KIPLING'S MANBOYS AND BOYMEN: MASCULINITY AS CHILD'S PLAY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S SHORT STORIES THROUGH THE LENS OF CREATIVE CRITICISM

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The analysis revolves around select short stories including "The Last of the Stories", "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes", "The Cry of Blood", "The Mark of the Beast", "The Man Who Would be King", "The Story of Muhammed Din", "Without Benefit of the Clergy", "Beyond the Pale" and "All the Mowgli Stories".

Central interpretations in the iconic Raj narratives includes an exposure of the fragility and domestic instability of expatriate culture's dynamics, behaviours, and institutions. "The Man Who Would Be King" is read as an adventure undertaken by schoolboys. In "Without Benefit of the Clergy" and "Beyond the Pale", this playful masculine existence is intertwined with the awkward problem of first love. Moving between short stories, the study keeps a steady eye on the character of Mowgli from "The Jungle Books", drawing comparing his development to that of other characters.

Navigating Kipling's literary terrain has traditionally been a challenging endeavour within academia. However, this piece attends to the complexities of Kipling's expansive imaginative realm. By redefining masculinity through the lens of playful mastery, this study intends a nuanced interpretation of several of his male characters, contributing to broader critical conversations surrounding gender, coloniality, childhood and psychoanalytic approaches to Literature.

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MANUSCRIPT

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim; (10-12)

Rudyard Kipling's *If* – bombards readers with anaphoric 'If' phrases, offering conditions that must be met to become 'a man, my son'.[1] The poem hinges on the subjunctive connective; suspended in possibility, the reader might become a 'man' if– and if– and if– . The phrase is left hanging with each 'If' condition. Both lines quoted above are fragmented by the hyphen-space that ruptures their visual presentation. 'Master' and 'aim' dangle in the indent, postponing this coming-into masculinity. The poem is burdened with chances that culminate in an unfulfilled promise.

'Man' is not become. Instead, 'man' is an ideal that is held in abeyance on the other side of the hyphen space. I understand the difference between the states of *being* and *becoming* a 'man' through Mowgli's assertion in "Tiger! Tiger!." In *All of Mowgli's Stories,* which collects Mowgli's serially published short stories from 1893 to 1895, the line reads: "'Well, if I am a man, a man I must become'". [2] [3] In *St Nicholas Magazine,* 1st American and Sussex editions, the line reads "'A man I must be'".[4] *If* – functions as a Just-So story of "How The Man Got His Masculinity" in which Kipling delivers vignettes of how to *be* a 'man' without giving readers a static image of how to *become* one. Eliding analogies, masculinity is perpetually in flux, a thing of being, rather than of becoming. One reaches the end of the poem and wants to interrupt the speaker: 'you'll be a man, *[like who?],* my son' (35).

Each 'If' phrase is qualified by a verb – 'if you can keep/trust/wait' – becoming an episodic moment, or a short story, where the narrator holds various tales and experiences loosely. A 'man' is one who is agile enough to move between each with temperance and consideration (1,3,5). *The one where you were able to keep/trust/wait;* Kipling's attention is on the possibility of action, rather than consequence. By establishing an intermediate area between fantasy and objective reality, Kipling undermines the pervading early 20th-century literary attitude that play is preparation for colonial masculinity.[5] Instead, *If* – suggests a mode of masculinity in which *being* a 'man' is a form of play. I am reaching for a mode of play that draws

[1] Kipling, *If –,* In *Rewards and Fairies,* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1910), p. 181-2.
[2] Kipling, *All the Mowgli Stories* (New York: Junior Deluxe Editions, 1956), p. 98.
[3] Throughout this thesis, I quote from the 1956 edition, adapted from the original 1933 collection. For a chronology of the stories' publishing, see G.A Martinez, *Chronology of Rudyard Kipling,* 1988.
[4] Kipling, "Tiger! Tiger!" in *St. Nicholas: an illustrated magazine for young folks,* (February, Vol. 21, 1894) p. 293.
[5] B. Deane, "Imperial Boyhood: Piracy and Play Ethic" in *Victorian Studies,* 53(4), 2011, p.122-4.

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on D.W. Winnicott's aphorism 'Playing is doing'.[6]

Kipling does not create a badge for masculinity that Verney Lovett Cameron's boy- explorers can be honoured with on return from their expeditions or that Robert Baden- Powell's boy-scouts can earn in the wilderness.[7] [8] As Bradley Deane observes with *Stalky & Co.,* while the boys understand that their schooling 'prepare[s] them for military or civil service exams', Kipling 'wrenches' them 'free from the narrative of progress in which' childhood is 'merely a beginning'.[9] [10] Redeeming the experience of childhood by inhabiting it, Kipling's short stories enact the *If* – model of masculinity through an illusionary mode pertinent to a child's world of play. This suggests that a 'man' is the male who can play freely, with control over himself, despite the situation. To 'keep your head when all about you/Are losing theirs', one must be able to *do* things (1).

II

I want to conduct a thought experiment modelled from Simon Palfrey's reading of 'playlife' in *King Lear.* [11] By attending to the actions of Kipling's characters, I am drawing on 'the peculiar liberties of imaginative criticism' to allow for 'the space (to magnify and separate) and time (to slow down and return) that are needed to touch the life emerging'.[12] Kipling's male characters achieve varying gradations of masculinity depending on how successful their play is, collapsing childhood's boyishness into adulthood's manliness, regardless of the characters' ages. By observing their play, I allow space and time for the *playworld* that animates the individual short stories.

III

In "The Last of the Stories" (first published in the *Week's News* on September 15, 1888), Kipling's first-person narrator, 'play[ing] Dante to' the Devil's 'Virgil', is dragged to 'one of the largest Hells in existence – the Limbo of Lost Endeavor,

[6] D. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1971), p.55.
[7] V.L. Cameron, *Three Sailor Boys; or, Adrift in the Pacific,* (London: Nelson & Sons, 1902).
[8] R. Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for instruction in Good Citizenship.* (London: Horace Cox, 1908).
[9] Kipling, *Stalky & Co,* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1899).
[10] B. Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Culture, 1870-1914,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.132.
[11] S. Palfrey, "Attending to Tom" in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 65(1), p.1-21.
[12] Ibid,. p.2.

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where the souls of all the Characters go'.[13] "'It's rather an appalling thing to be confronted with fifty-one children'" – characters that Kipling had created within only the first four years of what would be a fifty-two-year literary career.[14] An assembly of *all* of Kipling's characters – his children – with *all* the playworlds of the short stories colliding, would not be as tame an encounter as it was in 1888. The playworlds unfold onto and into each other, smoothening the hyphen-spaces between them to create an even playing field – a *playground.* Loud and bustling, alive with screams and laughter, all of Kipling's children play together in a scene that might resemble Pieter Bruegel, the Elder's "Children's Games" (1560).

Figure 1. Bruegel, P. (1560)."Children's Games". Kunsthistoriches Museum, Vienna, (Orrock, 2012).

Leo Koerner argues, 'Bruegel made such pictures to be viewed from two distances'.[15] The composition's lack of a clear centre allows child play to run rampant across the scene. Audiences shuttle between the playground, a sprawling landscape, and the individual playworlds of each figure. Freezing distinct moments of action, Bruegel's playground, as Edward Snow observes, moves between 'the present, the almost-past, the not-yet, the about- to-be, the held-in-abeyance, the imagined away, or [and] the permanently translated'.[16] The playground lends itself to an enactment of the *If* – model, entertaining multiple possibilities of existence simultaneously.

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[13] Kipling, "The Last of the Stories" in *Abaft the Funnel,* (New York: B.W. Dodge & Company, 1909), p. 323-3.
[14] Ibid., p. 346.
[15] L. Koerner, *Bosch and Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p.7.
[16] E. Snow, *Inside Bruegel: The Play of Images in Children's Games,* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), p. 159.

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Criticism conventionally attributes the doubleness, the 'two distances', of Kipling's work to his cultural 'hybridity', split between both India and England. [17] [18] Reading Kipling through the sixteenth-century painting of child's play allows us to attend to character action within the texts. Puck and Punch might be playing in a corner with toy trains while Stalky terrorises Gunga Din and Tommy Atkins marches on.

Hans Sedlmayr sees the children as fragments of the larger composition, 'broken, shattered', 'closed off from each other and from the space that surrounds and connects them'.[19] Kipling's short story form similarly implores its readers to move within each individual story's playworld, while also being conscious of its placement in a wider trajectory. Strickland, for example, moves between at least six short stories. In his debut tale, "Miss Youghal's Sais, he is the only 'man' 'in the whole of Upper India' 'who can pass for Hindu or Mahommedan, hide-dresser or priest as he pleases'.[20] He begins as a proto-Kim, taking delight in the freedom of movement that comes with disguise by decoding an Indian, 'native', sign system to code his own performance that 'has gone deeper than the [white] skin'.[21] Taking on a costume as a transitional object to enter a potential space, it reads to me like a child playing dress-up.[22] He matures into the Strickland we meet in *Kim* (1901) where, as John McBratney observes, he 'lacks the freedom and range of his earlier liminal self'.[23]

The Mowgli Stories imply a similar sense of chronology. "Tiger! Tiger!" alludes to "In the Rukh" – the concluding Mowgli story which was published first – with the playfully dismissive line, 'But that is a story for grown-ups'. [24] Angus Wilson is resistant to the idea of Mowgli 'growing up' from 'man's cub' to Jungle Ranger, understanding "In the Rukh" as a threat to contaminate the 'child's vision'.[25] Daniel

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[17] H. Bhabha, "The Location of Culture" in *The Location of Culture,* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 5.

[18] For recent critical readings of Kipling's 'hybridity', see D Randall, *Kipling's Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); G.S Narayan, "Hybridity, History and Empire in Rudyard Kipling's Kim" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* 2018, 60(1), p. 56-70., and H Trivedi, *Kipling in India: India in Kipling,* (London: Routledge, 2021). Such readings are largely driven by Kipling's autobiography "Something of Myself" (1937) and reputation as 'Bard of Empire' (in *Country Life Illustrated,* March 11, 1899, he is hailed for the 'discovery of India as a field for romance', having '"explained" the East to the West' (p. 293)).

[19] H. Sedlmayr, "Bruegel's Macchia" in C. Wood, ed. *The Vienna School Reader,* (New York: Zone, 2000), p.330-1.

[20] Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills,*(Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1888), p.23.

[21] Ibid., p.24.

[22] D. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" in: *Playing and Reality,* (London: Routledge, 1951), p.4.

[23] J. McBratney, "Passing and the Modern Persona in Kipling's Enthographer Fiction" in *Victorian Literature and Culture,* Vol. 24, 1996, p. 38.

[24] "Tiger! Tiger!", p. 117

[25] A. Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling,* (London: Granada Publishing, 1979), p.11, 18.

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Karlin sees it as a 'half-baked anticipation' of the rest of the stories; Jane Hotchkiss as a writing 'backward' into Mowgli's past that anticipates adulthood before childhood begins.[26] [27]Readers are constantly asking, *is the picture complete?*

Despite critical pushback, "In the Rukh" is the first and last Mowgli story, demonstrating how Mowgli moves through each, like Strickland. The Mowgli of "In the Rukh" has the same 'two or three white scars just above his ankle' that the Mowgli of "Tiger! Tiger!" has 'all over his arms and legs'.[28] [29] Flesh, toughened and hardened by play, baring the marks of *being,* is not outgrown, shed, or disfigured in a forward projection or propulsion into masculinity. Each short story is self-sufficient but also invites the imposition of a teleology using groupable and surrounding narratives to situate the characters in a larger structure. An individual story acts as a fragment of an unknown (and unknowable) whole.

In Sedlmayr's austere observations of the children that he calls 'Primitives – a hollow form of human', we see streaks of his Nazism, contemptuous of the child at play.[30] He makes the 'Primitives' *Other* to the aestheticizing gaze of an adult audience; Joe Moshenska recognises how 'the threat and allure of observing a child at play is isometric with' that 'of viewing an artwork'.[31] Koerner's 'two distances' are not just the conflict between the micro and macroscopic perspectives or different modes of time, but also reflect the disjunct between the role of the analyst and analysand, the reader and the children. The playground allows a Winnicottian approach to consider both Kipling's child and adult analysands. Having equalised Kipling's male characters through Bruegel's incessant prismatic viewpoints, I have structured this dissertation as a series of psychoanalytic observations. Inhabiting the playworlds of Kipling's short story children arranged on Bruegel's landscape, audiences take on the role of a child's observer, appraising and taking notes for each case study on *how* they play and the ways in which this demonstrates their masculinity.

My assumptions are as follows:

(1) Masculinity is determined by the *If* – model.

a. A 'man' is defined by his ability to play and do.

(2) Play has rules, systems, and laws.

a. One must learn these to excel in play.

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[26] D. Karlin, "Introduction" in *The Jungle Books,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), p.13.

[27] J. Hotchkiss, "The Jungle of Eden: Kipling, Wolf Boys, and the Colonial Imagination" in *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 2001, 29(2), p. 441.

[28] Kipling, "In the Rukh", *All the Mowgli Stories,* p. 275.

[29] "Tiger! Tiger!", p. 96.

[30] Sedlmayr, "Bruegel's Macchia", p.336.

[31] J. Moshenska, *Iconoclasm As Child's Play,* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2019), p.162.

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(3) Only Kipling's children fill the playground. All the children will be referred to as boys, regardless of age.

My observations are as follows:

(1) Age is not a pre-requisite to achieving masculinity.

(2) There is no boy that meets every 'If' condition.

a. There is no 'man' in the playground.

(3) Each boy achieves a different gradation of masculinity.

a. There are child boys who are not always boyish. To avoid generalising them into a state of overgrown childhood, they will be referred to as 'boymen'.

i. 'Boymen' include, but are not limited to: Mowgli, Muhammed Din, Tota.

b. There are adult boys who are not always 'men'. To avoid generalising them into a state of undergrown adulthood, they will be referred to as 'manboys'.

i. Adult boys act as the *older* boys (but not necessarily as 'men'). In this way, the playground mimics J.M. Barrie's Neverland, with Wendy playing mother, and speaks to Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, where 'growing larger is always involved with growing smaller'. [32] [33] [34]

ii. 'Manboys' include, but are not limited to: Strickland, Flete, Holden, Trejago.

(4) The children closer to becoming 'men' are better at playing.

(5) Those who are better at playing have learnt the systems that are *at play* to be able to play *within* them.

a. I am reminded of Mowgli who, from inside Kaa's coils, was 'taught' a game by the snake and 'played [it] carefully'.[35] Learning *how* to play made him 'strong enough to endure a little rough handling', in contrast to 'The Boy' in "Thrown Away", who fails to achieve the requisite toughening of manliness and takes things too seriously to be able to play freely with them.[36]

By way of Kenneth Gross, 'To call them by name, child by child': Morrowbie, Daniel, Peachy, Flete, Strickland, Holden, Muhammed Din, Tota. Like all families, they have one child that is *impossible*. [37]

I have tried to hold Mowgli by the 'little ankle bones' that Tabaqui fixates on

[32] J. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy,* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911).

[33] L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* (London: Macmillan, 1865).

[34] K. Gross, *Dangerous Children: On Seven Novels and a Story,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), p.14.

[35] *All the Mowgli,* p.159.

[36] Kipling, "Thrown Away" in *Plain Tales,* 1888, p. 159-60.

[37] Gross, *Dangerous,* p.1.

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in *The Jungle Play* – Kipling's only play.[38] He writhes out of my grasp and refuses to sit still. In a manner befitting 'The Master of the Jungle' – the child who plays freely and between the Jungle's kingdoms with mastery *over* their systems – he runs free through this dissertation and will join each child while we observe how they create their playworlds as Kipling's literary landscape becomes their experimental playing fields.

Morrowbie

"The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes" was first published in the 1885 *Quartette*. Morrowbie's story starts like Alice's; with a child falling into a hole.[39] He tumbles into a 'horse- shoe shaped crater of sand' and watches as 'the ground rose suddenly'.[40] The desert sand moves to subsume him into its 'crater', revealing an underworld limbo village of the undead, 'that is well known to exist, though he is the only Englishman who has been'. [41] Like the Redcrosse Knight in Faeryland, this English manboy comes 'pricking on the plaine' of colonial India, with his 'angry steede', penetrating a landscape that he does not understand.[42] The village functions like Errour's den, the world of the *Other,* that both 'God and man does hate'.[43]

David Gilmour reads this story as 'the vulnerability of the Englishman', echoing Louis Cornell's notion that it is 'a genuine Anglo-Indian nightmare'.[44] [45] Neither critic acknowledges Morrowbie's fear of having no control over the 'native' subjects, which would ruin the English manboy's game of playing coloniser.[46] [47] Whiteness is faced with the realisation that it is neither the exception to, nor is it protected from, the masses as its ruler. Trapped in this limbo space with the half-dead, half- human 'natives' – the *thing* that is deeply inferior – Morrowbie's 'nightmare' and 'vulnerability' lies in the realisation that he has been thrust onto an even playing field with the brown children: 'Here was a Sahib, a representative of the dominant race, helpless as a child and completely at the mercy of his native neighbours'.[48]

Morrowbie's game functions like conversation in Wonderland; wor(l)ds that

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[38] Kipling, *The Jungle Play,* (London: The Penguin Press, 2000), p. 12.
[39] Kipling, *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, (New York: F.M Buckles & amp., 1899).
[40] Ibid., p.12.
[41] Ibid., p.5.
[42] E. Spenser, "Book 1" in W. Kent, ed. *The Faerie Queene* (1751), (London: Printed for J. Brindley, 1590), Canto 1.6.
[43] Ibid., Canto 1.115.
[44] D. Gilmour, *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling,* (London: John Murray, 2002), p.31.
[45] L.L. Cornell, *Kipling in India.* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.105.
[46] P. Hopkirk, *Quest for Kim: in search of Kipling's great game.* (London: John Murray, 1996)
[47] C.A. Matteo, "Le grand jeu" and the Great Game: The Politics of Play in Walter Scott's "Waverley" and Rudyard Kipling's "Kim". *Journal of Narrative Theory,* 2000, 30(2), p. 163-186.
[48] *Morrowbie Jukes,* p. 38.

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the children thought they knew, envelop and mock them. The preconceptions learnt in the world above must be razed to engage in this new play in the uncertain world below which implores instinct. Morrowbie rolls through the sand and is met by the laughter of the village's 'native' population; 'they cackled, yelled, whistled, and howled […] in convulsions of unholy mirth'.[49] Laughter finds physicality between the consonance of the past participles and the repeated, cutting 'c' sound between 'cackled' and 'convulsions'. 'Unholy mirth' rises from the mouths of the 'ragged crew' and ensnares Morrowbie, as though it were 'Errours endless traine', and activates a violent impulse within him. [50] [51] Dormant until solicited, it is something like the 'primordial barbarity' that Chinua Achebe recognises in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), or like how the 'beat upon a savage war drum' cast 'the spell of savagery' on Will in "The Cry of Blood" (n.d.).[52] [53] Kipling's emphasis on 'savage' paired with the minstrel caricature illustration implicates Will into the crude 'going native' trope, of which Conrad's novella is a cornerstone.

[49] Ibid., p.20.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Spenser, Book I, Canto 1.162.
[52] C. Achebe, "An Image of Africa", *The Massachusetts Review,* 1977, 18(4), p. 792.
[53] Kipling, *The Cry of Blood* (London: Famous Crimes, n.d.).

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FAMOUS + CRIMES 113

"Straight!"
"What did yer say?"
"Well, seein' as how he was a bit on, I say nothing."
"Ah! they do talk queer in booze."
"That's what I thought."
"Think he means it?"
"Soon see. I'll ask him to-day."

At that moment the swing-doors of the dirty little bar-room were flung open, and Brown walked in. He went straight up to Elizabeth and her companion.

"Well, old girl, thought over what I said last night?"
"What do you mean?—about marriage?"
"Yes; it don't do you no good going on as you are. It don't do me no good. Let's splice and be comfortable."

There was no mistaking this offer, made in sober earnestness, in the presence of Ann Besting. Elizabeth did not have such opportunities in her path every day, and, although, perhaps, she would have preferred a husband with a white face, she contrived to remember the ancient adage which tells us that "handsome is as handsome does," and con-

fected by this moral reflection, became Mrs. Brown the day after the proposal.

Long courtships were not fashionable in her circles of society.

Brown and his bride soon left their accustomed haunts, took a small, neat house, furnished it, and settled down to a life of connubial felicity. Elizabeth's son by a former marriage, now a young man, at first opposed all intercourse with Brown, on account of his nationality. The young fellow did not take kindly to a negro stepfather.

After a time, however, Brown's invariable good humour, pleasant manners, and generous heart, worked their way into the youth's affection. Finally, he voted his stepfather "a real good sort," and came to live in the house Brown and his mother had taken.

For some considerable period the expectations of continued and uninterrupted happiness were more than fulfilled. "All went merry as a marriage bell."

This, however, was but a prelude to the awful tragedy which resulted from the marriage.

One day Brown was alone walking in the country. Crossing some fields, he came upon a number of booths, around which all the humours of a small country fair were in progress.

At one end of the fair a troupe of "wild men" were being exhibited, and in half-amused curiosity Brown lingered to look at them. Inside the booth a showman began to beat upon a savage war-drum. The sound was monotonous and uninspiring. Brown stood enthralled. Where had he heard that magic sound before, so remote and yet so strangely familiar? The showman still beat the drum, and the weird notes, one after the other, unmusical and harsh, stirred the pulses of Brown's blood as they had never before been stirred in his life. Surely he had heard that before—somewhere, long ago, that magic sound had led him forth to battle. A great inclination to dance and sing rose up within him, a longing to fight and to vanquish.

Half-frightened, and strangely moved, he hurried away with new impulses roused within his breast. New impulses! No; rather the oldest impulses on earth waking after long sleep.

He w[illegible] home quietly enough, but from that day he was never the same man.

He grew subject to melancholy fits, periods of abstraction and depression. Was he longing for the sea? No; a subtler, older, more powerful influence than the sea's call was moving in his heart. The long-silenced voices of savage forefathers, rude and barbaric, were calling their son through the calm of the ages.

Brown did not know this himself; all he recognised was the fact that a mighty and, to him, inexplicable change had come over him. He longed for action, but not the action of the sea. His present life oppressed him; the order, the commonplace method of civilised circles tortured his inherent wildness. He wished to be free, alone on vast tracts of uncultivated ground, free to roam, to hunt, and to slay.

At times he was astonished at the strange, dreadful thoughts which came sweeping through his brain. Once, as he sat by the fire in the little, well-ordered parlour, a terrible desire came over him. Elizabeth was asleep on the couch.

She awoke suddenly, and found Brown standing over her and as she had never seen him look before. He was trembling in every limb.

"My God, what's the matter, Will?"
"Nothing, nothing."
"You are ill!"
"No, no."
"I can see you are!"
"I tell you I'm well."

Figure 2. 'Danced madly round the body' (p. 213)

'The blood cries out: who shall deny the call?'.[54] The verb 'cries' personifies blood as a child crying for a pacifying object; the violence answering 'the call' takes on the role of the breast. In "His Chance of Life", Michele D'Cruze's 'white blood', is hostile when deprived of the thing it feels entitled to; 'the White shows in spurts of fierce, childish pride – which is Pride of Race run crooked'.[55] When Morrowbie's

[54] Ibid., p.114.

[55] Kipling, "His Chance of Life" in *Plain Tales,* p. 66.

'white blood' cries out, he does not deny its call:

[…] irritated beyond expression […] [I] commenced cuffing those nearest to me with all the force I could. Those wretches dropped under my blows like nine-pins, and the laughter gave place to wails for mercy. [56]

The cutting 'c' consonant is carried from 'cackled' into 'commenced cuffing' and 'could,' before the heavier vowel 'o' is introduced in 'dropped'. Through the assonance in 'blows', the extended sounds find weight and substance. The 'blows' act as a transition image, dominating over the audacious bodies, the 'wretches' from whom the laughter rose. 'Blows' make them conquerable in their lightness, as they fall away, 'like nine-pins', against the strength of this English manboy's wrath. His violence razes their laughter from the soundscape and substitutes it for the cowering 'wails' of smaller children.

Gunga Dass, with 'the laughter be it understood of a superior or at least of an equal', tells Morrowbie there is no way to escape, "None of what kind at all".[57] Morrowbie answers the call again:

I acted as one mad. I hurled myself against the sand-slope. I ran round the base of the crater, blaspheming and praying by turns. I crawled out among the sedges of the river- front […] – and so fell, spent and raving, at the curb of the well.[58]

Like Mowgli in his delirious episode "The Spring Running", he is "'angry with that which I [he] cannot see'".[59] Anger manifests in 'spurts of fierce, childish pride', tantrums, where unchecked passions spill into play. Mark Paffard understands Mowgli's anger as an expression of 'the loneliness' that 'the Sahib in India suffers', 'a god among mere mortals'. [60] What is lost when critics impose allegorical structures on Kipling's texts is exemplified in this reading. The version of "The Spring Running" that is collected in *The Second Jungle Book* ends with the line, 'This is the last of the Mowgli stories'; the child is dead. [61] An allegorical reading does not *allow* for the pain, mourning and turmoil in a text that is written primarily for a child readership who will literalise the action without constructing a supra-narrative. The Jungle *is* and the emotions *are* because Mowgli is *doing, playing* and *being*.

Morrowbie, unlike Mowgli, is a 'Sahib in India', not just an allegory of one. Within the past tense verbs 'hurled', 'ran' and 'crawled', we see his tableaus on the

[56] Kipling, *Morrowbie Jukes,* p. 20.
[57] Ibid., p. 29.
[58] Ibid., p. 30-1.
[59] Kipling, *All the Mowgli.* p. 224.
[60] M. Paffard, *Kipling's Indian Fiction,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 224.
[61] Kipling, "The Spring Running" in *The Second Jungle Book,* (London: Macmillan, 1895), p. 104.

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playground – the actions Bruegel would paint him within. The present participles 'blaspheming' and 'praying' hold something of the substance of his 'cuffing'. Movement drives the playworld in a cacophony of changing, but continuous, actions that lend themselves to the thrashing wind that 'dives/ and strafes invisibly'; an attacking toy plane in the hands of a larger child in Seamus Heaney's *Storm on the Island* (16-17). [62] Like military 'strafes', he runs out of ammunition, burning his energy in the rampage of attacking verbs. He collapses, turning away from the action, and moving into the adjectives 'spent and raving'. I imagine this manboy, with his head on 'the curb of the well' and his belly rising and falling with slowing breaths. Adulthood encroaches; the child resembles something of the 'man' creature who, *spent,* 'tirest on'.[63]

Morrowbie cannot save himself from his 'nightmare', relying on 'Dunnoo, my dog boy', who:

[…] tracked Pornic's [the horse's] footprints fourteen miles across the sand to the crater […] taken on one of my ponies and a couple of punkah-ropes, returned to the crater, and hauled me out.[64]

Dunnoo, a Wee Willie Winkie in brown skin, comes riding 'as fast as the pony could put foot on the ground' to rescue the 'princess'.[65] Dunnoo manually airlifts him from the desert-hole. For all the ferocity of his tantrum, Morrowbie ends as a pathetically limp figure, 'dragged, face downward', 'choked and half-fainting'.[66] The English manboy fails the divinity that Paffard attributes to him and cannot play his way out of the desert hole.

Flete and Strickland

'White blood' goes 'native' again in "The Mark of the Beast" (first published in the *Pioneer,* July 12th, and 14th, 1890), where the English manboys play deeper into their colonial fantasies.[67] Here, we meet Flete, focused on 'gravely grinding the ashes of his cigar-butt into the forehead of the red stone image of Hanuman'.[68] I can imagine his tongue sticking out and his face too close to the 'red stone', like when a child, drawing, leans into the table. The sickly, drunken face – sweaty and sunburnt – slurs,

[62] S. Heaney, "Storm on the Island" in *Death of a Naturalist,* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), p. 38.
[63] W. Shakespeare, "The Tragedie of Cymbeline" in *The First Folio of Shakespeare,* (London: Printed at the Charges of W. Faggard), Act 3.4.102.
[64] *Morrowbie Jukes*, p. 70.
[65] Kipling, "Wee Willie Winkie" in *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories,* (Allahbad: A.H. Wheeler & Co, 1890), p. 15, 14.
[66] *Morrowbie Jukes*, p. 79.
[67] Kipling, "The Mark of the Beast" in *Life's Handicap,* (London: MW Books Ltd., 1891).
[68] Ibid., p.292.

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"'Shee that? 'Mark of the B –beasht! *I* made it. Ishn't it fine?'"; the child seeks the narrator's approval on his newest art.

Frederick L. Knowles argues it is a story of 'pure horror' because of the animalising effect of the Silver Man's curse on Flete.[69] He 'snarls, and his snarls were those of a wolf, not a man', with 'beast noises in the back of his throat'.[70] There is a distinction to be made here between the human beastliness Flete demonstrates in a quintessentially 'Sahib' way, and the animal beastliness that the curse has him perform. Does the mark of the beast put the 'beast' into him, or does it physicalise what is already within? Flete's particular brand of beastliness does not let him sit on the gradient between 'man' and boy; the unchecked entitlement and supremacy he attributes to his 'White blood' is beastly beyond humanity.

How far can the actions of these manboys be considered play when they are so aggressively brutal? The narrator cannot tell of the torture that he and Strickland subject the Silver Man to; 'This part is not to be printed'.[71] The terror-tableau of white violence that cannot not be printed would have to be worse than the detailed illustration of Will's dance around his wife's charred corpse, or the image of 'the dried, shrivelled, black head of a native baby – open eyes, mouth and shaved scalp' 'bobbing, in the water' in "In The House of Suddhoo".[72]

Peachy and Daniel

In *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Tales,* Kipling compiles stories presenting 'a collection of facts that never quite explained themselves', in which "The Man Who Would be King" succeeds "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes".[73] The two stories converse, revealing a curious inability in the Anglo-Indians to be 'men' while at work – at play – as agents of the Raj.

Kipling's 'Sahib'-play is not preparation for Empire because Empire is the landscape of Bruegel's playground; the children are playing on India's unpartitioned earth. In "The Man Who Would Be King", Kipling is working in the same mode of colonial play as Robert Louis Stevenson in *Treasure Island.*[74] Bradley Deane recognises Stevenson's 'cultural influence […] to remap the imperial frontier as a self-sufficient

[69] F. Knowles, *A Kipling Primer,* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1900), p.144.
[70] "Mark of", p. 299.
[71] Ibid., p.303.
[72] Kipling, "In The House of Suddhoo" in *Plain Tales,* p.129.
[73] Kipling, *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Tales,* (Allahbad: A.H Wheeler & Co., 1890).
[74] R. L. Stevenson, *Treasure Island,* (London: Cassell, 1884).

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playground'.[75] Like Jim and Israel, the behaviour of Peachy and Daniel naturalises the violence of Expansion as an expression of boyhood. These two manboys, with their 'red beard[s]', 'sunken eyes' and 'educated taste for whiskey', behave like the Redcrosse Knight, Wee Willie Winkie or Morrowbie.[76] They ride their horses across 'our [their] Kingdom', claiming possession over the vast and barren space that is Afghanistan in the minds of Western readers (perhaps, even more so post-2001).[77]

The play of the two bearded, alcoholic manboys in this game of dominion goes horrifically wrong. Daniel does not make it past the first 'If' condition; 'the King lost his head' while 'crying like a child'.[78] Peachy comes back into the narrator's office to confess as he 'wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child'.[79] 'Like a child' realising they have broken the head off a doll, Peachy returns to the narrator's office and tumbles 'the dried withered head of Daniel Dravot' onto his table.[80] Peachy's action has an air of concession; he surrenders from play, returning to

[75] B. Deane, "Imperial Boyhood: Piracy and the Play Ethic" in *Victorian Studies,* 2011, 53(4), p.697.
[76] Kipling, "The Man Who Would Be King" in *The Phantom Rickshaw,* p. 68, 103, 66.
[77] Ibid., p. 77.
[78] Ibid., p. 108, 102.
[79] Ibid., p. 103.
[80] Ibid.

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deposit the object of destruction. There is nothing that can be done to fix the situation; it is a confession that asks for neither forgiveness nor justice. Instead, Peachy searches of some kind of safety, handing over the object of his guilt – and whatever else he is feeling for ruining his own play – to whoever is watching over him – a role that readers are implicated in as observers.

WHITE GODS

In 1975, John Huston adapted "The Man Who Would Be King" into an adventure film of the same name, starring Michael Caine as Peachy Carnehan and Sean Connery as Daniel Dravot. Here are some lines from the screenplay:

CARNEHAN: Not gods – Englishmen, which is the next best thing.[81]

CARNEHAN: NO, we aren't gods, exactly, but we are Heaven-sent…to deliver you from your enemies. [82]

CARNEHAN: We're out to conquer this country, ain't we? With you as a god it'll take half the time and trouble. [83]

Huston and Paffard, in their artistic and critical responses, are recognising an ideology of white supremacy that drives the colonial narrative within and outside of Kipling's texts. Between the collections *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *Traffics and Discoveries,* Kipling refers to the 'Sahib' as 'Heaven-born'. [84] [85] Essentialised into a state beyond- humanity, white masculinity is an ideal that can only be born into, rather than achieved or become; one must *be* white to *be* a 'man'. Mowgli kicks at dirt in Bruegel's playground, muttering the more accurate *If* – line, '*[If you can be white],* you'll be a man, my son'.

Kipling draws on the rhetoric of divine white colonial masculinity, the 'White God' myth. Prevalent since the beginning of European expansion, it can be seen in the masculinist fantasies of texts like Henry Neville's *Isle of Pines*).[86] German tracts, like Friedrich Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, manipulate modes of Hindu Vedic thinking (what Goodrick-Clarke calls 'Eastern Aryan tradition') to

[81] J. Huston, *Empire's End: John Huston's 'The Man Who Would Be King,* 1974, p. 53.
[82] Ibid., p. 54.
[83] Ibid., p. 76.
[84] Kipling, *Plain Tales,* p. 250.
[85] Kipling, *Traffics and Discoveries,* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904), p. 71.
[86] H. Neville, *The Isle of Pines,* (London: Printed by G.S. for Allen Banks, 1668).

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fashion the white 'God Man' by way of racial hierarchy. [87] [88] The myth persists through fascist writers, like James H. Madole, who establish a congruence between Nazism and Hindu Nationalism, which was gaining traction in the decades leading to Independence and Partition in 1947 and rules India through the Bharatiya Janata Party today.[89]

Kipling's 'native' or mixed children are generally understood through how he navigates the 'White God' myth. Jean Fernandez fixates on 'the curious workings of hybrid blood' within Michele D'Cruze's 'actants of mixed blood'.[90] Robert Ivermee asks, 'From where did the figure of Wali Dad derive?', seeking to place him within the 'ongoing Anglo-Indian debate over the "backwardness" of Muslim subjects'.[91] Alisha Walters determines, 'Through Kim's white body, then, Kipling reveals palimpsestic races of the emotive and tangible exchanges between white and black'.[92] While seeking to understand these not-wholly-white children through their racial makeup, these critics draw on social Darwinism to reduce them to eugenics-like terms.

The rhetoric surrounding Mowgli is especially unsettling: a 'feral' child [93], 'a throwback to pre-historic India'[94], a 'man on an upward evolutionary climb'.[95] The 'naked brown baby' that comes rolling into the Wolves' cave in "Mowgli's Brothers" is dehumanised into Carl Linnaeus' racial category, *homo feralis.*[96] [97] Mowgli's brownness enables the invasive critical search for Darwin's 'missing link' within the body of the child.

I am reminded of Trinculo in *The Tempest,* 'There would this monster make a

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[87] F. Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier.* (Heidelberg: beu Mohr und Zimmer, 1808).

[88] N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity,* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 81.

[89] K.P. & I. Hexham, "Surprising Aryan Mediations between German Indology and Nazism: Research and the Adluri/Grünendahl Debate", *International Journal of Hindu Studies,* Volume 19, p. 279.

[90] J. Fernandez, "Hybrid Narrative: The Making of Character and Narrative Authority in Rudyard Kipling's 'His Chance of Life', *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 2008, 36(2), p. 349.

[91] R. Ivermee, "Kipling, the "backward" Muslim, and the Ends of Colonial Pedagogy", *Nineteenth-Century Contexts,* 2014, 36(3), p. 253.

[92] A. Walters, "A "White boy...who is not a white boy": Rudyard Kipling's Kim, Whiteness, and British Identity", *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 2018, 46(2), p.333.

[93] K. Nagai, *Imperial Beast Fables,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020), p. 36, 90, 94.

[94] J. Hotchkiss, "The Jungle of Eden: Kipling, Wolf Boys, and the Colonial Imagination", *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 2001, 29(2), p. 441.

[95] J. Straley, "The Cure of Wild" in: *Evolution and Imagination in Victorian Children's Literature,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 119.

[96] Kipling, *All the Mowgli,* p. 11.

[97] C. Linnaeus, *The natural history of quadrupeds, including all the Linnaean class of mammalia,* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1801), p.119.

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man; any strange beast there makes a man'.[98] Mowgli morphs into a Caliban figure; if *The Jungle Play* were to be staged, one of the biggest hermeneutic complications would be the performance of his shifting states of animality. Trinculo asks, 'What have we here? A man or a fish? […] A strange fish […] legged like a man and his fins like/ arms!'.[99] Mowgli answers Caliban's cue:

'"Mowgli the Frog have I been," said he to himself. "Mowgli the Wolf have I said that I am. Now Mowgli the Ape must I be before I am Mowgli the Buck. At the end I shall be Mowgli the Man"'.[100]

The verb 'to be' takes on a Janus-like gaze here, stretched between the past and the present to thrust the child into a projected futurity. Beginning in the past assured ('have I been'), Mowgli's speech propels itself into past possibility ('have I said') and the imperative present ('must'), before landing in the future tense 'I shall be.' Mowgli exists beyond an evolutionary teleology; his body is not adapting but is unshaped and reshaped as he moves between species and across time.

The critical drive to decipher the non-whiteness of these children through 'mixed blood' and 'white body'– seeking to understand where they have 'derive[d]' from – aligns unsettlingly with Sedlmayr's gaze, watching the menacing, yet captivating, 'Primitives' at play. This becomes even more disturbing considering the dialogue between several people writing to *Notes and Queries* between September 17th and November 19th, 1910 to debate Kipling's use of the swastika in his bookplate (Swithin) (Swithin).[101] [102] [103] [104]

The most recent publication with the bookplate that I can find is from 1927:

[98] W. Shakespeare, "The Tempest" in *The First Folio,* Act 2.2.1115.
[99] Ibid., Act 2.2.1109, 1112, 1119-20.
[100] Kipling, *All the Mowgli,* p. 201.
[101] W. Crooke, "Kipling and the Swastika" in *Notes and Queries,* 17 September 1910, s11-II(38), p. 239.
[102] J. Travenor-Perry, et al., "Kipling and the Swastika" in *Notes and Queries,* 8 October 1910, s11-II(41), pp. 292-293.
[103] Scholesser Rockingham, F & W.C.B., "Kipling and the Swastika", *Notes and Queries,* 22 October 1910, S11-II(43), p. 338.
[104] S. Swithin, "Kipling and the Swastika" in *Notes and Queries,* 12 November 1910 , s11-II(46), p. 395.

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Figure 3. The Front Matter (p. v) of Ballads and Barrack Room Ballads (London: Macmillan, 1892).

The Nazis held a Nuremberg rally the same year; 'the tread of the swastika's battalions will find an echo throughout Germany!'.[105]

> The conversation in *Notes and Queries* reaches the consensus that Kipling is using (appropriating) it as the Hindu symbol of good luck and that its reversal in some editions (like in Figure 4) is a printing error. It seems that Kipling discontinues using the swastika bookplate beyond 1927, as the Nazi flag became more recognisable across Europe.
>
> While he drops the warping and dangerous *thing* that inflames the rhetoric of the 'White God' myth, it speaks to the cultural proliferation of the racial ideology that 21st-century criticism could align with Kipling's 19th-century audience. Both prioritise a reading that understands Mowgli's growth 'as he ascends from being "Mowgli the Frog" to becoming "the Master of the Jungle".[106] Jessica Straley, focusing on what Mowgli 'ascends' to, understands his journey as an evolution from animal – *rather than child* – to 'man'. By refusing to let Mowgli and his childishness *be,* she focuses on an animality to which he is predisposed through his brownness.
>
> Imposing structures onto the short stories ruins the children's play. Readers are like the 'Sahib'-narrator in "The Story of Muhammed Din", who 'trampled' on little Muhammad Din's game of 'marigold-heads, dust-bank and fragments of broken soap-dish into confusion past all hope of mending'.[107] Wandering 'unawares' through the text, fixated on the adult's supposedly real world, these critics wreck 'ruin' over the children's games.[108] I reassert the importance of *allowing* the playworld within the text. I am reminded of Vladimir Nabokov's principle, 'Ask yourself if the symbol you have detected is not your own footprint'.[109] Imposing an allegory of 'White Gods' on the texts directs Kipling's Imperial racial ideologies towards an extremism. He tried to distance himself from Nazism by abandoning and (as claimed by the Kipling Society) *defacing* the swastika printing block used by Macmillan Publishers.[110]

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[105] W. Weiß & A. Rosenberg, *Reichsparteitag der NSDAP Nürnberg 19./21, August 1927* (Göttingen: Institute for Scientific Film).
[106] J. Straley, "The Cure of Wild" in *Evolution and Imagination in Victorian Children's Literature.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.119.
[107] Kipling, "The Story of Muhammed Din" in *Plain Tales,* p. 252.
[108] Ibid., p. 252.
[109] J.A. Appel, "An Interview with Vladimir Nabokov" in *Nabokov: The Man and His Work* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 22.
[110] M. Smith & A. Wilson, *Kipling and the Swastika,* 2023.

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HOLDEN

The narrator of "Without Benefit of the Clergy" (first published in *Macmillan's Magazine,* June 1890) is not implicated into Holden's play but, instead, watches over his movement between two playworlds. He is neither committed to the life of a 'Sahib', a 'bachelor and a free man', nor to a life 'withdrawn from the world, shut in behind the wooden gate', where 'he was king in his own territory, with Ameera for queen'.[111]

"Without Benefit of the Clergy" was collected in *Two Tales by Rudyard Kipling* with "The Man Who Would be King" (1919). Positioning 'heaven born' Holden in succession to Peachy and Daniel emphasises divine white masculinity and makes its *Other* – the 'native' female body – dispensable to the colonial game.[112] Daniel desires a '"wife – a Queen; to breed a King's son for the King"'.[113] Twelve pages later, Ameera tells Holden she knows '"God will give us a son – a man-child that shall grow into a man"'.[114] The *Other* playworld of the native wife and mixed-race child, Tota, rivals that of the 'Sahib'. The colonial aspiration to be a 'White God' struggles against domestic responsibility. When he is king over his 'own Kingdom', it is not an expansive foreign land, but a world unto his own with his family. Trejago's transgression "Beyond the Pale" (1888) was a premonition of the danger that the dual-playworld poses to Holden.

The most beautiful scenes of Holden's story – and the tableau that I would ask Bruegel to paint the family within – are revealed when he is playing house, rather than playing coloniser:

"Now, for all thy years thou art a child, and shalt be picked up and carried down the stair-case."

"Tota! Have a care for Tota, my lord! Thou, at least, art as foolish as any babe!" Ameera tucked Tota out of harm's way in the hollow in her neck, and was carried downstairs, laughing, in Holden's arms, while Tota opened his eyes and smiled, after the manner of the lesser angels. [115]

Leaving the terrace after counting the stars and naming the baby, the family is bundled into the father's arms. Holden bares the green of Ameera's 'muslin', the twinkle of her ornaments, the *chanak* of her 'silver anklets' – the weight of mother and son – in his arms.[116] Readers are privy to a scene of deep intimacy; a playworld

[111] Kipling, "Without Benefit of the Clergy" in *Two Tales*, (Boston: International Pocket Library, 1919), p. 65, 77, 64.
[112] "Without Benefit", p. 70.
[113] Ibid., p. 51.
[114] Ibid., p. 63.
[115] Ibid., p. 77.
[116] Ibid., p. 72.

with a soundscape of the couple's laughter and the child who 'smiled'.[117]

Holden figures Ameera as 'a child' (and she taunts the same back). I see, in Ameera's lifted body, a ghostly palimpsestic overlay of Trejago's description of Bisesa, her 'little feet – little feet, light as marigold flowers, that could lie in the palm of one's hand'.[118] Whilst both these inter-racial romances exist within a system of Empire, patriarchy, and white supremacy, I resist readings that fold the relationship into a narrative of paternalism. Robert H. MacDonald argues:

Patriarchal superiority joins racial superiority […] [Bisesa] cannot understand that she is a plaything in a play world, and that playthings will be put away when a man comes into a man's estate.[119]

While both Trejago and Holden 'put away' the 'native' women for their 'Sahib' role, MacDonald's claim overlooks the tenderness and care that can exist within the systems of 'plaything' and play-world in the same way that grief, violence, and exploitation can.

Is the child-like native[120] a 'plaything,' or is it the failure of the English manboy's play that he cannot move beyond seeing her as one? With this, the tableau is not an establishment of white male supremacy but an emblem of a boy trying to be man enough for his family.

Holden found one helpless little hand that closed feebly on his finger. And the clutch ran through his limbs till it settled about his heart. Till then his sole thought had been for Ameera. He began to realise that there was some one else in the world […]. [121]

There is an enrapturing beauty within Holden's domestic playworld which Kipling's 'two distances' guides readerly vision across. The microscopic, the imagery of a new-born's hand around a father's 'finger' for the first time, takes possession over Holden's 'heart'. It spills past Ameera, into a cosmic image of 'the world', revealing what is now at stake within it. Holden's 'world' shifts to make space for Tota, which means that, when the child dies, it really does feel like there is a hole in the text where he should be playing. The loss of a child is understood through the

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[117] Ibid., p. 76.

[118] "Beyond the Pale" in *Two Tales*, p. 151.

[119] R.H. MacDonald, "Discourse and Ideology in Kipling's "Beyond the Pale"" in *Studies in Short Fiction,* 1986, 23(4), p. 417.

[120] Kipling's other child-like 'native' characters include: Mother Gunga (1898), the Bhils (1898), The Lama (1901), and *The White Man's Burden* (1899), with its 'new-caught sullen peoples,/Half devil and half child' (7-8). For critics on Kipling's paternalism, see D Gilmour, *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling,* (London: John Murray, 2002) and A. Bubb, "The Meaning of Things: Kipling's Formative Journey 'Home' in 1889 and the Late Victorian Imperial Tour" in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 2016, 22(3).

[121] "Without Benefit", p. 68.

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'pain' and physical effects of a bullet wound – a space where flesh is excavated of itself:

The first shock of a bullet is no more than a brisk pinch. The wrecked body does not send in its protest to the soul till ten or fifteen seconds later. Holden realised his pain slowly, exactly as he had realised his happiness, and with the same imperious necessity for hiding all trace of it.[122]

Speaking to the *If* – line, 'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster/ And treat those two imposters just the same', Holden is temperate and careful when handling 'his pain' and 'his happiness'. There's a strange relief in the bereavement,

Because finally, the moment you have been expecting, been dreading, been preparing yourself for since the day you became a parent has come.

Ah, you tell yourself, *it's arrived. Here it is.*[123]

Things mingle; Ameera's 'frail glass bangles' against 'certain heavy gold bracelets' with a 'cunning European snap,' Holden reciting 'the Mohammedan prayer' 'in earnest,' a cold sabre-hilt' for the 'clinging grip' of little hands, a bullet for emotional pain, 'the wrecked body' and 'the soul'.[124] Holden, 'considering his sorrow' after he loses Ameera too, chooses to raze evidence of that playworld from physical existence.[125] Durga Dass promises, "'It shall be pulled down […] so that no man may say where this house stood'".[126] The final line of the story obliterates the domestic playworld's existence, assimilating Holden into Trejago's story; 'a double life so wild that Trejago to-day sometimes wonders if it were not all a dream'.[127]

*

Yet another boy fails to be a 'man.' Holden puts away the wrong 'plaything'; by turning away from the family to favour his work as a 'Sahib', he chooses the wrong playworld. Adult children, unable to distinguish which 'plaything' should be dropped, which must be put away and which should always be cherished, have more than a small child's power to cause great harm. Tota dies. Ameera dies. Bisesa has her hands 'cut off at the wrists'.[128] The chance to be a 'man' is not postponed, like it is in *If* –; it is *ruined*, play is ruined, lives are ruined. This is symbolised in Trejago's partial castration; the cut 'muscles of the groin' and his subsequent limp 'for the rest of his

[122] Ibid., p. 80.
[123] H Yanagihara, *A Little Life,* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015), p. 164.
[124] "Without Benefit", p. 69-70, 72-3.
[125] Ibid., p. 92.
[126] Ibid., p. 93.
[127] "Beyond the Pale", p. 150.
[128] "Beyond the Pale", p. 152.

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days'.[129]

The wrong 'plaything' – that which is beyond the pale or against the benefit of the clergy – is not the 'native' woman but the role of a 'Sahib.' Playing coloniser, Holden and Trejago misinterpret themselves as Baden-Powell cogs in the Imperial system, as though they were not players themselves, but 'playthings' for a larger child's hand. It does not make sense to me that these men would choose the playworld that does not offer to them the 'endless delight' or the 'months of absolute happiness' that the domestic does.[130] [131]No child wants to stop playing. There was no reason to follow through on the fallacy of growing up, especially for Holden, when he was teetering on finally letting himself feel happy:

The touch of the cold sabre-hilt in his palm turned suddenly to the clinging grip of the child upstairs – the child that was his own son – and a dread of loss filled him.[132]

Tota and Muhammed Din

I imagine Tota would not stray too far from Muhammed Din, who is only four years older, on Bruegel's playground. I imagine their fathers would be watching over them, small as they are; Imam Din calls Muhammed "'a *budmash* – a big *budmash*'" [mischief-maker] and Holden calls Tota 'a "spark"'.[133] [134] Both children echo each other in their replies:

"'It is true that my name is Muhammed Din, *Tahib*, but I am not a *budmash*. I am a *man*!' .[135]

"'*Hum'park nahin hai. Hum admi hai.* (I am no spark, but a man)'".[136]

Literalising their father's words as an account of who and what they are, both children are defiant and self-defensive. The structure of both statements resemble one: outbursts of churning emotions as they refuse to be categorised and labelled as anything other than 'a man'. Whereas Ameera is determined to deliver 'a man-child

[129] Ibid., p. 153.
[130] Ibid., p. 151.
[131] "Without Benefit", p. 77
[132] Ibid.
[133] Kipling, "The Story of Muhammed Din" in *Plain Tales,* p. 251.
[134] Kipling, "Against", p. 79.
[135] "Muhammed", p. 251.
[136] "Against", p. 79.

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that shall grow into a man', it already sounds like there is an adult stuck within the small bodies of Tota and Muhammed. In these undergrown boymen, adultness holds something uncanny that 'made Holden choke' and commences the 'Sahib'-narrator's 'acquaintance with Muhammed'.[137] [138]

Whilst Morrowbie flings himself into desert sands and Peachy and Daniel cry, Tota and Muhammed can express their frustrations in a single, firm, and cutting statement. An ability to articulate their emotions and boundaries separates Muhammed and Tota from the manboys as boymen. Their lucidity is a less developed version of "Mowgli's Song and, in this way, is more realistic of what a child of their age might be able to articulate. The 'most delicate monster,' like his Shakespearean counterpart [139], speaks beautifully while others are reduced to frantic tantrums and one-line statements:

As Mang flies between the beasts and the birds, so fly I between the village and the Jungle.

Why? […]

I am two Mowglis, but the hide of Shere Khan is under my feet. All the Jungle knows that I have killed Shere Khan.
Look – look well, O Wolves!

Ahae! My heart is heavy with the things that I do not understand. [140]

This is not the kind of self-questioning that a child is likely to indulge in on their own behalf. Mowgli ages exponentially from the eleven-year-old boy we left overleaf, at the end of "Tiger! Tiger!." Is his childness ruptured by the violent play of murder? Does it take too much from him for him to still be called a child?

The song is a narratological attempt to allow and to diagnose the strangeness and self- alterity of being. The pain that Mowgli is in as he realises that he is *Other* to both the Jungle and to himself manifests in an absolute tearing of the self. 'I am two Mowglis'; it is like he is both analyst and analysand, dissociating to be able to conduct a foundational self-analysis. Morrowbie, Peachy and Daniel do not have the same mastery over language; instead, their violent impulses and passions overspill their bodies and are articulated through the potential space of play as action.

[137] Ibid., p. 70.
[138] "Against", p. 251.
[139] Shakespeare, "Tempest", Act 2.2.1178.
[140] *All the Mowgli,* p. 120.

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Mowgli's Song

Hsh! He is asleep. We will not wake him, for his strength is very great. The kites have come down to see it. The black ants have come up to know it. There is a great assembly in his honour.

Alala! I have no cloth to wrap me. The kites will see that I am naked. I am ashamed to meet all these people.

Lend me thy coat, Shere Khan. Lend me thy gay striped coat that I may go to the Council Rock.

By the Bull that bought me, I have made a promise—a little promise. Only thy coat is lacking before I keep my word.

With the knife—with the knife that men use—with the knife of the hunter, the man, I will stoop down for my gift.

Waters of the Waingunga, bear witness that Shere Khan gives me his coat for the love that he bears me. Pull, Gray Brother! Pull, Akela! Heavy is the hide of Shere Khan.

The Man-Pack are angry. They throw stones and talk child's talk. My mouth is bleeding. Let us run away.

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Figure 4. Powers' illustrations, p. 120

Perhaps, this is why Richard M. Powers' 1956 illustrations do not depict him as a child, but, instead, give him a larger manboy body:

"Mowgli's Song" is prefaced with the note: 'He Sang at the Council Rock When He Danced on Shere Khan's Hide'; Powers depicts it as a bodily display of virility as Mowgli stands in his loincloth with his dagger (and phallic extension) in hand.[141] Enacted as a performance, the song is an imagining that seeks to understand the child whilst remaining within the space of the child himself, as opposed to

[141] R.M Powers illustrations in the 1956 edition of *All the Mowgli Stories,* p. 118

translating him into something adult. Like Trejago and Holden, he has two conflicting playworlds – 'the village and the Jungle' – but part of the pain of his experience is that he is subjected to it at such a young age. Forcing him into a larger body, making him a manboy, loses the child's lament.

The only thing translative about the song is the fact that it would not have been sung in English; the narrator is mediating Mowgli's animal-speak and Indian languages for an English- speaking readership. The narrator is self-conscious of this in "The Law of the Jungle", 'Just to give you an idea of the immense variety of the Jungle Law, I have translated [some] into verse'.[142] Like "The Love Song of Har Dyal" in "Beyond the Pale", it might be 'really pretty in the Vernacular. In English you miss the wail of it'. [143]In both translated songs of pain and mourning, the clauses sit together awkwardly, with no clear rhyme to round off the lines. They remain unresolved and unsophisticated, reaching for the mythic impossibility of literal and stylistic translation.

I wonder, if Kipling were to have left the songs, 'really pretty in the Vernacular', might they resemble T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*? Kipling's 'double distance' extends to a critical understanding of what Eliot is doing; Kipling might work in his method of recognising mythological patterns to present them in their raw, untouched state, inviting readerly attention like Trejago's fascination with Bisesa's object letter. Equally (and simultaneously), he might be pulling on 'the Vernacular' or Sanskrit for the *aesthetic* of India: 'Shantih shantih shantih'.[144]

A halfway point might put language(s) together to *make* myths in a Salman Rushdie- like *chutnification*, where 'the individuality of the component parts meld into a complex mixture in which the origin[s] of single flavours are no longer distinguishable from the whole'.[145] This is working in the same world as Bruegel's 'two distances' and the paradoxical doubleness of the short story as a self-sufficient fragment. It is also speaking to Holden, Trejago and Mowgli's dual-play world with conflicting things competing for attention, to be understood and to survive.

V.

Like in *If –,* between these short stories, I cannot find an embodied paradigm of masculinity. There is no boy in the playground who *is* a 'man' to function as the exemplar of what it might look like to *be* a 'man'. None of the children have finished

[142] *All the Mowgli,* p. 91.
[143] "Beyond the Pale", p. 149-50.
[144] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land,* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1922).
[145] T. Giles, Writing and Chutnification in Rushdie's Midnight's Children. *The Explicator,* 2007, 65(3), P.185.

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playing to announce, like Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio, '"I have become a real live boy!"'.[146]

I don't know what Kipling's 'man' looks like.
Here are John Lockwood Kipling's illustrations of Mowgli, published in the Centenary edition: [147]

Figure 5. John Lockwood Kipling's illustrations on pages 113, 3, of the Jungle Books' Centenary edition

Laid 'on Bagheera's back', tending to the "Red Flower', 'skinning a ten-foot tiger alone'; the illustrations are tableaus and are detailed enough to function as a Renaissance cartoon for Bruegel. These three illustrations freeze Mowgli in the actions that define his plotline.

Unlike Powers' illustration, which resemble Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan more than Mowgli, these are not symbols of masculine strength and virility.[148] John Lockwood Kipling's Mowgli seems like he is not fully grown, as though his growth and development were stunted by his emaciated state. From the textual detail of the scars on his ankles, I imagined Mowgli as robust and full-bodied; he had enough flesh for it to be hardened by play.

Perhaps, these prismatic visualisations of a child are the consequence of

[146] C. Collodi, *Pinocchio: the adventures of a marionette,* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1904), p. 223.
[147] John Lockwood Kipling's illustrations in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books,* ed. Centenary (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 66, 111.
[148] E.R. Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes,* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1914).

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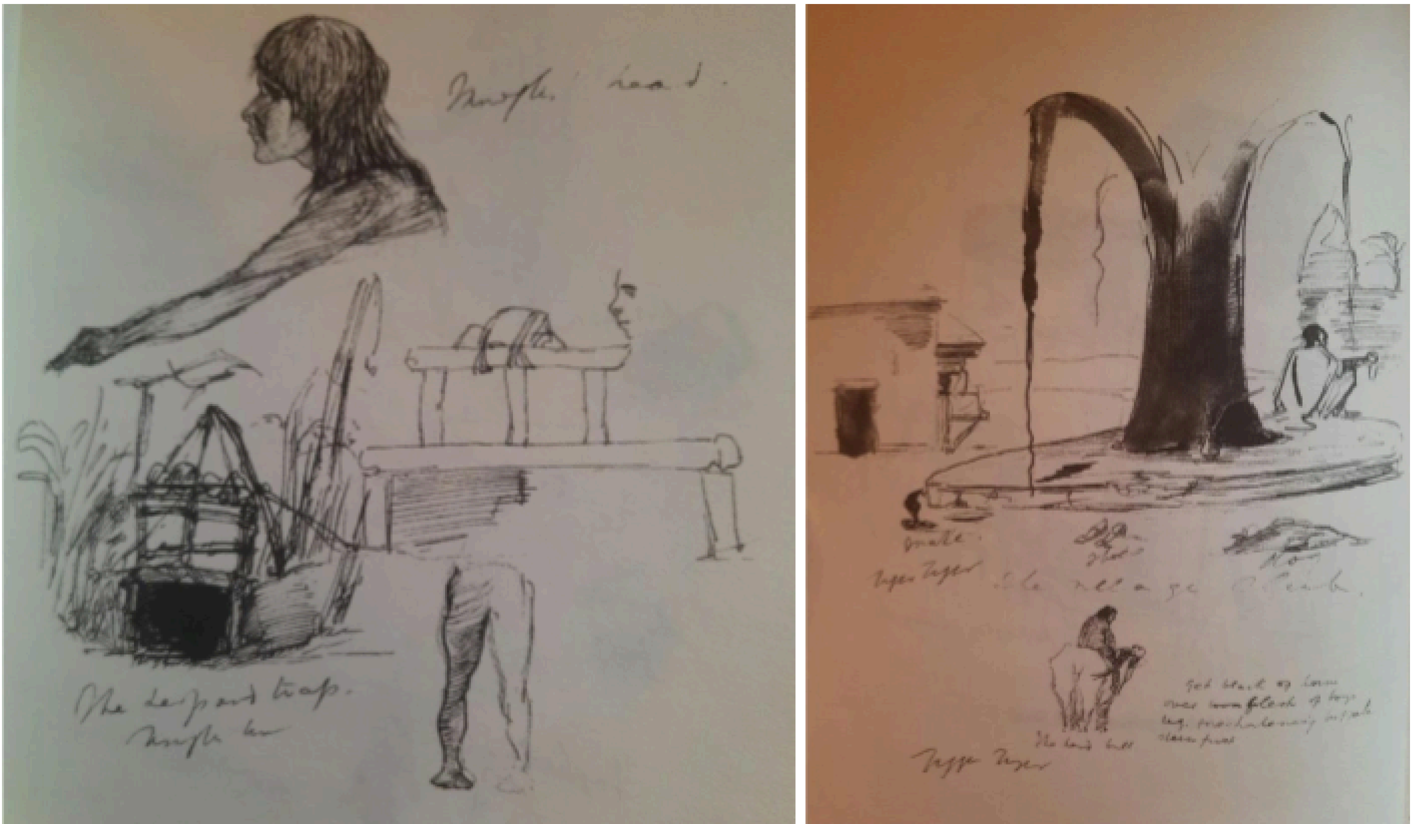
trying to still an image of the dynamic *being* of a man – that state which is held in flux by the subjunctive 'if'.

Here are Rudyard Kipling's own sketches of Mowgli in the manuscript to *The Jungle*



Play:

Figure 6. Kipling's own illustrations from The Jungle Play, p. xxxiii, xxxvii

There is something in the movement and abeyance of these sketches that speaks to the ontology of the short story form. They allow for the physicalising of the hyphen-space as things are at once shifting, captured, half-done, half-incomplete and will never be completed. There is no linguistic stasis of a 'man' in *If –,* so there is no visual, static image of Mowgli. Instead, Kipling delivers visions into moments of a changing state of masculinity that is always aspirating to be – but never becomes – a 'man'.

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