminality, and both Kim’s and Hurree’s racial identities carry the potential for anxiety in the text. However, the text also implies the operation of a hierarchy as it presents Kim and Hurree as fundamentally different: the apparently unassailable fact of Kim’s whiteness differentiates him from Hurree’s Bengali background. The text ultimately works to mitigate the anxieties surrounding these characters as it presents both Kim and Hurree working to support the Raj through the apparent freedom offered by an idealised liminal state.

Kim’s apparently innate ability to adopt disguises by changing his clothes, and his penchant for travelling, establish him as a liminal character who appears unconstrained by racial or geographical boundaries: from the opening of the text, Kim is awarded the moniker “‘Friend of all the World’” (7, 115). Kim’s shies away from the ‘European’ clothes his guardian ‘insist[s] with tears that he should wear’ (5). Instead, Kim appears variably as a ‘Hindu’ (5, 109), a ‘Mohammedan’ (5, 112) the lama’s *chela* and even as a ‘Eurasian lad’ (124); he dyes his skin and cuts his hair in order to adopt disguises (108), and impresses Lurgan Sahib with his ability to both ape and communicate with people of myriad castes and religions (134). Kim appears to the lama in two different guises on the day he meets him (7, 17), and the lama later comments that Kim appeared to him “‘bearing two faces – and two garbs’” (32). Kim’s liminality is also symbolised by the frequency with which he travels (and indeed, the text’s emphasis on the liminal, and its ties to the imperial project, are symbolised by its setting on the Grand Trunk Road). Kim travels with the lama as he accompanies him on his Search (41); he accompanies Mahbub Ali as he drives his horses throughout India; he journeys to school; he travels to Lurgan Sahib’s house, and, ultimately, he undertakes the arduous journey from the plains to the mountains and back again. Kim notes the frequency of his travel in the text – “‘Hai mai! I go from one place to another as it might be a kick-ball. It is my
Kismet. No man can escape his Kismet” (101) – and this penchant for travel suggests a restiveness that the text works to eradicate by incorporating the act of journeying into the work of the Great Game. Far from ‘avoid[ing] missionaries and white men of serious aspect who asked who he was and what he did’ (5), the ideological work of the text ensures that Kim ultimately collaborates with such ‘white men of serious aspect’ as Colonel Creighton in order to ensure British hegemony.

Like Kim, Hurree’s liminality is signalled by his uncanny ability to adopt myriad disguises in the text. Hurree is notably able to hoodwink Kim when he appears disguised as a hakim (184), and Kim later ‘look[s] on with envy’ as he watches Hurree shift identities with ease (234). Don Randall asserts that

[Hurree] is enormously fat and yet his excess of flesh is like so much clay that he can mould to his will. He is a master of disguise, able to hoodwink even his fellow-spies … The surface of his person is slick, elusive, ungraspable. Here Hurree melts into a crowd; elsewhere he stows about his body the various elements of a large intelligence trove, then transforms his entire aspect and demeanor, all the touchstones of his identity, while passing through a doorway. The Hurree Kipling has imagined possesses a liminal body, a liminal selfhood. (155)

Hurree’s indeterminate status is also highlighted by the fact that his many claims to be a ‘fearful man’ (154, 186, 187, 222, 233) are belied by his bravery (189, 203, 207), and his description as a ‘Babu to his boot-heels’ (234) at the close of the text evokes the cunning of Puss-in-Boots (Sullivan, notes to text, 234; Perrault, cited in Zipes 397-401). Hurree also occupies a liminal position in scholarship surrounding Kim as he resists easy categorisation: Randall reads Hurree as a ‘matchless dissembler’ (129) and asserts that he is ‘[t]he colonized subject most able to turn the weapons of the master against the master’ (129). While Randall also argues that Hurree ‘never turns his shifty talents against the Raj’ (129), he is nevertheless ‘a potential site of anxiety’ (156). John McBratney reads Hurree as a figure who ‘hints at the survival of the liminal despite the crushing monolith of empire’ (130), and importantly, reads him as a figure who is able to ‘assume the white man’s superior
self-transfigurative powers’ (132). Indeed, McBratney asserts that Hurree is ‘a character who at moments escapes his author’s ideological presuppositions’ (132).

Just as Kim and Hurree are both marked by their liminal characterisation, both are also characterised by liminal racial identities that represent potential anxiety in the context of British imperial expansion. Kim’s Irish identity, and Hurree’s status as a Bengali Babu, mark them as liminal subjects. In its depictions of racial identity, Kim implies a racial hierarchy operating within the liminal space of the British Empire, as Kim’s Irish identity – with its attendant notions of “whiteness” – is less problematic in terms of the text’s ideologies than Hurree’s status as a Bengali Babu.

Kim’s Irish identity⁹ is made clear from the opening of the text: Kim’s parents were Irish (3, 14), and Kim states that he is known as “‘Kim of the Rishti … Eye-rishti’” (75). Kim’s father was a member of the Irish regiment the Mavericks (3), which has an ‘Irish green’ (70) flag, and Father Victor advocates for Kim to receive a Catholic education at St. Xavier’s (90) due to his racial background. McBratney asserts that ‘Kim’s depiction as Irish allows the youth to fall within the ambit of the British Empire, while at the same time resisting the cultural and political hegemony of an exclusive English identity’ (106). McBratney’s assessment of Kim attests to his liminality: Kim is, as Bart Moore-Gilbert states, ‘both a colonising subject and (as an Irish boy) himself a colonised subject’ (122). Kim’s liminal position as coloniser/colonised can also be mapped onto the imperial project at large. Kaori Nagai notes ‘Ireland’s unique double position as the colonizer and the colonized within the British Empire: not only was there a shared experience between India and Ireland of being colonized, but there was also a long history of Irish participation in the imperial expansion’ (7).

Hurree’s status as a Bengali Babu functions as a cause for anxiety in the text. John McBratney asserts that ‘Kipling deeply distrusted Bengali babus as

⁹ It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss the implications of Kim’s Irish identity in detail, but for a detailed discussion of the connection between India and Ireland in Kipling’s work, see Kaori Nagai’s Empire of Analogies: Kipling, India and Ireland (2006). Nagai’s magisterial text posits that ‘Indo-Irish analogies and comparisons became especially important in representing imperial integrity in the late nineteenth century, and as such became the very site where the image of the British Empire was contested’ (3). Kim mobilises the “‘imperialist’” mode of representation Nagai identifies, which posits ‘Irish participation in the Raj as the strongest proof of Irish loyalty to the Empire’ (3). The text’s fleeting references to Kim’s ‘Irishness’ are especially significant, as they advert to his liminality, and his paradoxical position as an ideal coloniser.
fawningly Anglophilic yet secretly seditious fools’ (McBratney 130), and posits that Kipling and contemporaneous Anglo-Indians ‘saw in the Anglicized Bengali the most pernicious internal threat to the Raj’, as ‘the English-educated Indian threatened to collapse the psychological, cultural, and political differences between Briton and Indian upon which the British founded their prestige’ (130). While Bengali babus reflected British attempts to ‘create a Western-educated class of colonial mediators’ (Randall 129) following Thomas Babington Macaulay’s 1835 “Minute” (Goswami 119), the Babus’ liminal position as ‘mediators’ proved problematic for the Raj:

Regarded as a defining moment in the debate about the educational objectives of colonial rule, [Macaulay’s] minute, recorded on February 2, 1835 … called for the creation of a set of Indians, in the mould of Englishmen, who would function as intermediaries. Although the introduction of an English-centered higher educational system in India – aimed at a select few – was essentially meant to generate Anglocentric native collaborators, paradoxically, it lead to the formation of an urban, professional, middle class that became increasingly invested in the idea of self-government. (Goswami 119)

Babus became troubling liminal figures for colonial administrators in the discourse of the period, able to express their dissatisfaction with the Raj in myriad ways.

Kipling’s novel carefully works to mitigate the anxieties associated with Kim’s and Hurree’s liminal (racial) identities by positing both the unassailable fact of Kim’s “whiteness”, and Hurree’s inherent inferiority as a Bengali Babu. In doing so, the text presents both Kim and Hurree as characters embodying an idealised liminality: while both are able to adopt different disguises in order to benefit the machinations of the Raj, they nevertheless adhere to a strict racial typology with its attendant hierarchical implications.

Despite the way in which Kim adverts to the eponymous character’s liminal racial identity, the opening of the text nonetheless establishes Kim as ‘white’, and also serves to foreground the text’s ideologies relating to both power and knowledge (which in turn functions as a form of power), especially vis-à-vis whiteness, in British India:
He sat, in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun Zam-Zammah on her brick platform opposite the old Ajaib-Gher – the Wonder House, as the natives call the Lahore Museum. Who hold Zam-Zammah, that ‘fire-breathing dragon’, hold the Punjab, for the great green-bronze piece is always first of the conqueror’s loot …

Though he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his mother-tongue in a clipped uncertain sing-song; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazar; Kim was white – a poor white of the very poorest. (3)

Don Randall (119-120), Zohreh T. Sullivan (153) and John McBratney (114) advert to the importance of this moment in communicating the text’s ideologies, in which the apparent ‘child’s play’ establishes Kim as the ‘rightful successor and ruler’ (Sullivan 153) of India. The text also highlights Kim’s apparently natural propensity for rational thought as it depicts him resisting Lurgan Sahib’s attempts to convince him that he sees a jar smashed and magically repaired before his eyes (130):

‘Look! It is coming into shape,’ said Lurgan Sahib.

So far Kim had been thinking in Hindi, but a tremor came on him, and with an effort like that of a swimmer before sharks, who hurls himself half out of the water, his mind leaped up from a darkness that was swallowing it and took refuge in – the multiplication-table in English!

‘Look! It is coming into shape,’ whispered Lurgan Sahib.

The jar had been smashed – yess [sic], smashed – not the native word, he would not think of that – but smashed – into fifty pieces, and twice three was six, and thrice three was nine, and four times three was twelve. (130)

It is noteworthy that Kim shifts his thought pattern from ‘Hindi’ – the text often highlights that Kim’s thoughts run in ‘Hindustani’ or ‘the vernacular’ (36, 179, 188, 214) – to his English ‘mother-tongue’ (3, 179) in order to do so. The text’s project of shifting Kim’s thought-pattern to (rational) English is important: while Hurree tells Kim that he may travel with the lama in order to become ““de-
Englishized”’ (155), *Kim* carefully highlights that the text does so only to maximise Kim’s effectiveness as a (white) player of the Great Game. Edward W. Said notes that the text always supplies somebody to remind Kim that he is a Sahib (190) – Mahbub Ali functions as a notable example (Kipling 92) – and asserts that the ‘division between white and non-white’ in the text is ‘absolute’: ‘a Sahib is a Sahib, and no amount of friendship or camaraderie can change the rudiments of racial difference’ (162). Indeed, Kim’s time at school reinforces this idea – ‘St. Xavier’s looks down on boys who “go native all-together.” One must never forget that one is a Sahib, and that some day, when examinations are passed, one will command natives’ (107).

Conversely, the text emphasises Hurree’s inescapable status as a Bengali Babu. Edward W. Said states that, despite his clear intelligence, Hurree is presented as comical and ‘gauche’ in *Kim* in order to uphold the text’s ideologies regarding race:

> The native anthropologist, clearly a bright man whose reiterated ambitions to belong to the Royal Society are not unfounded, is almost always funny, or gauche, or somehow caricatural, not because he is incompetent or inept – on the contrary – but because he is not white; that is, he can never be a Creighton. Kipling is very careful about this. Just as he could not imagine an India in historical flux *out* of British control, he could not imagine Indians who could be effective and serious in what he and others of the time considered exclusively Western pursuits. Lovable and admirable as he may be, there remains in the Babu the grimacing stereotype of the ontologically funny native, hopelessly trying to be like ‘us’. (Said, *Culture* 185)

Hurree is also presented as being unable to exercise the same level of rational thought as Kim as his fear of Huneefa’s charms and her “‘Evil Eye’” betray his superstitious tendencies (152-3). Hurree’s fear serves to betray his status as Other:

---

10 Donna Landry and Caroline Rooney similarly read Hurree Babu as a ‘grotesquely comic yet effective intelligence-gatherer’ who aspires ‘hopelessly’ to ‘laurels from the metropole’ (67).
‘How am I to fear the absolutely non-existent?’ said Hurree Babu, talking English to reassure himself. It is an awful thing still to dread the magic that you contempuously investigate—to collect folk-lore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in all Powers of Darkness. (Kipling 152)

Hurree’s unrealised desire to join the Royal Society (147, 232), his failed attempts to have his work published in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* (153), his ‘bungled attempts to quote Shakespeare and Spenser’ (Christensen 22) and his misuse of English expressions (135, 184, 231, 232) present him as a character who, despite his Western education, is fundamentally unable to grasp what the text presents as the tenets of European rationality: science and literature. This presentation of Hurree ensures that, as a character, he is reassuringly inept. While he can adopt disguises in order to function effectively as a player of the Great Game, the text suggests that he lacks the ability (or, indeed, the inclination) to conspire against the Raj.

Kim’s and Hurree’s idealised liminality becomes especially evident in chapter 13, when the pair thwart the designs of Russian and French colonisers in the Himalayas. It is here that the text’s concerns with liminal identities and liminal space converge: chapter 13 demonstrates the text’s overarching concern with mitigating anxieties surrounding liminal imperial space in ‘an area widely viewed as the Achilles’ heel of the empire’ (Matin 359). As loyal subjects of the British Empire, Kim and Hurree work to ensure that the threat posed by Russia’s and France’s ‘ambitions’ (Parry 311) in the area (and, by implication, the threat posed by non-British colonisers in general) is removed as they work to protect the tenuous borders of British India in the Himalayas.

Ann Parry asserts that Russia’s attempts to gain territory along the North West Frontier had been ‘particularly in evidence since the 1860s’, after Russia’s failed attempts to gain territory in the Ottoman Empire had caused them to move towards Afghanistan (311). While Parry states that ‘[a] boundary between Russia and Britain had been agreed in 1887’, Britain remained suspicious about ‘mischief-making’ (311) on Russia’s part, and Russia’s activities in the region, and particularly on the Frontier, continued to cause Britain anxiety. Jeffrey Meyers similarly identifies Russia as ‘a very real enemy’ (26) for Britain: while ‘[i]n 1846, two thousand miles had separated the English and Russian frontiers’ (26), Meyers
asserts that this distance between Russian and British territory had decreased to a mere five hundred miles thirty years later, with the anxiety of Russia’s approach compounded by the fact that borders in the region remained uncertain (26). This section of the text offers a pertinent example of the anxieties associated with the interstitial space of the frontier, and Kim’s and Hurree’s idealised liminal characterisation suggests a paradoxical solution.

The chapter elaborates on a persistent threat that has been present since the opening of the text (34), which adverts to the Kings of Native States conspiring with Russia to undermine British rule (21-2), and the text carefully emphasises the need to subdue such activity as the novel continues (141-2, 145, 185-6, 187). The arrival of two men – Russian and French spies carrying survey instruments – sets the events of chapter 13 in motion when Hurree asks Kim to accompany him and assist in the project of obtaining the kilta in which the spies’ documents are stored (186, 188, 201). During a confrontation in which the lama refuses to sell the Russian spy the copy of the Wheel he has sketched for Kim, the Russian man strikes the lama, and Kim strikes the Russian man in turn, splitting the group (202-4). Kim obtains the kilta (207), and the Russian and French men are subsequently discredited as Hurree leads them on a difficult and circuitous journey back to Russian territory (207-9).

Kim’s actions in the chapter demonstrate the text’s emphasis on idealised liminal characterisation as a means of mitigating anxieties associated with the contested space of the frontier. Despite appearing as ‘a neophyte’ (200) as he adopts the disguise of the lama’s chela (the lama remains, as he does for the entirety of the text, unaware of Kim’s work in espionage), Kim’s actions are reassuringly couched in notions of whiteness which serve to highlight his loyalty to the Raj. Witnessing the Russian man strike the lama ‘wake[s] every unknown Irish devil in the boy’s blood’ (202, my emphasis), Kim ‘[thinks] hard in English’ (203) as he attempts to escape the conflict, and utilises ‘the craft of his mother-country’ (207) as he attempts to convince the hillmen to give him the pertinent documents and instruments from the kilta. Kim also remembers that he is ‘a white man, with a

11 It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss Russia’s and France’s designs on India in detail, but for a more comprehensive discussion, please see Ann Parry’s ‘[Recovering the Connection Between Kim and Contemporary History]’.
white man’s camp-fittings at his service’ (204) as he attempts to heal the lama. These references to Kim as a ‘white’ (3) subject who is able to thwart the attempts of rival colonial powers to “make [their] mark” (200) in the region serve to present him as the ideal instrument of the Raj. Kim is able to mimic myriad identities, but his ultimate loyalty and subjectivity is aligned with Britain. Indeed, A. Michael Matin argues that Kim’s actions in this chapter also serve to mitigate anxieties about his (liminal) racial identity: Matin asserts that the ‘hand-to-hand combat’ in which Kim engages with the Russian man ‘microcosmically enacts the fantasy of an Ireland rendered disciplined, tractable, and, above all, serviceable for the British Empire during a period when Conservative imperialists such as Kipling were vociferously denouncing proposals for Irish Home Rule’ (365). Kim’s behaviour in chapter 13 presents him as an ideal British subject who is removed from the ‘English-born imperial official[s] … [who are] ridiculed for their “dull fat eyes”, their blindness to India’ (McClure 74), but is ultimately loyal to the Raj.

Hurree’s actions in chapter 13 also signal his idealised liminality. The text elaborates on anxieties associates with Hurree’s status as a Bengali Babu as he affects treason in order to curry favour with the spies (198-9). Hurree becomes ‘thickly treasonous’ and ‘[speaks] in terms of sweeping indecency of a Government which had forced upon him a white man’s education and neglected to supply him with a white man’s salary’ (198). Don Randall notes that the text’s ‘representation of the Babu malcontent reproduces historical actualities, but from the British imperial perspective (as the scene’s parodic aspects demonstrate) and in the service of British interests’ (129). Hurree’s liminality becomes a key focus of the chapter when the Russian man notes his liminality as a subject of colonial rule, stating that Hurree “represents in little India in transition–the monstrous hybridism of East and West” (199). This statement becomes ironic in light of the text’s ideologies: while Hurree’s “hybridism” might indeed have appeared “monstrous”, the threat it poses to the text’s ideology is mitigated by the fact that Hurree is paradoxically using the uncertainties accompanying his status as a Bangali Babu to support the Raj. Hurree convincingly renders dissatisfaction with the status quo in order to support the status quo. The chapter ends with the injunction, expressed by Hurree as he laments the fact that the papers are in Kim’s possession rather than his, that “you cannot occupy two places in space simultaneously. Thatt [sic] is axiomatic” (209). Hurree’s comment serves as the chapter’s final indication of his
loyalty to the Raj: the text suggests that it is self-evident that, as a subject of colonial rule, Hurree cannot truly function as an autonomous liminal figure, but must necessarily make use of his liminality as he acts in service of the Raj.

The texts discussed in this chapter – Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* and Kipling’s *Kim* – suggest that liminal characterisation is only acceptable if it furthers the interests of the British Empire. These texts also highlight the spatial significance of liminal characterisation. While *The Secret Garden* suggests that Mary’s and Colin’s troubling colonial liminality must be tempered in order for them to function effectively in the metropole, *Kim* adverts to the efficacy of an idealised liminal characterisation in the colonies on the condition that it assists in the maintenance of British hegemony.
Chapter Five: Fantastic Spaces

Ideas and images of the Fantastic – or fantasy – feature heavily in Golden Age texts. Importantly, these Fantastic ideas and images are inextricably connected to ideas of place. The Fantastic emerges in these texts as characters journey from a realist setting to a fantastic realm; Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) are notable examples.

The various Fantastic texts discussed in this chapter share an emphasis on the liminal as characters negotiate thresholds separating real and fantastic spaces, contemporary and historic settings and, significantly, life and death. This emphasis on the liminal is reminiscent of the fantastic mode itself, which resists simple definition: as Rosemary Jackson asserts, ‘[t]here is no abstract entity called “fantasy”’, but rather, ‘a range of different works which have similar structural characteristics’ (7-8).

There are numerous – and often vastly different – ideas of what constitutes a fantastic text. Importantly, scholars often use the terms “fantastic” and “fantasy” interchangeably, so that the literary fantastic is extremely difficult to define. Gary Westfahl’s discussion of the Fantastic in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* emphasises the confusion inherent in the term. Westfahl writes that although “fantastic” ‘might logically be regarded as the adjective form of “fantasy”’, the terms differ greatly in practice (335). Similarly, Lucie Armitt highlights the lack of clarity associated with some definitions of fantasy:

“What is fantasy writing? Utopia, allegory, fable, myth, science fiction, the ghost story, space opera, travelogue, the Gothic, cyberpunk, magic realism; the list is not exhaustive, but it covers most of the modes of fiction discussed … as “fantasy”. (1)

Indeed, Deidre Baker asserts that the history of children’s fantasy in particular is characterised by ‘forceful contradictions’: children’s fantasy has been criticised for being at once ‘fraudulent, irrational, and overly imaginative’ and, at the same time, ‘formulaic, escapist, and not imaginative enough’ (79).
Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970; translated from French in 1973) presents a model of the Fantastic with which many scholars engage as they discuss fantasy/the Fantastic. Todorov’s definition of the Fantastic focuses chiefly on the idea of hesitation. He asserts that when characters within a text experience a supernatural event they are faced with two options. Either the event did not occur, and it was a figment of the character’s imagination; or the event took place in reality, but reality is ‘controlled by laws unknown to us’ (25). Todorov argues that the Fantastic resides only in this moment of uncertainty. Once a character (or reader) chooses an alternative – either accepting that the event was a figment of the imagination, or acknowledging that reality is not what they imagined it to be – the text can no longer be considered Fantastic (25), and instead becomes uncanny or marvellous (25). Notably, Todorov asserts that the ambiguity which remains at the close of James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) epitomises the Fantastic (43).

Importantly, Todorov’s concept of the Fantastic is inherently spatial. The Fantastic is not a distinct genre in itself, but is instead located on the frontier of the uncanny and the marvellous. Todorov presents the Fantastic as a figurative space from which the reader emerges once they make certain decisions about the text at its close (41). If the reader decides that ‘the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described’ Todorov states that the work becomes uncanny. Conversely, if the reader decides that ‘new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena’, the text belongs to the genre of the marvellous (41). Importantly, Todorov also divides the uncanny and marvellous into further sub-categories, and emphasises the manner in which the fantastic functions as a liminal space which operates between ‘adjacent realms’ (44).

While Westfahl utilises Todorov’s taxonomy to structure his definition of the Fantastic in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, he is somewhat dismissive of Todorov’s definition of the Fantastic, asserting that it marginalises and trivialises ‘traditional fantasy’ and science fiction, and has only ‘occasionally’ been utilised successfully by scholars (335). Similarly, Farah Mendelsohn and Edward James assert that Todorov’s definition of the fantastic narrows the field of fantasy to a ‘tiny sliver’ (4). While Farah Mendelsohn asserts that scholars are now unlikely to utilise Todorov’s text as the sole methodological framework informing their study of fantastic literature (xiii), Claire Whitehead emphasises the continued importance
of Todorov’s contention. Whitehead asserts that the continued popularity of Todorov’s work can be attributed to three factors: Todorov established a clear definition of the genre; he distinguished the Fantastic from similar genres; and he directed scholars’ attention toward the narrative structures operating within texts (6).

Many other scholars have also continued to utilise Todorov’s definition of the fantastic – Dimitra Fimi relies on Todorov’s differentiation between ‘fantasy’ and ‘the Fantastic’ to support the way in which she differentiates between the two genres (40-1). Similarly, Amaryll Chandy also argues that Todorov’s ‘classic study’ allows scholars to differentiate between three literary genres:

- the marvellous, in which the supernatural is accepted; the uncanny, in which it is only suggested; and the fantastic, in which the reader hesitates between a supernatural and a natural explanation of the events. (63)

Lucie Armitt also regards Todorov’s *The Fantastic* as an authoritative text (195), and interestingly highlights the spatial implications of the distinctions Todorov proposes. Armitt asserts that Todorov’s fantastic ‘takes up no space at all’ – rather, it ‘demarcates the place of the frontier’ (196).

While Rosemary Jackson’s contention is indebted to Todorov’s discussion of the Fantastic (indeed, Jackson states that the importance of Todorov’s work ‘cannot be overestimated’ (5)), Jackson nevertheless criticises Todorov’s *The Fantastic*. Jackson argues that Todorov’s structuralist analysis of the Fantastic led him to neglect an examination of the social and political implications of the form (6), things she deals with in her seminal text *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981).

Like many other scholars, Jackson highlights the difficulties inherent in defining fantasy (2). However, Jackson concomitantly highlights the importance of attempting to define the genre in order to ‘militate against escapism or a simple pleasure principle’ (2). Jackson’s definition of fantasy allows scholars to examine myriad texts:
There is no abstract entity called “fantasy”; there is only a range of different works which have similar structural characteristics and which seem to be generated by similar unconscious desires. Through their particular manifestations of desire, they can be associated together. The possibilities available to each particular text are determined, in many ways, by the texts which have preceded it and whose characteristic features it repeats or repudiates. (7-8)

Rather than being generated by ‘similar unconscious desires’, I argue that the texts discussed in this chapter can be – as Jackson asserts – ‘associated together’ through their concern with liminality. It is not the aim of this chapter to discuss the ‘unconscious desires’ which may serve to inform this concern with liminality, but instead, this chapter will explore the way in which liminality functions as a trope which serves to link apparently disparate fantastic texts.

Jackson emphasises a certain escapist element in fantasy literature, as she asserts that it attempts to compensate for a lack ‘resulting from cultural constraints’ (3), her reading offers a more nuanced understanding of what she describes as a ‘literature of desire’ which serves to seek that which is experienced as ‘absence’ (3). Importantly, Jackson states that fantasy “expresses” desire in two ways: it both represents and ‘expel[s]’ desire (3-4). The manner in which fantasy represents desire is fairly self-evident. Conversely, Jackson’s reading of the manner in which fantasy literature ‘expel[s]’ desire is more nuanced. Jackson asserts that fantasy literature can ‘expel desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity …’ (3-4). Here, Jackson understands fantasy literature as having the ability to ‘express’ desire in the sense of ‘expulsion’ (3-4). Significantly, Jackson’s concept of fantasy is also concerned with the liminal: Jackson discusses the way in which the fantastic highlights the relation between real and unreal as its chief concern, and links the fantastic to ‘contradiction’ and ‘that which evades articulation’ (37).

This idea of liminality is also evident in more recent scholarship focusing on the fantastic. Brian Attebery’s concept of the ‘fuzzy set’ reveals the difficulties inherent in defining fantasy literature, or literature belonging to the fantastic mode. While the ‘fuzzy set’ reflects Jackson’s concept of ‘a range of different works which have similar structural characteristics’ (7-8), Jackson’s concept is superior.
Attebery’s fuzzy set consists of a category with a ‘clear center’, but which has boundaries that ‘shade off imperceptibly’ (12). Farah Mendelsohn asserts that the fuzzy set suggests that there are ‘core likenesses around which we can construct ever more distant perimeters’ (xvii). Mendelsohn utilises the fuzzy set as a means through which to structure her own examination of fantasy texts. However, she also utilises John Clute’s ‘taproot texts’ – texts containing elements of the fantastic before the last decades of the eighteenth century, such as Shakespeare’s The Tempest (c1611) Milton’s Paradise Lost (1667) and Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress (1678) (921-2) – to extend Attebery’s notion of a single fuzzy set to present several fuzzy sets (xv). Importantly, these fuzzy sets are ‘determined by the mode in which the fantastic enters the text’ (Mendelsohn and James 4). Attebery’s and Mendelsohn’s fuzzy sets highlight the difficulties in defining fantastic literature. While they acknowledge the difficulties associated with defining the genre, Attebery’s and Mendelsohn’s fuzzy sets are undeniably nebulous.

However, some scholars have discussed the Fantastic – and have also highlighted the difference between fantasy texts and Fantastic texts – while also providing a clear definition of the concept. Notably, Dimitra Fimi offers a concise definition of literature of the Fantastic. She states that Fantastic literature is a broad category that ‘deviates from realism and allows the exploration of “impossible,” non-realistic occurrences within its narratives’ (40). Fantasy literature, in contrast, is a distinct category of Fantastic literature that not only ‘allows fantastical elements to exist’, but also takes them seriously and arranges them into a coherent system within the narrative (40). Fimi relies on Todorov’s Fantastic to structure her definition, contrasting his Fantastic against her concept of fantasy. Fimi claims that if a text attempts to confuse the reader about whether the fantastic elements are real or not, it is Fantastic, whereas fantasy texts do not attempt to present any such confusion (40-1).

Brian Attebery similarly contrasts conflicting ideas of fantasy. Attebery asserts that fantasy can be both a genre – containing formulaic narratives which are often regarded as somewhat trivial – and a mode, which he understands as encompassing ‘all literary manifestations of the imagination’s ability to soar above the merely possible’ (2). Amaryll Chanady also emphasises the importance of differentiating between the fantastic, fantasy, the marvellous and magical realism, and argues that these differences relate to the manner in which the supernatural is
treated in the texts (62-3). Brian Stableford similarly asserts the importance of differentiating between fantasy and the Fantastic (xlii-xlili). However, while such differentiation allows definitions of the Fantastic mode to emerge, they are also problematic in regard to terminology. Scholars who assert the importance of differentiating between the two terms – such as Dimitra Fimi and Brian Stableford – often use them interchangeably.

David Sandner addresses this confusion in his discussion of fantasy literature. Sandner argues the ‘distractions’ inherent in identifying different categories of fantasy or Fantastic literature do not facilitate a discussion of general fantastic material (21-2). While Sandner emphasises that such definitions may be useful for specific arguments, he asserts that they ultimately serve to ‘obscure’ work that attempts to ‘explore the presence of the impossible in literature and in our experience of life itself’ (21-2). Sandner’s discussion is valuable – while he does not provide a working definition of the Fantastic, he expertly suggests that such a definition may not be necessary.

Stephen Prickett’s *Victorian Fantasy* offers a discussion of the Fantastic that is pertinent to an examination of Golden Age children’s literature. Prickett emphasises the role Enlightenment thinking played in the creation of the Fantastic. While “fantasy” was formerly frowned upon, Prickett argues that it was gaining popularity by 1825 (6):

Magical and marvellous stories which had been attacked by such diverse authorities as Rousseau, Mrs. Trimmer and Mr. Gradgrind, were now being rediscovered as a source of spiritual “dynamism” in what Thomas Carlyle attacked as a “mechanical” and “prudential” age. (9)

Prickett ultimately attributes such changes to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who he asserts functioned as a ‘barometer in this change in emotional climates’ (6). Coleridge’s ‘prophetic’ delight in tales of ‘the marvellous and supernatural’ (8) preceded a rise in the popularity of Fantastic texts. Prickett cites the publication of Grimms’ *German Popular Stories* in England in 1823 as an event which prompted many authors to follow in the Grimms’ footsteps. Prickett asserts that ‘suddenly fairy stories had become respectable – for antiquarians, for poets, and even for children’ (8). Importantly, authors such as the Rossettis ‘rejected with disgust a
traditional diet of edifying literature’ (8) such as that promoted by the Edgeworths
and the S. P. C. K Tract Society (7).

Importantly, Prickett asserts that in this process, ‘imagination’ was
separated from ideas of ‘fantasy’ and ‘fancy’ (9). Prickett attributes this separation,
once again, to Coleridge:

For [Coleridge] the imagination was a “living power” that transformed the
elements with which it dealt, shaping them into a new unity. Fancy, on the
other hand, was “a mere dead arrangement” of “fixities and definites”: a
scissors and paste job of the mind. Fantasy, as the word now came to be
used, was at the opposite pole from this meaning of fancy. In contrast with
the aesthetic and creative power attributed to the imagination, it came to be
seen as the quality of dreams and reverie. (9)

These ideas of imagination and fantasy became opposed in the Victorian psyche:
while imagination was placed on a pedestal (which Prickett attributes to
Coleridge’s influence), fantasy was alluring, but was also allied with disturbing
ideas, nightmares, and hags (9). Coleridge’s importance in regard to Fantastic
literature lies primarily in his challenge against modes of thought popularised in
the Enlightenment. The ‘beautiful and sinister’ (6) dream worlds created by
Coleridge posed a challenge against the somewhat rigid Enlightenment mode.

Many other scholars also highlight the importance of Enlightenment
thinking in the formation of the Fantastic mode. Claire Whitehead asserts that the
Fantastic emerged alongside Enlightenment ideals, as some thinkers were just as
unsatisfied with the rationality associated with the Enlightenment as they were with
a worldview that was steeped in mysticism (3). Similarly, Mendelsohn and James
highlight the importance of Enlightenment thinking in the formation of the
Fantastic. They argue that the idea of a world which could be ‘controlled and
understood’ was ‘subverted’ into the Gothic mode, where the ‘surface world’
becomes a ‘delusion’ (14). Matthew Dickerson and David O’Hara also understand
assert the re-emergence of fairy tales as a Romantic response to the rationality of
the Enlightenment (2).

Importantly, the Fantastic is also inextricably linked to ideas of liminality.
Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts highlight the way in which the liminal connotes
the spatial, linked to boundaries, borders and functioning as both a transitional landscape and a sense of potentiality (1). Similarly, Peter Schwenger’s conception of liminality emphasises the idea of “in-between-ness”: in discussing the borders between sleep and waking, Schwenger highlights the way in which individuals are concomitantly ‘there and not there, real and unreal, [experiencing] day vision and night vision’ (141). Sandor Klapcsik highlights the role thresholds play in liminality, highlighting the way in which the term finds its roots in the Latin ‘limen’, or threshold (7). Klapcsík also asserts that liminality is ‘strictly related to perception or the lack of it, and to limits as well as to the breach of limits, transgression’ (7).

D. W. Winnicott’s Playing and Reality (1971) is especially pertinent to a discussion of fantastic (Golden Age) children’s texts. His Playing and Reality is profoundly concerned with ideas of liminality, and significantly, Winnicott utilises spatial metaphors to discuss the ‘intermediate area’ (4) of ‘experience’ that separates the individual’s ‘inner world’ (3, my emphasis) and external reality. Winnicott emphasises the importance of ‘transitional objects’ and ‘transitional phenomena’ (2), which, being ‘transitional’ are necessarily liminal:

We experience life in the area of transitional phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals. (86)

Winnicott also emphasises the importance of play and once again utilises spatial metaphors to discuss it. Winnicott asserts that ‘playing has a place and a time’ (55). Play is neither located inside nor outside, and does not belong to the ‘me’ or ‘not-me’ (55), but instead, operates within a liminal space. The fantastic operates similarly in Golden Age texts, occupying a place similar to that of Winnicott’s transitional phenomena, and similarly informed by both subjective experience and the social mores of the external world of the texts. The prevalence of the trope of liminality – notably Wonderland, Neverland, and the portals featured in various texts – suggests that the fantastic, like play, occupies and operates within the liminal space between subjective experience and objective reality.
As this discussion has shown, fantasy/the Fantastic is liminal in the sense that it evades a simple definition, but this chapter will also demonstrate how the Fantastic is profoundly concerned with liminal spaces and identities. Time travel, portals, thresholds and death itself are all liminal states which are explored in these Fantastic texts, and in the process, Fantastic child protagonists also become imbued with ideas of liminality. Fantastic Golden Age texts for children engage with states of “in-between-ness”, utilising spatial metaphors to engage with myriad ideas.

**Fantastic Portals: The Psammead Trilogy and Puck of Pook’s Hill**

Ideas of liminality are emphasised in four significant Golden Age time travel texts: E. Nesbit’s Psammead trilogy – *Five Children and It* (1902; first serialised in 1900); *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) – and Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906). Time travel narratives emphasise ideas of liminality: John Clute highlights the spatial nature of time travel as he asserts that time travel stories proper feature protagonists who ‘find themselves … in a new venue’ (949). Liminal portals feature significantly in each of the four texts, transporting characters from a realist to a fantastic setting.

The three texts that comprise E. Nesbit’s Psammead trilogy are pervaded by the fantastic. Robert, Anthea, Cyril, Jane and their baby brother known as the Lamb discover various magical creatures and objects that they utilise – and sometimes exploit – in order to enjoy magical adventures. Though these adventures take place in numerous locations, they are nonetheless inextricably connected to domestic space and the notion of “home”.

*Five Children and It* sees the children discover a Psammead (“‘Sammyadd’” (12)) – a Sand-fairy capable of granting the children one wish per day (17-18) – in a gravel-pit near the house where they are spending the Summer. Though the effects of the wishes the Psammead grants disappear at sunset, all five children invariably suffer from the effects of the ‘comic literalism’ (Anderson 314) with which the Psammead interprets their requests. After wishing to be ‘as beautiful

1 Significantly, Clute also differentiates time travel narratives from timeslip narratives. While time travel narratives see characters transported through time, timeslip narratives involve no corporeal travel (949).
as the day’ (17), Robert, Anthea, Cyril and Jane are rendered unrecognizable and are turned away from their home by the suspicious servants (21-3) (consequently, the children request that the servants be unable to perceive the magic effects of their wishes (33)). Similarly, Robert’s wish to be bigger than the baker’s boy with whom he had fought leads to him reaching a height of ‘ten or eleven feet’ (165-6). Importantly, the outcome of the children’s wishes both figuratively and literally threatens the domestic space: Cyril’s wish to be living in a besieged castle sees a battle break begin around the children’s home (138-154); Cyril’s wish for ‘Red Indians in England’ (208) sees the house and children similarly threatened and Robert’s flippant wish that ‘everybody’ (64) would want the Lamb leads to him being coveted (and stolen) by the socialite Lady Chittenden (67-8) and by a group of ‘gipsies’ (73-80). The close of the story sees the children leave the Psammead, allowing him to rest and promising not to ask for any more wishes (240).

*The Phoenix and the Carpet* similarly sees the children discover magic creatures with the ability to grant them wishes. After their mother purchases a carpet for the nursery, Cyril discovers an egg-shaped ornament (8-9) which, after Robert inadvertently drops it in the fire, is revealed to be a Phoenix egg (16-18). The Phoenix also reveals that the carpet on the nursery floor is a magic carpet (25). Once again, the children utilise both the Phoenix and the carpet as a means through which to have adventures. Importantly, the carpet allows the children to travel further than they did in *Five Children and It*. Robert, Anthea, Cyril and Jane travel to a castle on the coast of France (35), to a tropical island where they deposit the disgruntled cook they had inadvertently included in their adventure and to India to procure goods to sell at a local bazaar (89). Once again, the sanctity of the domestic space is threatened, but unlike the threats presented in *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet* sees domestic space threatened from within. For example, Jane encounters a burglar after she mistakes him for her brothers as they attempt to purge the house of 199 Persian cats brought inside by the carpet (189). Like the first text in the trilogy, the close of *The Phoenix and the Carpet* sees the eponymous fantastic characters leave, and the children apparently return to their normal lives.

The final text in the trilogy, *The Story of the Amulet*, sees the children discover half of a magical amulet that allows them to travel through both time and space. Eitan Bar-Yosef asserts that this final text ‘begins by enhancing the geographical divide between metropolitan center and periphery’ (10). Importantly,
he also asserts that the ‘space available for adventure’ is ‘dramatically extended’ in *The Story of the Amulet* – the setting has not only been extended ‘geographically’, but also ‘temporally’ (10). Notably, Robert, Anthea, Cyril and Jane travel to a realm ‘eight thousand years ago’ (66), visit Babylon (93) and Atlantis (173).

Though these three texts are structured around the idea of the fantastic, it is also very important to note that they are also inextricably concerned with the idea of home. The fantastic elements in *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet* and *The Story of the Amulet* both threaten and protect the sanctity of the domestic space. Michelle J. Smith’s reading of the texts emphasises the importance of domesticity. Smith argues that the texts support the imperial project as female protagonists – namely Anthea – both civilise “native” inhabitants of the lands they visit and wean the young male protagonists off parental influence (107). Smith emphasises Anthea’s mothering in the texts as she suggests that Anthea’s ‘maternal capabilities’ serve to infantilise the indigenous peoples the children encounter (107).

This discussion of Anthea’s maternal role in the texts is not tangential, but rather serves to demonstrate the manner in which the domestic and the ideologies associated with it permeate the numerous places presented in the trilogy. Anthea’s intentions to ‘be a good housekeeper some day’ (*Five Children* 15) are significantly manifested in her desire to protect the Lamb – she ‘turn[s] scarlet and burst[s] into tears of rage’ as a ‘gipsy’ (*Five Children* 73) takes the Lamb, and shrieks and protests as Cyril cunningly suggests that the ‘gipsies’ may keep their brother (*Five Children* 74-5). The manner in which the fantastic concomitantly threatens and protects the literal and the figurative domestic is especially noteworthy. The servants emerge as a threat in *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, and the interplay between the fantastic elements in the text and the realist domestic space are particularly noteworthy.

The relationship between the children and the servants is strained in the second text of the trilogy. The children wish the cook ‘had never been born’ (*Phoenix* 60), and the cook’s description of the children as “‘varmints’” (*Phoenix* 67) indicates the way in which she reciprocates the children’s feelings. Unlike in *Five Children and It*, however, the servants are presented as untrustworthy:
When the Lamb was clean again he had to be taken care of while mother rumpled her hair and inked her fingers and made her head ache over the difficult and twisted house-keeping accounts which cook gave her on dirty bits of paper, and which were supposed to explain how it was that cook only had fivepence-half-penny and a lot of unpaid bills left out of all the money mother had sent her for housekeeping. Mother was very clever, but even she could not quite understand the cook’s accounts. (*Phoenix* 245)

Here the servant represents a threat to the middle-class domestic sphere – while Mother is unable to perceive the cook’s fraud, the reader can see that her ‘accounts’ are fiction. This section also serves to support Marah Gubar’s claim that Golden Age authors ‘presuppose the existence of socialized … child readers’ by including reference to ‘impure topics such as money in their narratives’ (*Artful Dodgers* 25).

In discussing this Fantastic trilogy, it is also important to highlight the importance of portals. John Clute asserts that few fantasy texts lack portals, which may be physical or metaphorical (776). Portals provide a means through which characters gain access to an alternate world (or worlds), and feature prominently in children’s fantasies, allowing ‘transition from this world to another’ (Clute 776). Clute asserts that the distinction between thresholds and portals ‘may sometimes be blurred’ but conceives of a threshold as a ‘sharp gradient between two places or conditions’, while a portal is ‘liminal’ (776). The portal trope features prominently in *The Story of the Amulet* as the children obtain half of an Amulet which allows them to travel through both time and space in order to secure the other half and obtain their wish for their parents and youngest brother to return safely home².

Like the cook’s deception, the portal/Amulet featured in *The Story of the Amulet* serves to disrupt the domestic sphere, and by extension, contemporary London. The chapters in which the children travel to Babylon also serve to demonstrate the way in which the portal trope is connected to a representation of the domestic sphere. The children travel to Babylon to search for the lost half of

---

² The Lamb is largely absent from this text, having accompanied Mother to Madeira to recuperate from an illness. The children’s father – a journalist – is reporting on the war in Manchuria.
the Amulet. Significantly, Babylon is domesticated in the text: Anthea notes that Babylon is ‘like home exactly’ (Amulet 94), and as soon as the children cross the threshold created by the gates, they are introduced to a domestic space by a gatekeeper, who takes them home to his wife (Amulet 101). Similarly, Jane opts to remain in the domestic sphere while Anthea, Robert and Cyril visit the Queen of Babylon (Amulet 104-5). While the children are imprisoned for asking for the second half of the Amulet (124), their experiences with the Queen are largely non-threatening and reminiscent of the domestic sphere – indeed, the children decide the Queen is ‘very beautiful and kind, but perhaps just the least bit flighty’ (Amulet 109).

However, when the Queen returns the children’s visit and materialises in contemporary London, she – like the cook – serves to disrupt the domestic sphere. The Queen’s clothing draws attention from onlookers in the street (Amulet 138-9), she attempts to steal jewellery from a Museum (Amulet 143, 145) and she causes havoc when the Psammead is compelled to grant her wish that her guards join her in modern London, causing havoc outside the Stock Exchange (Amulet 154). Significantly, the Queen’s time travel – and, by extension, the Amulet/portal which allowed her to travel to London – functions as a form of social critique. The Queen of Babylon criticises the way in which members of the London working class appear, asking why their masters don’t ‘see that they’re better fed and better clothed’, and makes an ‘enormous change in the look of the Mile End Road’ as she wishes that all the ‘poor people’ have food (Amulet 150). The portal creates a sense of figurative distance in this text (and, indeed, in the preceding texts in the trilogy) that mounts an apparent critique of contemporary society. The Story of the Amulet sees the Queen of Babylon improve (albeit temporarily) living conditions in modern London (150), and sees working-class Imogen placed in a new, loving home (Amulet 190). However, Imogen’s departure highlights the reinforcement of bourgeois protocols that I adverted to in chapter one, as the working-class child is symbolically removed from contemporary London to a vastly different temporal domain (Amulet 186-90).

Portals also feature prominently in Rudyard Kipling’s Puck of Pook’s Hill (1906). Significantly, Linda Hall asserts that Puck of Pook’s Hill and Nesbit’s The Story of the Amulet – both published in the same year – represent the first time-slip stories (305). Puck of Pook’s Hill sees Dan and Una summon Puck, one of the ‘Old
Thing[s]’, after performing *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in a magic ring (13-16). Puck conjures fictitious figures from history, who share their experiences with the children. Notably, Puck conjures Norman Sir Richard Dalyngridge; Parnesius, a Roman soldier posted to Hadrian’s Wall, and the Jewish ‘outsider’ (Hall 307) Kadmiel, who was connected to the signing of the Magna Carta (220).

Kipling’s model of time travel differs from Nesbit’s. While Nesbit’s characters travel in time and exercise influence over the events and characters they encounter (Hall 307), Dan and Una function as passive spectators who remain in the text’s present, and interact with the characters who have travelled through time to meet them. Significantly, Hall does not offer a definition of the term ‘time-slip’, and significantly, her discussion distances her from Clute’s definition of timeslip narratives3, but resembles Brian Stableford’s understanding of the term. Stableford asserts that timeslip texts may represent ‘an object or person … extracted from the timestream and thrown back again at a different point’ (948). Stableford also states that timeslips are ‘rarely random’, often linking ancestors of loved ones, for example. In *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, the link between the children and the figures who visit them is determined by place.

*Puck of Pook’s Hill* is deeply concerned with ideas of place. Sandra Kemp, Charlotte Mitchell and David Trotter state that *Puck of Pook’s Hill* is ‘not simply a dramatised history lesson’, but rather ‘attempt[s] to integrate a sense of landscape with an understanding of the human forces that shaped it’ (328). Similarly, Lisa A. F. Lewis asserts that ‘[t]he land itself … bears true witness to the past’ (197). As Carole Scott argues, ownership of the land is a pivotal concern at the opening of the text (41). When Puck appears, Dan quickly claims ownership of the land, asserting, ‘‘[t]his is our field’’ (14). Dan is also concerned that Puck will claim ownership of the land: ‘‘But it’s our meadow,’’ said Dan, drawing back. ‘‘Are you going to magic it away?’’ (19). Similarly, Puck claim’s ownership of the hill: ‘‘…right under one of my oldest hills in Old England? Pook’s Hill – Puck’s Hill – Puck’s Hill – Pook’s Hill! It’s as plain as the nose on my face (16). Land ownership

3 Clute specifically identifies *Puck of Pook’s Hill* as a ‘time travel’ text as opposed to a ‘timeslip’ text (949).
is inextricably connected to the fantastic in the text. The process of ‘taking seisin’ is prioritised in the text:

‘[I]f you take seisin from me, I may be able to show you something out of the common here on Human Earth. You certainly deserve it.’

‘What’s taking seisin?’ said Dan, cautiously.

‘It’s an old custom people had when they bought and sold land. They used to cut out a clod and hand it over to the buyer, and you weren’t lawfully seised of your land – it didn’t really belong to you – till the other fellow had actually given you a piece of it – like this.’ He held out the turves. (19)

Significantly, Dan and Una are unable to interact with the fantastic characters until they are ‘lawfully seised and possessed of all Old England’ (19). Significant locations in the text also serve as a means of reference as the children listen to stories from different periods. Dan and Una are shocked to learn that Forge Mill (‘“our mill!”’ (128)) played a significant part in both Parnesuis’ and Sir Richard Dalyngridge’s narratives (128).

The significance of place is also connected to the portals featured in the text. The portals featured in *Puck of Pook’s Hill* are all connected to the landscape the children explore. Two significant portals operate in the text: the ring through which Dan and Una conjure Puck, and the oak, ash and thorn leaves which force them to forget their experiences. Significantly, the children did not create the ring through which they conjured Puck, but rather, discovered it. Trees – specifically oak, ash and thorn leaves – also function as a portal in the text. Puck highlights the fantastic power with which the leaves are imbued when he states that he ‘came into England with Oak, Ash and Thorn’ (18), and he utilises them to his advantage throughout the text. Puck gives Dan and Una leaves to chew (30) and ‘slyly’ throws leaves into Dan’s and Una’s laps (52). Puck also discreetly drops oak, ash and thorn leaves from trees above the children (102), and places them on the children’s heads (123). After the children come into contact with the leaves, they forget their fantastic adventures. The fantastic significance of oak, ash and thorn leaves is also extended to trees in general in the text. Trees enable Dan and Una to engage with the fantastic characters in the realist setting, and Lisa A. F. Lewis asserts that trees
‘stand for secrets and the access to a historical world’ (193). Lewis highlights the way in which fantastic characters enter the text with the aid of trees (193). Significantly, Puck emerges from ‘alders’ to meet the children, both Dan and Una emerge from a cluster of trees to meet Sir Richard Dalyngridge (35). Una is also concealed by trees before she meets Parnesius (109; see also Lewis 193).

The portal trope is highly significant in all four texts, allowing the characters to travel between realms and periods of time. Neither here nor there, neither inside nor outside, the portal epitomises ideas of liminality.

‘To die will be an awfully big adventure’: The Fantastic and Death

Representations of death feature prominently in many Golden Age texts. Importantly, while Roz Kaveney states that Victorian and Edwardian writers (notably Oscar Wilde, Saki and E. M. Forster) personify death (256), many Golden Age texts for children instead present Fantastic spaces that are imbued with ideas of mortality. Indeed, Kimberley Reynolds and Paul Yates assert that death is presented as a ‘seductive’ alternative to life in a number of nineteenth-century fantasy texts featuring child protagonists (164).

The prevalence of death in Victorian fantasy texts for children can perhaps be attributed to the fact that, as Paul Yates suggests, ‘[m]ost death, including that of children, was a domestic event and a normal part of communal life until relatively recently’ (220-1). Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds assert that it is only in the twentieth century that childhood death became ‘exceptional’ (1) and discuss the way in which a child could achieve ‘the stature of an adult’ as they attained grace on their deathbed (8). Indeed, Avery highlights the way in which Puritan texts – notably Janeway’s A Token for Children (1671) – reminded children about the inevitability of their death (95-6). Reynolds and Yates similarly argue that life was ‘regarded as the responsibility of the Divinity’ as times of ‘famine and pestilence’ rendered futurity uncertain (157). However, Puritanical writers were careful to highlight that a shorter life awarded children fewer opportunities to sin (Reynolds and Yates, 162), and enabled them to attain a ‘“good”’ death (Reynolds 170) and ‘eternal futures of bliss’ (Reynolds and Yates 157).

However, as time progressed, it became more difficult for children to attain a ‘“good”’ death, and in increasingly secular societies, Gillian Avery and
Kimberley Reynolds assert that child death came to signify failure both on the part of the scientific and caring systems which should have kept children alive, and the child’s ‘failure’ to reach adulthood (8). Literal child deaths often became symbolic events (as well as a way through which to delimit behaviour) in texts from which protagonists could recover: Reynolds cites Eleanor H. Porter’s eponymous *Pollyanna* (1913) and Katy Carr of Susan Coolidge’s *What Katy Did* (1872) as notable examples (170). Reynolds and Yates state that ‘dead and dying’ children become ‘multivalent signifiers’ in nineteenth-century literature (162).

My discussion will advert to the way in which images of death are presented in six texts spanning the Golden Age by highlighting the prevalence of images of mortality in three early Golden Age texts: Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* (serialised between 1862-3 and published in its entirety in 1863); Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* texts (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871)); George MacDonald’s *At the Back of the North Wind* (serialised in 1868 and published in its entirety in 1871). My discussion will then elaborate on images of mortality in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *In the Closed Room* (1904); and finally J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* texts (1906, 1911, 1928). Each of these texts features a child protagonist (or, in the case of the *Peter Pan* texts, protagonists) who completes a journey from a realist setting to a Fantastic setting. While the Fantastic setting often reflects the social mores of the setting the protagonist left behind – for example, Barrie replicates a domestic setting in Neverland where Wendy fulfils the role of ‘Mother’– in each of the four texts the Fantastic setting is associated with ideas of death.

The way in which the child protagonists reach the Fantastic space in these texts is also noteworthy. Once again, the portal trope features prominently as characters depart from the realist (often domestic) setting and journey to another realm, but it is also important to note the emphasis placed on liminality. For example, windows feature prominently in each of the texts, demarcating the boundaries between inside and outside and, by extension, the boundaries between life and death. Tom evades capture and begins his journey toward a Fantastic death.

---

4 Reynolds and Yates also discuss a notable example in which a female character does not recover from the death that delimits her ‘troublesome’ femininity: Judy in Ethel Turner’s *Seven Little Australians* (1894).
after he evades capture by climbing out of Ellie’s bedroom window (*Water-Babies* 18). The North Wind first calls to Diamond through her ‘window’ in MacDonald’s text (48), and both Judith and her Aunt Hester are closely associated with windows in *In the Closed Room*. Finally, Peter finds the window barred in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, and the image of the barred window also features in both *Peter Pan; Or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* and the 1911 novelisation of the play (*Peter and Wendy*).

Early Golden Age texts are imbued with ideas of (liminal) death. Whether child characters return from the deathly realm to which they travel, or remain within a deathly realm, Fantastic representations of death are inextricably connected to ideas of liminality. For example, Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* further demonstrates the way in which Fantastic Golden Age texts connect ideas of liminality and death. While sweeping the labyrinthine chimneys of Harthover House5 the protagonist Tom loses his way and finds himself in a bedroom. When he is mistaken for a thief (17) Tom escapes through a window (18) and begins his journey toward a Fantastic rebirth that concomitantly symbolises his demise. While Tom swims in the river as a water-baby, Sir John finds ‘a black thing in the water’ which he identifies as Tom’s ‘body’ and ‘shell’ (43). While he has apparently died, Tom is liminal – he resembles an animal, having abandoned his ‘husk’ to become a water-baby, and exists as both a body in the water and a living thing.

Carroll’s *Alice* texts are similarly imbued with images of death, as Alice’s liminal characterisation adverts to notions of mortality. Both of Carroll’s *Alice* texts see the protagonist travel from a realist setting to a fantastic realm. In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice arrives in Wonderland after she falls down a rabbit-hole. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice enters the fantastic realm – which is structured like a chessboard – through a mirror. Like many other fantastic texts, the fantastic realms Alice occupies are symbolically connected to ideas of death.

5 Harthover House is pertinent to an examination of place in Kingsley’s text. The House was ‘built at ninety different times, and in nineteen different styles, and looked as if somebody had built a whole street of houses of every imaginable shape, and stirred them together with a spoon’ (14). Stephen Prickett asserts that the house grew ‘naturally’ and functions as a ‘living’ piece of history (146). Like Tom, Harthover House is liminal: it does not belong to one single period, and functions both as a house and a ‘living’ organism.
Alice comes to represent a deathly force in the text, establishing murderous dominance over many of the creatures she encounters. She has eaten lobster (*Wonderland* 88), whiting (*Wonderland* 91) and has killed a goldfish (*Wonderland* 103). Alice is ambivalent at the close of ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter’ (*Looking-Glass* 166) and cuts a large slice out of a sentient pudding (*Looking-Glass* 235). Significantly, Alice finds herself faced with a ‘dead silence’ (*Looking-Glass* 235, my emphasis) after doing so.

The connection between death and liminality is also emphasised in George MacDonald’s *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), in which the North Wind and the protagonist Diamond are both liminal and deathly. MacDonald’s tale follows Diamond as he travels with the North Wind, and ‘puzzl[es] over the incomprehensible ways of the adult world’ such as ‘the arbitrary forces of nature, bad luck, disaster and illness’ (Prickett, *North Wind*, 10). Diamond – who is sometimes referred to as Little Diamond – lives with his parents in a house adjoining a stable, which houses (Big) Diamond, the horse after whom Little Diamond was named. One night the North Wind visits Diamond, and while Diamond is initially frightened, he regularly accompanies the North Wind as she completes her ‘work’.

Diamond is otherworldly and ‘preternatural’ (McGillis and Pennington 24): he becomes known as ‘God’s Baby’ in the text (172). Diamond dies at the close of the text, but the narrator emphasises that his death is not final – rather, Diamond has simply travelled to the ‘back of the north wind’ (298). Notably, the North Wind symbolises death in the text. Indeed, Stephen Prickett emphasises the way in which death functions to inspire MacDonald. Rather than presenting death as ‘problem’ or a ‘fear to be allayed or played upon’, Prickett asserts that MacDonald’s Fantastic draws inspiration from the fact of death itself (169). Kimbeley Reynolds and Paul Yates find MacDonald’s representation of death as a ‘seductive’ alternative to life problematic (164) and Reynolds finds Diamond’s deathly experiences ‘disturbing’ in the way that it ‘celebrates, demands, and presents as desirable the death of its child [protagonist]’ (171). The connection between the North Wind and death is characterised by liminality. The North Wind is a ‘paradox’, at once ‘destructive’
and ‘caring’ and embodying ‘the spirit of mystery itself’ (McGillis and Pennington, 24).

The North Wind enters Diamond’s bedroom through a liminal ‘window’ formed by a hole in the wall (48) and frequently alters her size: the North Wind is ‘so small that she could not have blown the dust off a dusty miller’ (86) but grows to a storm that ‘shook Diamond’s heart against the sides of his bosom’ (91). Objects swept up by the North Wind – including Diamond, who accompanies her on her journeys – enter ‘nowhere’ (91). Diamond is similarly associated with images of liminality throughout the text. He sleeps in a hay-loft at the text’s opening (45) and in an attic room at the close of the text (290) and encounters liminal spaces in his travels with the North Wind. Diamond’s death is similarly imbued with liminal imagery, as his body is discovered on a literal threshold “just outside his own door” (297).

These images of mortality are elaborated in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s Fantastic novella In the Closed Room (1904), which engages with ideas of liminality as it represents death in spatial terms. In the Closed Room also presents characters who embody ideas of liminality and death: Judith, a ‘frail, curious creature’ with ‘silent ways’ who ‘play[s] by herself in … corner[s]’ (1) enters the eponymous closed room and plays with a ghostly little girl who resides there. Significantly, In the Closed Room is characterised by a preoccupation with place in both a literal and a figurative sense. The significance of Judith’s home is explored in the narrative, but the most important images of place are revealed as Judith remains caught between the realms of life and death.

Representations of death in many of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s realist texts have been awarded substantial critical attention. Burnett addresses ideas of death in the three texts most often examined by scholars – Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886), A Little Princess (1905) and The Secret Garden (1911)⁶ – as all three child protagonists experience the death of at least one parent (Gibson and Zaidman 232).

---

⁶ While The Secret Garden’s indebtedness to the Gothic suggests it is not an unambiguously realist text, it does not address fantastic elements in its treatment of ideas of death. Jen Cadwallader’s “The Three Veils: Death, Mourning and the Afterlife in The Secret Garden” discusses the process in which Colin Craven gradually accepts his mother’s death. While Cadwallader authoritatively discusses the significance of the figurative space created by the veil covering Lilias Craven’s portrait, she emphasises the process in which Colin comes to master this space, rather than its significance as a liminal space symbolically separating life and death.
Scholars often favour biographical readings when addressing Burnett’s presentation of ideas of death, citing the death of Burnett’s son Lionel in 1890 (Thwaite 134-6) as one of the chief influences on her writing. Notably, Jane Darcy asserts that the image of childhood Burnett presented in Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886) was difficult to sustain in light of her son’s death (75-6). Two of Burnett’s biographers – Ann Thwaite and Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina – identify links between Lionel’s death and representations of death in Burnett’s work. Gerzina states that ‘one thing about [The Secret Garden] is clear: it is the resurrection of Lionel’ (263). Gerzina also asserts that Burnett’s fantastic short story The White People, in which a young orphaned heiress is able to see the ‘White People’ who go unnoticed by others (20), ‘haunted’ Burnett and functioned as a ‘portrait’ of Lionel:

[Burnett] dedicated the book to Lionel and made the connection clear through a portrait of a grown man who knows he is going to die soon, calls his mother “Dearest,” and tries to convince her that death is a passage to a lovely place and not an end. (284)

While it is highly likely that the experience of Lionel’s death would have influenced Burnett’s writing, it is also important to consider other possible readings of death in Burnett’s texts. Notably, Philippe Ariès asserts that in the nineteenth century, a change occurred where individuals no longer feared their own death, but instead, feared the death of others (56, 68). Importantly, both In the Closed Room and The White People were published at a time when attitudes toward child death and children’s experiences of death were also changing. While Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds are careful to stress the falsity of the idea that parental love is

---

7 Importantly, both Jane Darcy (“The Edwardian Child in the Garden: Childhood in the Fiction of Frances Hodgson Burnett”) and Cadwallader emphasise the relationship between Lionel’s death and the subsequent presence of ideas derived from Christian Science and New Thought in Burnett’s work – particularly in In the Closed Room and The Secret Garden.
8 The White People (1917) resembles In the Closed Room in subject matter: the protagonist Ysobel Muircarrie is able to see ghosts, and death is presented as another spatial realm to which Ysobel is closely linked. While In the Closed Room and The White People do not present child death as desirable (cf. Reynolds 1998), the texts reflect a certain ambivalence about ideas of death: death is romanticised in both texts, and the unusual manner in which the protagonists engage with death is also emphasised.
a relatively new concept (2), they also emphasise the way in which ideas of childhood death have changed (8). While a child could once die ‘‘well’’, ‘affirming the veracity of religious orthodoxy to all present’ (8), the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw dramatic changes occur. The ways of measuring what a ‘good’ death might be altered (8).

Judith, the protagonist of *In the Closed Room*, lives with her parents in a cramped workers’ flat next to an Elevated Railroad she holds in fear. Judith figuratively escapes the Railroad and workers’ flat as she ‘falls awake’ and dreams about a garden in which she meets her Aunt Hester, who died as a child. When her parents Jane and Jem are offered work as caretakers, Judith moves with her parents to a large, empty house. Importantly, Judith is filled with an intense desire to enter a forbidden closed room. While her mother is unable to do so, Judith finds she is able to open the locked door. Judith enters what she identifies as a girl’s room, and a little girl – Andrea – soon appears and plays with Judith. While the girl insists that Judith does not touch her, the pair shares an ability to communicate without words, and form a close bond. As the pair plays together, Judith is filled with an intense happiness.

After Judith returns to the room to play for yet another day, Jane answers the door to Mrs Haldon, the owner of the house, who reveals that her daughter Andrea died recently. After Jane explains that Judith has seen Andrea, the pair hurries to the closed room, and the two women discover Judith’s body on the sofa. Judith, meanwhile, has journeyed into the rooftop garden with Andrea, and met her Aunt Hester. While she is looking at her daughter’s body, Jane comments on the uncanny similarity between her Aunt Hester’s death and Judith’s death.

Judith’s uniqueness is evident from the beginning of *In the Closed Room*. Judith is a solitary, ‘silent’, ‘frail, curious’ child who does not share a close bond with her parents. Indeed, the ‘healthy, vigorous’ Jane and Jem Foster believe their daughter to be somewhat ‘remote’, and their ‘affection’ for Judith is ‘tinged with something indefinitely like reverence’. Judith’s peculiarity, and her connection to death, is highlighted in the text.

Judith feels an affinity to her Aunt Hester that her parents are unable to explain, since they have refrained from discussing her death with their daughter. Judith ‘knew her Aunt Hester as her mother did not’ and had ‘seen her often in
dreams’. Importantly, Judith is associated with ideas of liminality: Judith plays in corners and is symbolically connected to the liminal Elevated Railroad.

Judith’s liminality is also connected to ideas of death, as *In the Closed Room* characterises death as a liminal space. Burnett suggests that death functions as a liminal space which certain characters may enter, and with which Judith has an affinity. Death is not associated with finality: as Judith plays with Andrea in the closed room (which functions as a metaphor for death in the text) for the last time, Andrea directs Judith to arrange her possessions in such a way that her mother (Mrs Hanlon) will know she had revisited her room. Mrs Hanlon’s reaction reveals the tenuous divide between life and death in the text:

> She whirled to look about her and flung up her arms with an unearthly rapturous, whispered cry:
> 
> ‘It is all as she left it when she ran to me and fell. She has been here – to show me it’s not so far!’
> 
> She sank slowly upon her knees, wild happiness in her face – wild tears pouring down it.’

As Mrs Hanlon discovers her daughter has visited her bedroom, she too becomes ‘unearthly’ and ‘wild’, blurring the divide between life and death. Similarly, Mrs Hanlon’s account of Andrea’s death – where she ‘sank slowly down on her knees’ and ‘everything went out of her face’ as she handed her mother a flower – also reveals the tenuous divide between life and death. This tenuous divide is also suggested by both Judith’s and her Aunt Hester’s deaths, as both characters died near open windows. Judith steps through the window to the large garden which has materialised on the rooftop, and her Aunt Hester died staring through an open window.

Judith’s dreams also reveal the manner in which death is constructed as a liminal space in *In the Closed Room*. Judith ‘falls awake’ and enters a world of ‘strange and lovely places’ where the air ‘smelled like flowers and everything was lovely in a new way’. Significantly, Judith’s dreams represent a more potent reality than everyday life: Judith ‘[breaks] into a low little laugh’ as she thinks about the fact that ‘people could not understand’. It is in this dream realm that Judith meets her Aunt Hester. Significantly, Judith also enters into a realm similar to that which
she visits in her dreams as she ‘fall[s] awake’ for the final time at the text’s close. The liminal space of the rooftop garden becomes more real than the surrounding city:

She forgot the city was below, because it was millions and millions of miles away, and this was where it was right to be. There was no mistake. This was real. All the rest was unreal – and millions and millions of miles away.

Judith is not represented as dying here, but rather enters a liminal space. Interestingly, Judith is the only protagonist of the four texts discussed in this section who does not return from the realm of death: although Judith enters a liminal space, Burnett is careful to emphasise that it is a space from which she does not return.

J. M. Barrie’s Peter Pan texts reveal a similar concern with liminal space which serves to symbolically represent death. Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr highlight the ‘protean’ nature of both Peter and the text itself (vii), and also highlight the way in which Neverland functions as a liminal space:

Neverland is never innocent, nor is it heaven or hell, nor reward or punishment, but rather an imaginary place individual to each child, reeking with desires for safety and home as strong as those that lured each child away from home in the first place. Neverland is never just one idea, just as Peter Pan is never just one boy or girl, but betwixt and between, and just as Peter Pan is not only a play for children but also one for adults, indulgently sentimental, joyful and tragic, about a dead boy who never dies. (vii–viii)

Indeed, even the form of Barrie’s text is connected to ideas of liminality as White and Tarr discuss the confusion caused by Barrie’s various presentations of the ‘Peter Pan’ tale. A character named Peter Pan first appeared in print in Barrie’s 1902 adult novel The Little White Bird. The play entitled Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up was first produced in London in 1904 (although Barrie subsequently altered the script each year). Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, which consisted of the chapters from The Little White Bird that featured Peter Pan, was published in 1906. Barrie’s play was novelised in 1911 and titled Peter and Wendy,
although the title was changed to *Peter Pan and Wendy* in 1924, and later became *Peter Pan* (viii-x).

While the tale of Peter Pan ‘remains vital today’ (White and Tarr vii), I will briefly summarise Barrie’s texts in order to contextualise my arguments. The plot of *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* is very similar to that of *Peter and Wendy*, although the differences are significant in light of Peter’s liminality. Peter Pan is, as John Clute asserts, ‘doomed to changelessness’ (754): Peter ‘want[s] always to be a little boy and to have fun’ (99). Peter enters the Darling nursery through the window, and after teaching the Darling children – Wendy, John and Michael – to fly, they travel to the Fantastic realm of Neverland ‘second to the right and straight on till morning’ (98). Wendy becomes ‘Mother’ to Peter and the Lost Boys (as well as to John and Michael), and the Darling children accompany Peter on many ‘adventures’, notably assisting Peter as he vanquishes his enemy Captain Hook. While the Darling children and the Lost Boys return to London (significantly, Wendy, John and Michael enter their Nursery through the window which Peter entered), Peter remains a ‘perpetual boy’ (Clute 754) in Neverland.

The plot of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* differs from the other texts, and is noteworthy due to both the emphasis it places on ideas of liminality, and its explicit treatment of childhood death. Barrie’s text presents Peter’s experiences after he leaves his house – significantly, through his nursery window – and flies back to Kensington Gardens, seeking once again to become a bird (as Barrie asserts all babies are when they are born). However, after he arrives in the Gardens, Peter loses the ability to fly, and becomes stranded on the island in the Serpentine. Peter becomes a ‘Betwixt-and-Between’ (17) – neither human nor bird, Peter embodies ideas of liminality. After various attempts to reach the ‘mainland’ in Kensington Gardens, Peter eventually gains the ability to leave the island by sailing in a thrush’s nest. Peter has fun in the gardens at night and tries to emulate the way in which other children play during the day. However, Peter decides to visit his mother and, after the fairies temporarily award him the ability to fly, Peter finds the nursery window open, and visits her as she sleeps. Peter decides to return to the Gardens but believes he will return to live with his mother again in the future.

---

9 I will refer to this text as *Peter Pan*. 
However, when Peter returns to his mother once again, he finds the window ‘barred’, and sees his mother with another little boy. Peter returns to live in Kensington Gardens and, significantly, meets Maimie Mannering after she remains in the Gardens after ‘Lock-out time’. I will discuss the significance of Maimie’s and Peter’s experiences later in the chapter.

Despite his assertion that he is at once ‘youth’, ‘joy’ and ‘a little bird that has broken out of the egg’ (Peter and Wendy 203), Peter Pan is inextricably linked to ideas of mortality. Peter and Wendy sees Mrs Darling reveal that Peter travels ‘part of the way’ with children when they die ‘so that they should not be frightened’ (75). Peter is clad in ‘skeleton leaves’ (my emphasis, Peter and Wendy 76, 77) and rescues ‘the children who fall out of their perambulators when the nurse is looking the other way’ (Peter and Wendy 94-5) – these children become the ‘Lost Boys’ of Neverland, and the term “lost” also carries significant connotations of death. Peter also reveals a familiarity with death which borders on nonchalance: he glories in killing his nemesis Hook (Peter and Wendy 204), ‘forget[s]’ people after he kills them (219) and, in accordance with a ‘saying in the Neverland’, Peter works to ‘vindictively’ ‘kill … off’ adults by breathing quickly (Peter and Wendy 168). Peter digs graves and buries children who have ‘perish[ed] of cold and dark’ in Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens (65). Peter is also symbolically connected to ideas of death by his exclamation, “To die will be an awfully big adventure” 10 (Peter and Wendy 152).

Neverland is also connected to ideas of mortality. Sarah Gilead describes Neverland as a ‘realm of death’, likening the trees in which the Lost Boys sleep underground to coffins. Gilead also suggests that the house the Lost Boys build for Wendy resembles a tomb. Indeed, Gilead describes Neverland as ‘a stew of murderous rivalry or revenge’: Tinkerbell is jealous of Peter’s affection for Wendy and attempts to kill her, and Hook and Peter function as fierce rivals in the text (286). The unchanging nature of the children (neither Peter nor the Lost boys age) and the ‘fluid’ nature of time and space (Wiggins 86) also suggest that Neverland

10 Barrie also presents this sentiment in Peter Pan (Act 3, p. 125).
– ‘second to the right and then straight on till morning’ (*Peter Pan* 98) – resembles the ‘afterlife’ (Wiggins 86).

A number of scholars have discussed the way in which Peter Pan is connected to ideas of death, and importantly, this discussion also serves to highlight Peter’s liminality. Notably, Christine Roth asserts that Peter is not endangered by the same ‘figurative deaths’ that Wendy suffers because he ‘is able to exist somewhere between life and death without being affected by either’. Roth presents Peter as ‘both angel and boy, phantasm and flesh, but never completely either one’ (58). Similarly, Sarah Gilead conceives of Peter as ‘[b]oth boy eternal and rotting corpse’ (286). Peter’s liminality, and his status as a ‘poor little half-and-half’ (16) is established in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*:

> “‘Then I shan’t be exactly a human?’ Peter asked.
> “No.”
> “Nor exactly a bird?”
> “No.”
> “What shall I be?”
> “You will be a Betwixt-and-Between,” Solomon said, and certainly he was a wise old fellow, for that is exactly how it turned out’. (17)

Peter also remains a ‘Betwixt-and-Between’ in other iterations of the tale, functioning as what Roz Kaveney terms a ‘Liminal Being’ (581-2). Kaveney asserts that Liminal Beings exist on the threshold between two states – in Peter’s case, life and death11 – and are incapable of change or growth. Consequently, Liminal Beings may function as figures of pathos: despite the narrator’s injunction that the readers should not pity Peter, Barrie’s texts carefully highlight ‘the one joy from which [Peter] must be forever barred’ (*Peter and Wendy* 214; also *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* 40), and the reader is prompted to sympathise with Peter whenever he experiences ‘one of his dreams’ and Wendy comforts him as he sleeps (*Peter and Wendy* 205). Peter’s liminality is emphasised when he appears as a ‘draught in the corner’ to adults, and Mrs Darling is unable to see him ‘clearly’

11 In this sense, Judith from Burnett’s *In the Closed Room* is similar to Peter.
Maimie Mannering also notes that Peter speaks and ‘look[s] rather like a bird’ in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (60). Significantly, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* also highlights Peter’s liminality as he lives on an island between Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. Carrie Wasinger highlights the way in which this space reflects Peter’s ‘hybridity’: given the proximity of the ‘Island in the Serpentine’ to Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament, Peter operates in a space which is ‘at once a margin and a center, part arcadia and part politically inflected sphere’ (223)\(^\text{12}\).

Peter’s proximity to windows in all three texts also attests to his liminality, and in turn, highlights ideas of mortality in each text. In both *Peter Pan* and *Peter and Wendy*, Peter enters the Darling nursery through the window, which separates the realms of life and death. *Peter Pan* details how Peter is clad in ‘autumn leaves and cobwebs’ (97) as he enters the nursery and, as Sarah Gilead asserts, the leaves in which he is clad symbolically connect Peter to death (286). Importantly, the window through which Peter enters allows him to ‘empty the nursery’ in the same manner as ‘death and aging’ (Gilead 286): the nursery window is the portal through which the Darling children must travel in order to reach Neverland. While Wendy, John and Michael are able to fly in the nursery, the window is important in that it serves to symbolically separate the trio from their parents. As the children fly in the nursery, Mr and Mrs Darling are only able to watch the ‘unwonted spectacle’ presented through the window from the street below, and ‘[t]he broken-hearted father and mother’ arrive at the window to see their children flying away. In both *Peter Pan* and *Peter and Wendy* the language in which the relationship between the Darling children and their parents is discussed after this event is significant. Mrs Darling becomes tired from searching the ‘heavens’ each night, and expresses her conviction that Wendy, John and Michael ‘will never come back’ (*Peter Pan* 147). Indeed, Mr Darling urges Mrs Darling to ‘shut the window’ when he feels a draught (although Mrs Darling refuses, asserting that the window must ‘always,

\(^{12}\) Wasinger also discusses Peter’s hybridity – and, hence, liminality – in regard to his age. Wasinger asserts that, ‘Peter seems impossibly adept at slipping between the ignorance of childhood and intricate knowledge of the laws of fairyland. Although merely one week old, Peter has seemingly always been capable of walking, talking, dancing, piping, building boats, purchasing labor, distributing salaries and officiating disputes between belligerent birds. Simply put, Peter is an infant with the abstract reasoning abilities of a bourgeois professional’ (224).
always’ be left open for the children) (Peter Pan 148). Similarly, as Wendy provides an examination about Mr and Mrs Darling in Neverland, the narrator is careful to highlight that ‘the questions were all written in the past tense’ because ‘Wendy … had been forgetting [her parents] too’ (Peter and Wendy 137). The window serves to separate the realms of life – the nursery – and death, symbolised by Neverland. It is significant that Peter does not teach the children how to stop flying as they travel toward Neverland, but they are compelled to continue the journey (Peter and Wendy 103).

The Nursery window is also highly significant in Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. Peter ‘escape[s]’ through the window ‘which had no bars’ and returns to Kensington Gardens (13). However, Peter returns to his mother after the fairies grant him a wish, and finds the window ‘wide open’ (37). While Peter enjoys seeing his mother, he decides to return to Kensington Gardens for a brief period (39). However, when Peter returns to his mother, he finds the window ‘closed’ and realises he is separated from his mother by ‘iron bars’ (40). These bars, and the window they cover, signify the divide between life and death – significantly, Peter never sees his mother again (40). Carrie Wasinger asserts that Peter’s mother ‘transforms the sill from a site of indeterminacy to a marginalizing device’ when she shuts the nursery window (224). This separation Peter experiences – and, specifically, the window as the site of this separation – is also emphasised in Peter and Wendy. After the children return from Neverland, Peter gazes through the window ‘at the one joy from which he must be forever barred’ (214). As the literal bars of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens become figurative bars, the exact nature of the ‘joy’ from which Peter is barred is unclear. I suggest that the ‘joy’ Peter is unable to experience is, in fact, life itself.

In examining the representation of death in Barrie’s Peter Pan texts, it is also important to examine the story of Maimie Mannering in Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. Maimie spends a night in the Gardens and meets Peter Pan after hiding before ‘lock-out time’ in order to see a Fairy Ball. Like Peter, Maimie functions as a Liminal Being in the text, possessing a ‘double nature’ and embodying the ‘uncanny’ (Kaveney 581). Maimie is ‘rather a strange girl’, and is particularly ‘strange’ at night as she frightens her brother Tony (Kensington Gardens 41):
She was quite the ordinary kind in the daytime.

But when the shades of night fell, Tony, the swaggerer, lost his contempt for Maimie and eyed her fearfully; and no wonder, for with dark there came into her face a look that I can only describe as a leary look …

The reason [Tony] was now become so wheedling and she so mysterious was (in brief) that they knew they were about to be sent to bed. It was then that Maimie was terrible. (42)

Maimie also threatens her brother with an imaginary goat at night (42), and Carrie Wasinger states that this threat represents Maimie as a sexual predator who ‘breaks taboo’: Tony is frightened during the night, and significantly, while he is in his bed. Maimie becomes the ‘aggressor’ rather than the ‘pursued’ as she ‘invert[s] the conventional heterosexual gender dynamic’ that exists between her and her brother (230). Wasinger’s reading serves to further highlight Maimie’s liminality: Maimie hovers between embodying the ‘ordinary kind’ during the day and demonstrating ‘strange’ (sexually) aggressive tendencies at night. Importantly, this change takes place as day turns into night.

Maimie’s liminality also highlights her connection to death. Maimie is the first (and perhaps only) child to survive staying in the Gardens after lock-out time (41, 65). While Maimie apparently survives her experiences, the language in which they are described carries connotations of death:

She had shut her eyes tight … When she opened them something very cold ran up her legs and up her arms and dropped into her heart. It was the stillness of the Gardens. Then she heard clang, then another part clang, then from another part clang, then clang, clang, far away. It was the Closing of the Gates. (*Kensington Gardens* 45)

The ‘Closing of the Gates’ is significant here, suggesting that Maimie has entered a deathly realm. This idea is emphasised by the ‘cold’ that drops ‘into [Maimie’s] heart’. Maimie’s experience of place also drastically alters after the ‘Closing of the Gates’: she sees trees moving and hears them speaking (45), sees fairies (46) and supports small trees as they walk (47). This change suggests the possibility that Maimie has entered the afterlife. Significantly, the fairies are unable to wake
Maimie as she lies under a pile of snow (53). Maimie’s position under the snow resembles a grave. While the fairies try to clear the snow away from Maimie’s body, she is soon covered again and even within the fantasy, the fairies are aware that Maimie is in danger of ‘perishing of cold’ (53). While the fairies decide to build a house in order to protect Maimie from the cold, the scene also resembles a funeral: the ladies ‘were crying in their handkerchiefs’ (53-4) and, like the house the Lost Boys build for Wendy, the house the fairies build for Maimie resembles a tomb. Maimie’s position as a living child is also tenuous after this scene, as Peter urges her to travel to the island with him and live as a fellow ‘Betwixt-and-Between’. Maimie chooses to return to her mother and remains wary of meeting Peter again lest she ‘linger[s] with him too long’ (62).

Golden Age children’s texts depicting fantastic realms represent another key thematisation of the liminal. This thematisation is especially significant as it highlights the way in which the fantastic mode is profoundly concerned with liminal spaces and liminal identities. The liminal space of the portal highlights the importance of liminal space in the fantastic mode, as the Psammead Trilogy and *Puck of Pook’s Hill* depict characters visiting different spatial and temporal realms. The prevalence of images of child death in Golden Age texts advert to the inherently liminal nature of childhood itself. The child characters in *The Water-Babies, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, At the Back of the North Wind, In the Closed Room* and, finally, Barrie’s ‘Peter Pan’ texts all traverse liminal thresholds between life and death.
Conclusion

This thesis contributes to discussions of Golden Age children’s literature by highlighting the key role that evocations of the liminal play in both representations of place and characterisation. Golden Age children’s texts are characterised by their emphasis on ideas of liminality as betwixt-and-between characters occupy betwixt-and-between places. These repeated evocations of the liminal, which form the overarching concern of this thesis, signal a fundamental anxiety with the in-between. Golden Age texts display a repeated concern with those things that don’t conform a binary worldview. Indeed, childhood itself functions as a pertinent example of this concern.

This thesis concentrates on representations of liminality in five key (and increasingly abstract) spatial domains: domestic spaces, domesticated natural spaces, pedagogical spaces, empire and, finally, fantastic spaces. The representations of liminality in each of these spatial domains advert to contemporary anxieties and problematics. Chapter one, which focuses on domestic spaces, depicts anxieties surrounding domestic space. Representations of the liminal question, but ultimately reinforce, the privacy associated with the (middle-class) home in *The Railway Children* and *Anne of Green Gables*. Chapter one also adverts to anxieties surrounding gender as it discusses the way in which *The Secret Garden* works to reinforce the structure of primogeniture. Chapter two, which focuses on domesticated natural spaces, highlights the intensely liminal nature of the pastoral. This emphasis on the pastoral highlights a key way in which a liminal literary mode creates a figurative space in which to work out anxieties in a symbolic way. Chapter three, which addresses pedagogical spaces, highlights how the pedagogical setting is used as a trope to rehearse and resolve anxieties as the (boarding) school setting of Angela Brazil’s girls’ school stories *The Fortunes of Philippa* and *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* work to resolve troubling liminal national identities and also to inculcate ideologies pertaining to normative femininity. Chapter three also demonstrates how a specifically imperial model of national identity emerges in *Stalky & Co.* as the liminal school setting inculcates lessons about liminal “‘stalkiness’” (Kipling, *Stalky & Co.* 13) that prepare male students for roles in the wider empire.
The emphasis on national identity in chapter three is elaborated in chapter four, which focuses on the British Empire, as the liminal emerges as an identity trope that is either mediated or cultivated depending on location. *The Secret Garden* offers an example of the way in which liminal characterisation is problematised in the metropole, as Mary’s and Colin’s colonial liminality is tempered in order to emphasise dominant modes of Englishness. Conversely, *Kim* posits the efficacy of an idealised liminality in the colonies, which serve to reinforce British rule in India. Chapter five addresses fantastic spaces and discusses the liminal trope of the portal in Nesbit’s Psammead Trilogy and Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*. Finally, fantastic representations of child death in texts spanning the Golden Age – from Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* of the Victorian era to the Edwardian *Peter Pan* – explore changing representations of childhood death and evoke persistent anxieties surrounding the transient nature of childhood itself. In depicting the five spatial domains (and their attendant anxieties) discussed in this thesis, many of the texts emphasise a return to structure. The return to structure that characterises Turner’s model of liminality is especially significant in discussions of children’s literature and offers a valuable theoretical framework for discussing the freedom which can, at times, appear paradoxical in children’s texts that allow temporary liberation from dominant social structures, but ultimately depict a return to (and a reinforcement of) dominant structures at the text’s close.

This thesis also suggests possibilities for future research. Notably, the emphasis on Irishness in a number of Golden Age texts suggests opportunities for further research. This thesis has adverted to recurrent representations of Irish identities: Honor’s Irish girlhood in *The New Girl at St. Chad’s* (1912); M’Turk’s latent Irishness in *Stalky & Co.* (1899); and the appropriation of the eponymous character’s Irishness in service of the British Empire in *Kim* (1901) are all notable examples of liminal Irish child characters. A number of recent texts address the intersections between Irish identities and childhood: for example, Kaori Nagai’s *Empire of Analogies: Kipling, India and Ireland* (2006) discusses representations of Irishness in Kipling’s œuvre (including his representations of Irish child characters) in the context of British imperialism; and while Pádraic Whyte’s *Irish Childhoods: Children’s Fiction and Irish History* (2011) primarily discusses Irish children’s texts published at the end of the twentieth century, his text nevertheless adverts to ‘[t]he link between past and present [which] is a dominant concern in
much contemporary Irish writing and in Irish culture in general’ (xii). More research could offer further insights about the way in which liminal Irish child characters engage with the wider structure of the British Empire.

While it is outside the scope of this project, this thesis also suggests the possibility of continuing research into the place Golden Age texts occupy in contemporary culture. Golden Age texts undeniably depict a privileged, middle-class milieu that enforces hegemonic power structures. This depiction of privilege is transmuted into the privileged position canonical Golden Age texts occupy in popular culture today. While Seth Lerer argues that ‘there is no single golden age, no precise moment when the literature for and of children was better, more precise, or more effective than at any other moment’, while noting that works are not intrinsically canonical but ‘attain canonical status through their participation in a system of literary values’ (7), this system of literary values undeniably continues to award Golden Age texts a privileged position.

Many of the texts discussed in this thesis continue to be published under the imprint of Puffin Classics, which attests to their continued significance as texts marketed for children1. The marketing materials credit these texts with special cultural significance: they are ‘[t]he standard in children’s classics–treasured, timeless, and inspiring’ (Penguin Random House). Numerous texts discussed in this thesis also appear under the imprint of Oxford Children’s Classics2 (Oxford University Press). A number of the texts discussed in this thesis – including the Peter Pan texts3, works by Kipling4 and Burnett’s The Secret Garden (2011) – also continue to be awarded academic (and cultural) recognition through their inclusion in the Oxford World’s Classics series (also Oxford University Press). The inclusion of The Secret Garden (2006), Kim (2001), Anne of Green Gables (2007) (and Alice


3 Notably, Peter Pan and Other Plays (2008) and the combined Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens and Peter and Wendy (2009).

4 Kipling’s works printed under the imprint of Oxford World’s Classics notably include the Just So Stories (2009), Kim (2008), the Jungle Books (2008) and The Complete Stalky & Co. (2009).
in Wonderland (2013)) in the list of Norton Critical Editions also attests to Golden Age texts’ continuing significance as objects of study. The Norton Annotated Editions also include selected Golden Age texts of The Wind in the Willows, The Secret Garden and Peter Pan (W. W. Norton), which similarly attests to their significance in academia, but also to their continued cultural significance. These texts evoke the (Edwardian) ‘gorgeously illustrated gift books and a merging of child and adult readerships’ (Gavin and Humphries, “Worlds Enough and Time” 5) that I adverted to in the Introduction as they combine the original texts with illustrations, extensive paratextual materials and marginalia, and academic commentary.

These publications serve to highlight the way in which the ‘system of literary values’ (7) that Lerer discusses – the system of values that operates both in an academic context, and in popular culture – continues to award Golden Age texts significance. While Golden Age children’s texts are by no means the only texts featured on publishers’ lists as children’s classics, their continued publication is significant. As I highlighted in the Introduction, the literary marketplace played a significant role in popularising and attributing value to certain children’s texts in both the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras. I assert that the literary marketplace continues to attribute such value to Golden Age children’s texts today.

However, in discussing the ‘Golden Age’ it is important to remember that the term is, as Victoria Ford Smith asserts, ‘a construction’ that serves as ‘a useful shorthand for an important epoch in the history of children’s literature and childhood’ (264, n. 4)5. The usage of the term ‘Golden Age’ can, as Seth Lerer’s comments (7) suggest, be fraught. This thesis has followed in Gubar’s and Ford Smith’s footsteps to use the term to refer broadly to a period that saw ‘an unprecedented explosion’ (Gubar 212, n. 2) in the number of texts published for children. This thesis has focused on texts that have attained canonical status as one facet of the literary production associated with that period: as Gubar highlights, the Golden Age saw increased production of ‘children’s fiction and poetry, not to mention an unparalleled proliferation of children’s periodicals and the emergence

5 Indeed, Marah Gubar similarly notes the ‘pithiness’ of the term ‘Golden Age’, and asserts that “mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century children’s literature” is quite a mouthful” (212, n. 2).
of children’s theatre’ (212, n. 2). However, the texts this thesis has discussed – most of which have attained and maintained canonical status in the century following their publication – are especially pertinent due to their emphasis on representations of liminality.

Golden Age children’s literature mobilises the ultimate liminal space of the text as a means through which to depict the ‘betwixt-and-between’. This thesis has utilised pertinent aspects of a Turnerian reading of liminality to elaborate on the significance of the repeated evocations of the betwixt-and-between that characterise Golden Age children’s literature. Just as the eponymous Peter Pan remains suspended in childhood at the close of Barrie’s text(s) and is characterised by his “Betwixt-and-Between” (Kensington Gardens 17) characterisation, Golden Age children’s literature is characterised by its repeated emphasis on playing out the betwixt-and-between places and child characters that populate late-Victorian and Edwardian children’s literature.
Acknowledgments

This research was supported by a seed grant from Brown University’s Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICSGC). I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful feedback, which significantly improved this manuscript. In particular, I thank Jennifer Casper and Michal Mount for their support and encouragement. I also thank the participants who generously shared their time and insights with me. Finally, I thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement.

References


<https://global.oup.com/education/content/children/series/oxford-childrens-classics/?sortfield=newest-first&search_input=&region=uk&view=&prevNumResPerPage=10&start=0&numResultsPerPage=75>.


