INSTRUCTION WITHIN ENTERTAINMENT: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

How and what to teach children through stories has been an ongoing topic of debate for centuries. In the nineteenth century, much of this debate was centred around teaching Christian religious practices, and connecting these practices back to moral lessons or social concerns. This thesis traces the changes in the way in which religious teachings are presented in children’s literature throughout the nineteenth century. I argue that the instructional elements of children’s literature do not become less significant over the period, but rather become implicit rather than explicit, and thus invite the implied child reader to make connections and judgements for him- or herself rather than merely accepting what the narrator is saying. I argue that norms surrounding gender, social class and empire are linked back to religious teachings, but that these links become less clear over the course of the century. I make this argument by looking first at domestic children’s fiction in the earlier part of the century by Hannah More, Mary Martha Sherwood, Charlotte Yonge and Hesba Stretton and show that earlier fiction was heavily didactic due to a lack of faith in the child reader’s ability to interpret the text, but that this fiction also went further than simplistic didacticism by creating a spiritually significant space for women in the home. I then examine fantasy novels by Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll and Anna Sewell, arguing that despite being seemingly subversive, fantasy novels do not attempt to question the social class system or the religious teachings that upheld it. The final chapter explores boys’ adventure and school fiction in the works of Thomas Hughes, R. M. Ballantyne, Robert Lewis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling, and demonstrates that the narrow forms of masculinity supported by earlier texts are questioned by later writers. All of these novels either accept or question social expectations around gender, class and empire while associating these expectations with specifically religious
teachings. Ultimately, the movement from explicit to implicit instruction in children’s literature does not signify a decreased interest in religious concerns, but only a change in the way in which religious teaching is presented.
LAY SUMMARY

Children enjoy stories, but most people don’t want to just let children read anything they like – most parents, teachers and writers worry about what sort of lessons children are taking from the stories that they are reading. This is not just a modern problem, either; in Britain in the nineteenth century, the question of what children should read was an important topic of debate. Since most people at the time believed that religious education was the most important thing a child should learn, many stories for children included religious elements. This thesis explores the different ways that authors throughout the century engaged with the question of how to teach children religious lessons through the stories that they were being told. It achieves this by examining whether those lessons were explicitly stated or implicitly suggested and how the lessons were linked to moral and social questions surrounding gender, class and empire.
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Chapter One: Introduction

“Do not hide anything from me,” Mrs. Fairchild appeals to her daughter Lucy, “I know that you have a wicked heart, and that your wicked heart will often make you unhappy when there is nothing else to make you so. Whilst you are a little child, you must tell your sins to me; and I will show you the way by which only you may hope to overcome them” (Sherwood 48). Thus begins one of the sections of Mary Martha Sherwood’s popular 1818 novel *The History of the Fairchild Family, or, the Child’s Manual: Being a Collection of Stories Calculated to Show the Importance and Effects of a Religious Education*. Fewer things could seem further away from children’s novels of the later parts of the nineteenth century such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* or Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.*, with their interest in jokes, satirical puns and foolish adventures. But does this mean that the focus on instruction, specifically religious instruction, disappears from children’s literature over the course of the nineteenth century?

I argue that there is a clear movement over the course of the century from explicit to implicit teaching in children’s fiction, but that this does not render the educational aspects of the literature less important than the entertainment value. I also argue that while the earlier works explicitly link moral lessons to religious lessons and the later works do not, this does not mean that the assumed link between the moral and the religious disappears over the course of the century; the religious is implicitly assumed to underwrite the moral. Although a number of children’s literature historians have seen the nineteenth century as the period in which mainstream children’s literature ceases to be a location where religious ideas are taught (such as Patricia Demers and Mary Thwaite), I argue that there is only a change in the ways in which moral and religious lessons are presented. The movement from explicit to implicit instruction does not represent a loss of
religious faith, or of interest in religious concerns. Instead, I argue that the works written for children in the nineteenth century provide a location where religious instruction, which begins the century as clear, explicit didacticism, gradually comes to exist in tension with a number of other social ideas as it shifts to implicit instruction. However, this change of focus does not represent a loss of religious faith or of interest in religious concerns. Rather, the confidence displayed in earlier works that constructions of gender, social class and empire can be easily linked to religious teachings is gradually lost.

The question of how religious assumptions have shaped children’s literature is an extremely important one because, as Mark Knight and Emma Mason argue, the nineteenth century was a period in which religious justification was required for almost all areas of life (Knight and Mason 9). Religious questions were raised in debates surrounding empire, race, gender, sexuality, economics, slavery, trade, education, class divisions and charitable acts. For such a society, the question of how religion was taught to the next generation was one of extreme importance. And while in some areas today this question may seem to be a less intrusive one, debates surrounding how to respond to current social issues often still include religious concerns. This thesis attempts to understand how religious world-views have been taught to children using literature in the past through examining nineteenth-century debates surrounding gender, class and the British Empire. This study may then offer insight into considering how best to understand the ways in which assumptions of religious justifications for moral standpoints are passed down to the next generation. In order to achieve this, it is also important to address critics’ assumptions surrounding the ways in which children have historically responded to such texts. Hugh Cunningham and Colin Heywood’s histories of childhood both acknowledge that childhood is a social construction that has changed over time, so I aim to move away from any assumptions surrounding how children
might react to the novels explored here and instead deal directly with the texts themselves. That is to say, I wish to focus on what the texts are attempting to teach rather than on what the child readers were actually learning.

One important context of my argument is that while there was a change in the way that religious teachings were presented, religious beliefs remained a key part of debates in a range of spheres discussed in children’s literature throughout the nineteenth century. As Knight and Mason explain, “[r]eligion was not just another aspect of the nineteenth century; it found its way into every area of life, from family to politics, sport to work, church architecture to philanthropy” (Knight and Mason 9). The issue of whether there was indeed a loss of faith during the Victorian era, at least amongst intellectuals, is an ongoing topic of debate in current scholarship; for example, Patrick Brantlinger argues that imperial ideology was a replacement for religious faith in his study *Rule of Darkness*. However, other scholars contend that regardless of whether there was a loss of faith in the Christian God, the need to engage with questions of religious concerns continued throughout the entire century. G. R. Searle confirms the significance of religious debates in his study of Victorian economics, explaining that “much of the mid-Victorian literature of protest similarly explores the links between depravity and deprivation and between sin and suffering” (Searle 3). In linking the religious question of sinfulness to economical debates, Searle implies that everything from business to politics was included in questions of how society ought to respond to social concerns, and demonstrates that these questions were framed in religious terms. John Maynard notes the prevalence of religious concerns surrounding sexuality when he acknowledges that “[i]t is rather we [in the twenty-first century] who are eccentric, even from our own Western traditions, in looking to separate sexual discussion as a secular phenomenon from their usual religious affiliations” (Maynard 3). In indicating that religious ideas have previously been linked
to sexuality, he suggests that it would in fact be strange to find a Victorian text that attempted to separate the two. Finally, as Siv Jansson points out, multiple feminist critics have recognised the religious aspects of the “angel in the house”, or of “women’s influence” and its centrality in giving the nation a high moral tone” (Jansson 32). It is thus clear that not only questions of economics and sexuality but gender as well were associated with the religious debates of the time. Therefore, a strong argument can be made that questions of class, economics, sexuality, gender roles and education were linked back to religious concerns not only in the first half of the century but throughout the Victorian period.

However, this is not to say that there was no uncertainty surrounding religious beliefs in the nineteenth century at all. While the above discussion indicates that questions of gender, class and empire were often linked to religious beliefs, the children’s novels discussed here demonstrate an increasing awareness of the complexities of class and gender concerns as the works move away from presenting a simplistic construction of class, femininity and masculinity. As these constructions become more nuanced, so does the way in which religious debates are discussed alongside them. For example, in domestic children’s fiction there is a move away from presenting parents (particularly fathers) as infallible rulers in works such as Sherwood’s fiction, to having a father character who is uncertain and frequently fails in his mentorship in novels like Charlotte Yonge’s The Daisy Chain; or, Aspirations. Later on, there is also an increased confusion over gender dynamics as the ideal of feminine spirituality upheld by Hannah More and the early Evangelical writers is either ridiculed (as in Carroll’s writings) or found by the writers of boys’ fiction to be an obstacle to creating spiritually centred male characters, resulting in authors such as Thomas Hughes having to find ways in which to render spirituality masculine again.
I argue that linking religious teachings to social constructions is not limited to constructions of gender, but also applies to constructions of class. The nineteenth century was the period on which the newly expanding middle classes created a confident self-identity. The fantasy novels explored in the second chapter demonstrate the prevalence of constructions of middle-class ideologies. Both *The Water-Babies* and *Black Beauty* focus on ways in which the middle class owes a duty of care to the working classes, and both novels emphasise that these duties are not only moral, but also religious. *Wonderland* questions the forms of middle-class moral and religious teachings, mostly by mocking the earlier moralist authors, but does not question class structures themselves. In fact, through allegory these structures are linked back to religious teachings. Whatever else the new fantasy genre may have been attempting to destabilise, the religious roots of constructions of class ideologies are not questioned.

I also argue that there is a movement in children’s literature away from directly depicting non-white characters in order to avoid moral and religious debates surrounding the Empire. The earlier adventure story, R. M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, represents colonised characters, but the later works, Robert Lewis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and Kipling’s *Stalky and Co.*, avoid directly dealing with colonised subjects. By viewing the non-white characters through the eyes of the European characters without any direct interaction, the focus of the texts is firmly on the white characters, with any discussion of non-white characters merely existing to reveal aspects of the white characters and their superiority. The end of the nineteenth century is generally recognised as being the period when confidence in the Empire was at its height, and by concentrating solely on white characters these later novels can engage with problems of constructions of masculinity without questioning white superiority or the moral and religious justifications that had been given from the beginning for expanding the British Empire. I argue that the tension surrounding issues
of the Empire and the “rights” of the white man fade into the background of these texts in favour of concentrating solely on the white characters. This does not mean that these questions are not still very much present in the text; rather, the questions are more strongly present precisely because they are not being directly discussed. Instead, the difficulties in linking ideas of white racial superiority directly to clear theological arguments gradually increase as direct discussion of the topic decreases, meaning that explicit religious instruction fades out of boys’ fiction even if religious belief itself continues to exist implicitly within the texts.

Alongside this movement away from certainty in religious justifications for constructions of gender, class and empire is the movement from teaching explicit to implicit lessons in children’s literature. The first influential critic of children’s literature, F. J. H. Darton, begins by defining children’s books as “printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good” and lists a number of genres including “moral and didactic treatises” that do not comply with this idea of children’s books (Darton 1). Darton allows only a few of these works to be “mentioned because they purposely gave much latitude to amusement, or because they contained elements which have passed into a less austere legacy” (Darton 1). Thus from the very beginning of the study of children’s literature a sharp line is drawn between those works designed to teach children (works that, according to Darton, do not fit into the category of children’s books at all) and works designed primarily to amuse children. The idea that teaching and entertaining are two distinct purposes of children’s literature has remained a prominent theme in children’s literature criticism ever since Darton first published his study in 1932.

Most historians of children’s literature agree with Darton that there was a movement away from a focus on education and towards a focus on entertainment, and that this change happened
relatively quickly in the nineteenth century. Mary Thwaite, for example, proclaims the nineteenth century to be of great significance for the development of children’s literature because it was at this point that “[t]he child, at last, was put at the centre, and his need to wonder and laugh and dream and to live in a world of his own making was recognised” (Thwaite 82). Not only will I question whether this assertion is correct in terms of whether there really is a sudden change in children’s literature, I also question Thwaite’s claim because it assumes that childhood is a constant, unchanging thing that needed to be discovered and correctly catered to (an argument strongly refuted by childhood historians Hugh Cunningham and Colin Heywood). Regardless of the questionable foundation of Thwaite’s claim however, her insistence that there was a sudden change of focus in children’s literature found favour with other later critics. Patricia Demers’s anthology From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children’s Literature to 1850 proclaims in its very title her conviction that such a shift, a move from “instruction” (texts with a primary focus on education) to “delight” (texts with a focus on entertaining) did take place. The title of the final chapter, “Harbingers of the Golden Age,” clearly indicates that Demers believes that this change took place in the two decades immediately after 1850, where the anthology stops. Her comment that the earlier instructive tales “appealed to well-intentioned adults” rather than to children and that “[t]hey [the child readers], poor lambs, were conditioned to accept and profit by such gifts” demonstrates that even in more recent critical works, modern assumptions surrounding childhood and literary value colour perceptions of the history of children’s literature (Demers, Instruction to Delight 144).

However, Demers does temper this black and white division between superior “delightful” children’s literature and inferior “instructional” children’s literature in her critical work Heaven Upon Earth: The Form of Moral and Religious Children’s Literature, to 1850 when she
acknowledges in the conclusion that even though entertainment may be one aim, the desire to instruct is present throughout all children’s literature. Similarly, Mary Jackson asserts in her preface that the lessons taught in children’s literature “reflect the nearly universal assumption that children were resources to be molded or engineered to specifications determined by a prevailing standard” and therefore, she argues that it is safe to assume that lessons will continue to be taught in children’s literature for as long as adults believe that children can be educated (Jackson xi). Jackson also focusses on the educational theories of Rousseau, Locke and the Evangelicals. She argues that Locke’s theory (which states that children are unformed at birth and need adults and experiences to form their education and personality), Rousseau’s idea of the innocent child (who will be tainted by the world as the child grows older) and the Evangelical image of the inherently evil child with original sin were the greatest influences on children’s literature in this period. In making this argument, she recognises the influence that these ideas have had on the ways in which instruction is presented in children’s literature. I argue that while Jackson is correct that instruction remains present in children’s literature, even so there is a movement away from explicit towards implicit instruction. Elements of instruction are as present in works such as Treasure Island as they were in More’s stories, but have moved below the surface of the text.

The shift from explicit to implicit teachings is, I suggest, inextricably linked to the changing role of the narrator. Fears surrounding being misinterpreted led the moralists and other early authors of children’s fiction to concentrate on firmly establishing the moral lessons of the stories as well as the religious foundations of these morals. However, over the course of the century the child reader was increasingly trusted to be able to correctly interpret the events of the story for him- or herself. As a result, the tone of the narratorial voice changed considerably. The first part of this change is in the narrator stating the moral but leaving the theological basis for the moral
lessons to be implicitly understood, and the second part of this change occurs when not only the religious foundations of the morals but the moral lessons themselves are left beneath the surface text, to be recognised without the narrator providing explicit direction to the reader.\textsuperscript{1} The connection of the moral to the religious did not disappear; as Searle, Knight and Mason point out, religious questions permeated every aspect of life to such an extent that it would have been almost unthinkable to attempt to provide moral instruction, even implicitly, separate from its religious foundation. Instead, it is left to the child reader to make the connections between the two for him- or herself, something that the moral writers at the beginning of the century would have refused to do out of a fear of being misinterpreted or misunderstood.

I will present this argument in three chapters, each of which will focus on a different part of the century and a different genre of fiction. Chapter one concerns domesticity and the role of the woman in the home. I examine narratives by four authors: More’s short stories “A Cure for Melancholy: Showing the Way to do Much Good with Little Money” and “Tawney Rachel; or, the Fortune Teller: with Some Account of Dreams, Omens, and Conjurers”; Sherwood’s \textit{The History of the Fairchild Family}; Yonge’s \textit{The Daisy Chain; or, Aspirations}; and Hesba Stretton’s \textit{Jessica’s First Prayer}. I will focus my study on the novel form, as the nineteenth century is often seen as the century of the novel, but I begin with More’s short stories because they were so influential. More and Sherwood help to establish the feminine role as a spiritual one, and later Evangelical writers continue this trend. I argue that there is movement over this first half of the century in the way that the relationship between parent and child is represented. I also argue that some concerns, specifically surrounding female ambition, continue to be a focus for writers of the domestic tale even into the 1860s. I will also explore the beginnings of the change in the role of the narrator

\textsuperscript{1} The correct gender to assign the child reader shifts depending on the genre of works under discussion. Therefore, the child reader is referred to as “she” in chapter one, as “he” in chapter three and as “he or she” in chapter two.
from explicitly establishing both the moral lessons and their religious basis to commenting on the events of the story in less detail and assuming that the moral lessons and the religious lessons can be correctly put together by the child reader.

Chapter two concentrates on the rise of fantasy and questions of social class, contending that despite appearing to break completely from social norms, fantasy fiction in fact reinforced class divisions. I will focus my examination on three primary texts: Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies*; Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*; and Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*. I argue that religious imagery and teachings are used throughout all three of the novels explored and the moral lessons associated with these images are centred on expressing a middle-class ideology. The role of the narrator continues to evolve, from an intrusive narrator to a narrator who deliberately refuses to comment on events. The shift in the narratorial voice begins the movement away from explicitly stating religious lessons to leaving them to be implicitly understood.

Chapter three follows the developments of school and adventure fiction and concentrates primarily on the attempts made to link masculinity, imperial rule and spirituality together. I argue that constructions of masculinity were increasingly destabilised even as the ideologies of empire were not. I contend that the movement from explicit to implicit instruction is completed at the end of the century when the moral lessons are implicitly indicated within the text, and those moral lessons are in turn implicitly grounded in religious teachings. I examine four texts: Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island; a Tale of the Pacific Ocean*; Hughes’s *Tom Brown’s School Days: by an Old Boy*, Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*; and Kipling’s *Stalky & Co*. I argue that the attempt to connect a clearly defined construction of masculinity to imperial rule and to spirituality was more successful in the earlier works of Hughes and Ballantyne. In Stevenson and Kipling’s fiction there is far less certainty that the types of masculinity advocated by earlier authors were the most suited
for empire builders. However, these texts do not question the superiority of the British Empire itself even if a different sort of masculine leadership may be needed within it. It is notable that *Stalky & Co.* is a relatively atypical example of Kipling’s fiction, not because it questions British superiority and the might of the British Empire (it emphatically does not) but because it seems to be questioning traditional ideas of masculinity and of military power structures through the failures of the teachers and the intelligence of the schoolboys. A general movement towards either first person or unintrusive narrators means that the moral and religious implications of the novels are left entirely for the implied child reader to interpret for himself, thus completing the movement from explicit to implicit instruction. In the end, I suggest, religious teachings do not go missing, but merely move below the surface of the text.
Chapter Two: Religion, Domesticity and Femininity

Domestic children’s fiction at the beginning of the nineteenth century simply and overtly connects religious teachings to moral lessons and social norms in a way that later novels fail to achieve. The genre itself is almost defined by its desire to teach religious ideas and developments later in the century either continue this trend or react against it. When considering domestic fiction for children in the nineteenth century, the most immediately apparent note to make is that as a genre it remains unchanged by arguments counter to its ideological mission (that is, the desire to teach children religious and moral lessons through literature) for far longer and more successfully than any of the other genres explored here. There are several reasons for this stability, the most compelling of which is that domestic fiction was already being written in the first half of the century, before school fiction for boys or adventure novels were popularised. In other words, the genre simply has a longer lifespan than other forms of children’s fiction, with a number of significant domestic fiction novels for children being published before 1860. However, most of these novels have now fallen out of the canon, primarily because many of the major names in the genre were Evangelical woman writers, who are now so completely out of step with ideas of how society should be ordered and function that most of these authors have since been all but forgotten, despite their extreme popularity at the time of writing.

This is not, of course, to claim that they have been entirely neglected by critics. Lisa Wood, Elisabeth Jay and Valentine Cunningham, to name just a few, have produced critical works focussing entirely on Evangelical writings. However, as Jay points out, the main concern of authors, readers and reviewers of Evangelical fiction was not how elegant the writing was, but rather how dependable the theology of the work was; their novels “tended to receive close doctrinal scrutiny and little aesthetic appreciation in the Evangelical newspapers” (Jay 204). The religious
teachings of the novels were far more important than their success as art forms, which explains why these writers are no longer read except by specialists, nor are they included amongst the ranks of authors of the period who are praised by literary historians for the quality of their writing. This neglect continues in spite of the fact that, as discussed in the introduction, to claim that any author in this period was writing without consideration of religious concerns would be extremely difficult, so in many ways the Evangelical novelists simply foregrounded anxieties that were widely shared and connected these questions to religious teachings. As Robert Lee Wolff puts it, “of all the subjects that interested Victorians, and therefore preoccupied their novelists, none – not love, or crime, or war, or sport, or ancestry, or even money – held their attention as much as religion. And of all subjects none is more obscure to the modern reader” (1-2). It is little surprise that fiction which advocated ideas that are often unappealing or incomprehensible to modern readers should find less favour than those by more immediately recognisable names such as the Brontës or Eliot, despite the fact that these writers also dealt with similar questions, because the Evangelicals tended to foreground religious teachings when they wrote about social concerns.

It is also important to recognise the complexity of the term “Evangelical” when applying it to the movement within English Christianity in this period. Jay recognises a clear split between Anglican Evangelicals and Dissenter Evangelicals, but insists that this division was more social than doctrinal, stating that “[m]any of the novelists with whom I am concerned were ill at ease in the realms of doctrinal debate but were perfectly capable of distinguishing between Evangelicalism and Dissent in social terms” (Jay 26). Jay’s assertion makes it clear that there were Evangelical Christians across denominations, but that there were differences in their perceived respectability (with the Anglican Evangelicals being steady members of the middle class and Dissenter Evangelicals being more likely to be working class). However, the line between them was not
firmly unbreakable; Cunningham argues that “[f]or Evangelical Anglicans, Dissent was more tolerable than Broad or High Churches if access to an Evangelical Anglican Church was impossible. Evangelical Dissenters (the majority in this period) shared many attitudes and theological assumptions with their Anglican counterparts, and people like the Ruskins could fit theologically, if not socially, into Dissenting pews” (Cunningham 107). Once again, the emphasis is on the differences between the Evangelical groups being a social divide; their doctrines agreed with one another, to the point where it was better to abandon the Church of England in favour of, for example, a Methodist Church, if the local Anglican Church did not offer Evangelical teaching. With all of this being considered, it is therefore possible to collect all of the authors discussed in this chapter under the banner of “Evangelical,” even if they were members of different denominations of the Church; their doctrinal teachings agreed with each other, even if their social circles were in contrast.

The main argument of this chapter is that all of the texts discussed here grapple with defining and creating a significant place for women within the family and the ways in which the representations of childhood and motherhood evolved. I argue that the ways in which the constructions of the roles of parent and child are linked to religious beliefs changes over the first half of the century. I also argue that these teachings begin as extremely didactic and gradually move to a less intrusive form of commentary – the teachings are still explicit, but less emphatically so. In order to make this argument, the chapter concentrates on the creation and maintenance of emerging middle-class ideologies of gender and domesticity, rather than on the realities of being female in the nineteenth century, meaning that of necessity the definitions of femininity and womanhood being explored are narrow and essentialist.
I argue that the concentration throughout the first half of the century is on creating a spiritually and morally significant role for women, as seen in Hannah More’s short stories “A Cure for Melancholia: Showing the Way to do Much Good with Little Money” and “Tawney Rachel; or, the Fortune Teller: with Some Account of Dreams, Omens, and Conjurers” and in Mary Martha Sherwood’s novel *The History of the Fairchild Family or, the Child’s Manual: Being a Collection of Stories Calculated to Show the Importance and Effects of a Religious Education* (1818). Parent characters are gradually allowed to be less perfect, as first seen through the father character in Charlotte Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain; or, Aspirations* (1856). I will then show that the idea of original sin, so prominent in the first couple of decades of the 1800s, gradually fades out of focus in favour of more Romanticised child characters in Hesba Stretton’s novel *Jessica’s First Prayer* (1869). The move towards a Romantic depiction of childhood does result in a more sympathetic portrayal of child characters, but also means that the characters lose their individuality. As well as this change, I argue that the religious lessons move from being primarily taught by the narrator to being a discussion amongst the characters that the narrator facilitates. This change means that by the middle of the century the child reader is to a certain degree allowed to work out which character’s stance on religious questions is the most valid for herself rather than receiving explicit instruction from an intrusive narrator. In the end, however, Evangelical domestic fiction remains essentially conservative, concentrating on an arguably empowering but basically restrictive role for women and girls within the home, a depiction of femininity that had far-reaching and long lasting effects on middle-class ideology.

Before discussing these ideas, however, it is important to take a moment to examine the pivotal role that More played in laying down the roots of the genre. Including More in a thesis focussed on novels for children in the nineteenth century may seem odd, as much of her writing
was before 1800 and the works explored here are her short stories, not her novels. However, More had such an extensive influence on other Evangelical writers and the domestic tale that it would be imprudent to exclude her from this discussion. More is credited with helping to construct the idea of the woman as a spiritual guide for the family. According to Eileen Cleere, “[a]t the beginning of the century, both Maria Edgeworth and More were noting the shifted focus of conduct materials . . . a shift they interpreted as the end of an era of ‘useful’ female occupations and the beginning of a modern era concerned only with female display” (Cleere 44). The fear of women becoming merely ornamental drove a desire to create a place in which women would be “useful,” and so More’s fiction often focuses on the importance of the duties around the home and the intrinsic value of the mother as guide and spiritual protector. Her works concentrate on teaching middle-class ideologies to the working classes, but she ensures that these ideologies were ones in which the women had a clearly defined God-given purpose. She was so successful in creating this role, in fact, that as Claire Grogan argues, “[s]ome modern critics’ attempts not only credit the works of Wollstonecraft and More with a similar feminist agenda but even assert that More’s works are more stridently feminist than Wollstonecraft’s” (Grogan 100).2 While Grogan’s main argument is that to see More as a feminist who is “similar” to Wollstonecraft is extremely restrictive, the fact that some critics have attempted to do so demonstrates the influence that More had on carving out a “useful” place for women that was significant and purposeful. And even if, as Grogan points out, these are only “modifications within the existing patriarchal structure,” More’s “endeavours to implement changes that invest the domestic sphere with moral worth” do provide an admittedly narrow realm in which women have some allotted power and influence

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2 Grogan quotes two critics advocating for this reading of More’s works: Gerald Newman, who claims that “More did more to subvert the established order than to uphold it” and Mitzi Myers, who believes that “More was a female crusader infinitely more successful than Wollstonecraft or any other competitor” (Newman, qtd in Grogan 100; Myers, qtd. in Grogan 100).
(Grogan 100). In fact, it is More’s very distrust of “any reading material that suggests a female is superfluous and has no real social influence” that leads her to write tales that do not “teach the female reader that mental imbecility is attractive to males and that everything should be performed in relation to males and the desire to please them” (Grogan 100, 107). As Linda Claridge Middup explains, “spiritual and intellectual enlightenment is an empowering condition which privileges the predominantly feminine (and Christ-like) qualities of compassion, modesty, humility and virtue” (Middup 9). Hence, through More and the later domestic fiction writers, spirituality comes to be seen as a feminine ideal, an area in which women are expected to act as guides.

More’s desire to achieve an association between femininity and Christ-like attributes was shared by the other moral tale writers, including Sherwood. Sherwood was producing works during the same period as More, although The Fairchild Family was first published after More’s cheap repository tracts. Sherwood also, according to Middup, focussed on creating “a strongly religious view of the truly feminine woman as the natural disciple of Christ” (Middup 12). If this was Sherwood’s main focus, she is less successful than More because Mr. Fairchild and Henry tend to dominate the more active parts of the narrative that are concentrated on giving religious justification for moral judgements. Even so, the attempt to include Mrs. Fairchild and her daughters in spiritual matters is clear. Ultimately, then, the greatest achievement of the Evangelical domestic fiction authors was creating an association between femininity and Christ-like behaviour, even to the point where later writers of boys’ fiction struggled to undo the effects of this connection enough to allow their characters to be both spiritual and masculine (a point I will argue in chapter 3). In any case, the desire within Evangelical writings to have a place for women that has purpose, meaning and spiritual significance is conceived in More’s writings; the later Evangelical authors
merely take up and refine this desire in their own works, and as such do not need to use such explicit references to religious teachings as More and Sherwood do.

The desire to link femininity and spirituality that More, Sherwood and the other moral writers had can be seen throughout the novels in the rest of the nineteenth century, and the beginnings of its effects are evident in Yonge’s novel *The Daisy Chain*. At one point, one of the younger brothers, Tom, protests against prayer and spiritual duties as being unfit for boys because they are “girl’s work!” (Yonge 305). Tom’s argument is immediately refuted by both his father and his elder brother, but the mere fact that a counter-argument to such a belief has to be discussed indicates the prevalence of the association of faith and spirituality with women. The trend towards focussing spiritual matters on the women of the household is evident even in this relatively early novel; while Norman, Tom and the other boys study pre-Christian classics, the girls are focussed on teaching the poorer children of the district “to be Christians” (Yonge 26) and on other religiously-motivated charitable works. In fact, June Sturrock asserts, “[t]he narrator establishes Ethel’s superiority as a feminine ideal not only through her central familial role and her father’s preference but also through her achievements in ‘Christianizing’ [sic] Cocksmoor” (Sturrock 40). If Ethel is established as a feminine ideal through her religious good works (even if these works are later curbed to keep her concentrated on the family), then Tom and the other male characters must to some extent be isolated from these very works lest they lose their masculinity. In essence, by the time that Yonge is writing the idea that spirituality and femininity are intertwined is firmly established, meaning that Yonge can assume that her implied reader understands that the two are linked together without having to repeatedly explicitly state it.

Stretton’s novel continues to build on the same principle of spirituality being connected to femininity, although by the middle of the century this idea has become so dominant that in 1869 it
does not need to be purposefully stated. In fact, Jessica as a girl character becomes the logical choice for a spiritual guide, as opposed to presenting the story with a boy protagonist instead. Jessica’s innocence is one that as a female character she can be permitted to maintain into adulthood. A male character would eventually have to cast such innocence aside in order to take a place in the male world of business and commerce, and move out to establish his own family. Such an expectation for her future is not placed on Jessica. When Elaine Lomax asserts that “religious metaphors underpin constructions of morality, femininity and respectability,” she is recognising the same phenomenon (Lomax n.p.). Jessica is only successful as an idealised “street waif” because she is a girl and therefore in need of protection, where an ideal male character would be able to take an active role in getting himself out of poverty without outside help. She creates a stark contrast with her mother, who fails to fulfil her maternal role, and in the end Jessica becomes almost a pseudo-mother figure to Daniel, completing the womanly duties of keeping his place neat and tidy and generally creating the feminine atmosphere that was thought to turn a house into a home. If a male waif character had been presented as achieving the same thing to such a standard, the results would have been temporary at best and would have had to disappear as he grew into manhood and started to aspire to a wife and family of his own. Jessica, by contrast, is assumed to be a permanent fixture in the life of the minister after Daniel’s death. None of these assumptions need to be explicitly stated; it is implicitly assumed that the implied reader will understand them. Thus the process begun by More and Sherwood and continued by Yonge is completed in Stretton; spirituality and femininity are intertwined with one another, creating an admittedly restrictive place exclusively for women to be useful and to have purpose.

Having established that femininity and spirituality are implicitly linked by the mid-nineteenth century, then, it becomes necessary to examine the changes in the representation of the
relationship between parent and child. Domestic fiction by its very definition is focussed on the family and the home, and expected its female readership, first through explicit moments of instruction and later implicitly, to understand that they too should aspire to be centred in the home and family life. As such, the changing understanding of how parents and children should relate to one another was of central importance to the genre and to its ideological impact on the future wives and mothers reading these works. Writing near the beginning of the century, Sherwood’s approach is to insist that parents are perfect and unquestionable authorities and that children must be rescued from the naturally fallen state that they are born into, in line with the strong belief in original sin adhered to by the Evangelicals. Mr. Fairchild asserts to his son that “I stand in the place of God to you, whilst you are a child” (Sherwood 260). This approach to parenting reflects anxieties over child mortality and the fact that the doctrine of original sin taught that without guidance, children would suffer in hell. As Brendan A. Rapple explains, “the nature of the child, Mrs. Sherwood was convinced, was thoroughly depraved by original sin” (Rapple 251). As such, the parent characters deal with the child characters in a very heavy handed way, in an attempt to save their souls from eternal punishment. This oppressive sort of education is a result of the extreme pressure and responsibility that this belief places on the parents. If a child dies without their parents having taught them how to pray and understand the bible, it is essentially then the parent’s fault that the child suffers eternally in hell. The parent characters therefore have to be perfect (or at least Sherwood wanted her implied reader to understand that they were supposed to be perfect) in order for the child characters to have any chance at redemption. Thus, it is a display of Mr. Fairchild’s anxious love for his children that he insists on total obedience and on being regarded as standing in the place of God to them.
However, while the “Fairchild method” of upbringing would have been accessible to the wealthier neighbouring family of the Nobles, to suggest that Sherwood is insisting that one single form of education would work for all children would not be correct. According to Middup, “[t]he narrator implies that if [the Noble parents] had followed the Fairchild method of moral upbringing and religious education, Augusta could so easily have lived up to her noble name” (Middup 8). But Mrs. Fairchild asserts that everyone has their own “besetting sin,” allowing each child their own individual character and identity, even if it is only in the form of the evil that they are most tempted to (Sherwood 224). This approach to understanding children contradicts the other major child rearing theories of the day, which assumed either that children could be made into whatever adults wanted them to be (as Locke theorises) or that they were innately innocent in a way that looked almost identical across the board (the Romantic child, which grew out of Rousseau's educational theories). In contrast to these two ways of viewing childhood, the Evangelical insistence on the importance of original sin was actually the only system that allowed children their own individual characters and needs. If each child has their own form of temptation due to their God-given natural personalities, it does not make sense to suggest, as Middup does, that Sherwood believes that the same education and upbringing would work for anyone. Indeed, the opposite seems to be true, for while Mrs. Fairchild encourages her ambitious daughter to keep a diary of her evil thoughts in the hope that this will prevent the bad thoughts from turning into bad actions, she does not require her other daughter or her son to do the same. Instead, acting in the role of the ideal mother guide, she tailors her methods by teaching specifically to the needs of each individual child. The real contrast with the Noble family is that Augusta does not have the close, direct attention of her mother to her religious education and therefore suffers from the lack of individualised care that a successful mother and spiritual guide should have provided for her. Mrs.
Fairchild’s cautions against her daughter’s aspirations serve not only as a warning against ambition but also as an example of how a mother should be able to respond to each child’s needs and successfully correct their children’s attitudes. In other words, Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild are presented as the supposedly perfect parents that their children can then trust to respond correctly to their individual needs (and “sins”) in a way that allows them to grow and learn successfully.

In Yonge’s novel, this approach to portraying parents as perfect guides for their children begins to change. The children are still in need of guidance and education, and the dead mother figure is set up as the perfect ideal that all of the girl characters must aim to emulate, but their father Dr. May, who as the father of the family would have been presented as infallible and untouchable in Sherwood’s earlier works, is allowed to have faults. At one point, the narrator comments that “although he knew it was bad for Margaret to manifest his displeasure, he could not restrain it, and continued to blame Ethel with enough of injustice to set her on vindication . . . Dr. May soon found out that [Margaret] had a headache, of which he knew he was at least as guilty as Etheldred could be” (Yonge 68). Such an admission would simply have been impossible in Sherwood’s writing. However, by the 1850s, depictions of father-figures, if not mothers, had changed somewhat. This was in a great part due to changes in attitudes to family over the first half of the century, as Valerie Sanders acknowledges: “it became harder as the century wore on to preserve an un tarnished … notion of men’s virtues, while the domestic setting of the novel between 1850 and 1870 brought the daily failings of husbands and lovers more closely under the microscope” (qtd. in Bradstock 80). In other words, it was no longer possible by the middle of the century to portray supposedly “perfect” father characters.

Dr. May is also allowed to be imperfect because his wife, and later Margaret, act as the perfect guide to his children and him when he is in the wrong. His first clumsy attempt to take up
the mantle of religious teacher demonstrates the difficulty with which he fills the role, and he admits his own inadequacy by pleading with Norman that “only One can comfort you truly; but you must not turn from me; you must let me do what I can for you, though it is not the same” (Yonge 108), a statement that would have been unthinkable for Mr. Fairchild to make, given his insistence that he stands in the “place of God” to his own children (Sherwood 48). Essentially, in allowing the women to take on a greater spiritual significance, the father characters can then be permitted to be imperfect. However, in order for her father to be fallible, Ethel must accept her role within the family as the most important one that she has, certainly beyond her own ambition in learning but also above her charitable concerns as well. The father figure can be imperfect because the mother figure is infallible.

The great exception to the trend in earlier domestic fiction of refusing to allow the mother character to be anything less than perfect is More’s writing. Even though her short stories were produced before Sherwood’s The Fairchild Family, Rachel in “Tawney Rachel” is the antithesis of the ideal mother character. She exists as a negative exemplar, an example of how ideal working class mothers are not supposed to behave. In other words, everything that Rachel does is a clear lesson in how women and mothers in particular should not act. This is permitted because Rachel is working class and thus effectively other to the middle class readers that More wished to appease. The story therefore creates the perfect warning against working class women acting in such a way. It is notable that class concerns are apparent in domestic fiction, and while this is in part due to More’s influence again and in part due to the middle class preoccupation with women doing charitable works, it was also because warnings against ambition applied equally to women and the working classes, and because domestic fiction was really the place in which new class distinctions were being defined and disseminated in the period.
Both of More’s short stories here make use of both the extremes of good and evil female characters in the two stories, “A Cure for Melancholy” and “Tawney Rachel”. Oddly, in the first of these the criticism seems to be that Mrs. Jones lacks any ambition, not that she has too much of it, although of course this is only in reference to the right kind of ambition. Mrs. Jones, a character who is possibly a reflection of More’s own activism, is only allowed to spend so much of her time and energy on charitable works because she has no family. Unable to give money and with so much time on her hands due to her husband’s death and having no children, she is in the perfect position to concentrate on activist work in her community with a degree of focus that surely would have been greatly reprimanded if, like Ethel, she had had children and a husband to care for. As always, the main focus of this activism is saving souls, not bodies, but More makes it clear that this does not mean that worldly wants should be neglected, first through the clergyman — “[t]o those who would undervalue works of mercy as evidences of pity, I would suggest a serious attention to the solemn appeal which the Saviour of the world makes” — and then through Mrs. Jones’s success; “the kindness she showed to their bodily wants gave her such an access to their houses and hearts, as made them better disposed to receive religious counsel and instruction” (More 168, 168-69). The purpose of the social activism is to make the working classes more open to religious conversion, and as a single woman Mrs. Jones is able to spend time on activism without jeopardising her family life.

By contrast, Rachel has a family, but they are only briefly mentioned in the story, and the reader would not even be aware of any of her children’s names if they had not read the prequel, “Black Giles,” first. Rachel’s main evil lies in tricking her neighbours with supposed fortune telling, which More cautions “is sinful, because it is prying into that futurity which God, in mercy as well as wisdom, hides from men . . . It is indeed charging God with folly” (More 133). She also
states that you must “[n]ever believe that God conceals his will from a sober Christian who obeys his laws, and reveals it to a vagabond gypsy who runs up and down breaking the laws both of God and man. King Saul never consulted the witch till he had left off serving God” (More 133). This is clearly a warning directed primarily towards women, as it is a woman who is the fortune-teller and the only characters duped by Rachel are women. Fear over fate is, according to More, “a common cant with poor deluded girls who are not aware that they themselves make their fate by their folly, and then complain there is no resisting it” (More 129, italics added); that is, it is clear that More feels strongly that being tricked in such ways is a “folly” that women are far more likely to commit than men. In the end, the male characters (the husband of one woman and the curate) put a stop to Rachel’s activities and have her transported. Thus, Rachel is physically removed from the children for whom she ought to have acted as teacher and guide, and any possibility of Rachel’s redemption as a mother is removed (a particularly poignant act given her biblical namesake). She therefore acts as a warning against slovenliness and dishonesty in the working classes while simultaneously existing as an example of poor mothering and a lack of good femininity, meaning that the evils associated with both the lower classes and girls are demonstrated in her character.

Outside of acting as negative exemplars of how a mother should not behave, it is not until Stretton’s novels in the 1860s, and Jessica’s First Prayer in particular, that the mother character is allowed to be imperfect. Jessica’s mother is allowed to fail in her maternal role partly because like Rachel she is a working class character, but to a greater extent because she exists primarily as a hurdle or a test for Daniel’s faith and Jessica’s mothering abilities rather than as a character in her own right. In other words, where in “Tawney Rachel” the focus of the narrative is on Rachel’s failure as a mother, in Jessica’s First Prayer the focus is on how Daniel and Jessica respond to Jessica’s mother. She exists only as a plot device, not as a lesson in and of herself. From the start,
by her absence Jessica’s mother is set up as less than ideal. Then later, when Daniel meets her, the commentary is simply that “the very sight of her, drunken and disorderly upon his hearth, was an abomination to him” (Stretton 107). It is notable even in this short extract that the focus is not on Jessica’s mother but on Daniel’s response to her. He had become Jessica’s family, and her former family is really just a challenge constructed for him to overcome; as the narrator explains, “[h]e had mastered his love of money for the sake of a child whom he loved; now he must conquer it to rescue a wretched woman whom he shrank from” (Stretton 121). Jessica’s mother is therefore essentially removed from the role of mother altogether – she exists primarily as a test for Daniel’s new faith and never poses a threat to Daniel and Jessica’s familial bond.

Jessica’s mother’s other function is as the device that finally allows Jessica to finish entering into the caring, idealised mother role. Jessica had begun this process already with Daniel, but enters it completely when she is looking after her mother. Daniel needs Jessica to make his house more homely but is more her protector than she is his, whereas Jessica’s mother is utterly incapable of caring for herself. This reversed mother/daughter relationship allows the child a degree of innocence and authority while at the same time depicting the mother as extremely fallible. The fact that Stretton could write in this fashion in an Evangelical novel indicates the strength of the influence that the idea of the Romantic child had that by the middle of the century it was not strange to see it used even in this style of fiction. However, it is questionable whether the move away from focusing on original sin makes Jessica a more rounded character than More and Sherwood’s child characters. Certainly it leads to a movement away from the heavy-handed, oppressive forms of education advocated by the moralists and hence away from long insertions of explicit instruction in the texts, but also means that Jessica is an unrounded character who is essentially identical to other fictional depictions of the Romantic child.
In other words, as a Romantic child Jessica lacks the individualised personality that belief in original sin allowed child characters to display and, like her mother, exists not as a character in her own right but rather to reveal the flaws of the adult characters. The adults are the ones who change and grow around her while Jessica stays the same, effectively reversing the patterns noted above in Sherwood’s fiction. Grogan argues that “Victorians found intrinsic merit in the obvious spiritual and biblical foundations on which [Stretton] constructed many of her stories,” but if this is so then those foundations were not, at least in this novel, concentrated on the correct ways in which to raise and educate a child (Grogan 229). Jessica is a perfect innocent, and therefore constant and unchanging. As such, she never learns anything. It seems as though in moving away from a focus on original sin, there is also a move away from individualised characters with clearly defined personalities and towards child characters that are really only an object for the flawed adult characters to learn from. Thus, a complete switch has taken place from Sherwood’s earlier works; instead of perfect parents and flawed children, Yonge presents both the father and the children as being flawed (although not the mother character) and then Stretton presents flawed parents and a perfect child. This means that the parent’s moments of explicit religious instruction, and the moments when the narrator joins them to insert further instruction, are gradually decreased, and increased confidence in the ability of the child characters and the implied child reader to decide for herself what the religious lessons are results in less intrusive moments of instruction.

The ideal relationship between mother and daughter is explored in Sherwood’s novel, where Mrs. Fairchild helps her daughter to address one of the major fears of the earlier Evangelical writers, particularly when discussing women or the lower classes — the evils of ambition. Mrs. Fairchild discovers that one of her daughters has social ambitions. She longs for a nice carriage and good dresses, signs of a higher rank in society than the Fairchild family are a part of. Mrs.
Fairchild responds by asking her to record her wrong thoughts in a diary. While neither the narrator nor Mrs. Fairchild explicitly states that ambition is a particular flaw in a woman, the fact that the entire procedure is kept solely between mother and daughter without ever involving any of the male characters strongly associates this particular “sin” with women. It is extremely poignant that Lucy’s focus is on the outward appearance that she wants — fine clothes and so on — as a great concern for the moral writers was that women were in danger of becoming merely ornamental (as argued earlier). By rebuking her daughter’s ambitious desires, Mrs. Fairchild is effectively desiring her daughter to want something other than outward appearance. Indeed, there was a “wish to educate females to expect and demand more than a purely ornamental role in life” (Grogan 100), and so girl characters were encouraged to desire things other than pretty clothes. However, this wish is really a secondary one to the continued fear, left over from the French Revolution, of social unrest. By writing against any social ambition in such strong terms, Sherwood continues the trend of attempting to force satisfaction, on explicitly religious grounds, within the less affluent classes. By framing this within a discussion between female characters, Sherwood associates ambition with the wrong sort of femininity that desired to be merely ornamental, and so steers readers away from ideas linked to unrest and towards an idealised, contented, spiritually driven form of femininity instead.

Yonge makes it clear that the same sort of dissatisfaction associated with social ambition is also the theme of her novel through the title, *The Daisy Chain; or, Aspirations*. This is not to say that the characters are unhappy, but merely that they want to achieve or do or be something other than what they are at the start of the novel. Each of the children are driven by a desire for something: Norman’s ambition is centred around his academic achievements; Ethel wants to make Cocksmoor into a Christian place; and Flora aspires to have a good reputation and be thought well
of by her neighbours. Like Lucy, Flora’s desires are centred around social ranks, but unlike Lucy her main focus is on how she is perceived by other people, not on whether carriages and clothes would be comfortable and enjoyable in and of themselves. Partly because of the greater focus on the female characters, which exists to provide the primarily female readership with instruction through models of appropriate gendered behaviour, the greater concentration on the dangers of being dissatisfied falls on the female characters, once again associating the evils of ambition with women. Most notable of these is Ethel, who desires both to keep up with her brother’s studies, which she eventually is forced to give up completely, and to be useful outside of the home in much the same way as More’s Mrs. Jones does. However, Yonge makes it clear that while all of the things that the characters desire can be good in and of themselves, they become evil when they take precedence over everything else or come to be desired for their own sake. For instance, while Ethel’s wish to set up a school is clearly presented as a good thing to wish to do, it becomes a problematic desire when it results in her neglecting her duties at home, and Margaret warns her that “[i]f we are not just the thing in our own niche at home, I don’t think we can do much real good elsewhere” (Yonge 85). In fact, in discussing Yonge, Barbara Dennis states that her “views on family were so strong as to be almost Roman — one of the standards she applied, in both her life and her fiction, was how an individual related to his family” (Dennis 7), and this preoccupation is evident in Ethel’s development. It is in the home and to the family that her primary duty lies and her wishes to create schools and build churches, although good, cannot be allowed to replace her proper feminine role as substitute mother figure. As such, her ambitions for Cocksmoor must be curbed in order for her to take up her proper feminine place within the family.

In complete contrast, Stretton’s Romantic child motif means that Jessica has no ambition whatsoever, so the focus of the story is on how other people act towards her rather than on Jessica’s
own actions. As a “street waif” tale (a genre that Stretton was famous for and which primarily involved emotive stories about children of the poor in order to encourage wealthier people to help the working classes), much of Stretton’s focus is on class divisions that keep the poor from God, shown through such moments as when Daniel tells Jessica that “you must take yourself out of this [church]. This isn’t any place for such as you. It’s for ladies and gentlemen” (Stretton 22) and that “we couldn’t do with such a little heathen with no shoes or bonnet on” (Stretton 24). These two assertions are clearly aligned with the middle class assumption that there is a link between cleanliness and godliness (despite the fact that this contradicts biblical teachings), and the implied reader is clearly supposed to understand that the attitude of the church goers is incorrect. Many of the inner-city churches were often considered remote from the working classes, although efforts were made to remedy this problem (Gibson 89-96). As such, the entire novel works as an advertisement for relief for the lower classes, and Jessica is successful in advocating for the poor precisely because as a girl, she is allowed to lack ambition (or rather, she is encouraged to) and instead she merely influences the male characters (Daniel and the curate), leading them to act for her.

Jessica’s status as a Romantic child confirms the importance of her “feminine influence” over the adult male characters. Influence, of course, was one of the great themes of discussions surrounding the woman’s role during the nineteenth century, as Siv Jansson explains: “[o]ne of the most crucial issues for Victorian women . . . is the question of ‘influence’. Conduct-books and advice texts are riddled with references to ‘women’s influence’ and its centrality in giving the nation a high moral tone” (Jansson 32). However, a step beyond Jansson’s assertion must be made to understand the implications of the idea of influence. Women’s influence on men assumes that women wish for men to act on the woman’s behalf, and to learn and change as the woman remains
the same. Therefore, it can only work firstly if the woman has a “high moral tone” and secondly if she has no desire to achieve any changes herself. In this way, Jessica’s lack of ambition makes her the ideal female character who gently, even unknowingly, shows the male characters their errors and provides spiritual support as they face various challenges. None of this is ever explicitly stated in the text – instead, the characters are merely presented as they are with occasional commentary and it is left to the reader to consider how to approach the commentary on religious concerns when considering Jessica’s plight.

The final part of this argument concerns the role of the narrator in providing either explicit insertions of religious instruction or commentary on religiously framed beliefs, beginning with More and Sherwood. The four novels discussed here split easily into two halves — the earlier works by More and Sherwood and the later works by Yonge and Stretton. More and Sherwood both employ the very authoritative narrator associated with the moral tale (Wood 66-67). Analysis of the narrative voice is necessarily concerned with the idea of the implied reader, a category explored in chapter two of this thesis. For the purposes of this discussion, the relevance of the implied reader is the fact that the narrator is speaking directly to a specific idea of who the readers might or could be in order to guide them, and for the domestic tale, that reader is female. The narrators in Sherwood, Stretton and Yonge’s novels are speaking to an implied middle-class child reader, whereas More’s implied child reader is working class. The earlier novels by More and Stretton make use of intrusive narrators who insert thoughts and comments directly into the text at regular intervals to deliver explicit religious instruction. More’s narrator is particularly intrusive at the end of each story, such as in “Tawney Rachel” when the narrator spends nearly three pages commenting on the tale, including such warnings as “[l]isten to me, your true friend, when I assure you that God never reveals to weak and wicked women those secret designs of his providence,
which no human wisdom is able to see” (More 133). By speaking directly to the implied reader in this way about the actions of the characters, More ensures that her readers know how they are supposed to understand the story.

The danger of being misinterpreted was a very real concern for the moral tale writers, and was the motivation behind the sometimes high-handed tone of the authoritative narrators. Patrick C. Fleming explains that “[m]oral tales guide readers’ interpretations, ensuring that child readers know how to navigate the narrative — that they know, in short, how to read the tale” (Fleming 2). It is this desire to help readers “navigate” the story that leads to the dictatorial narrative tone in More’s works. Sherwood follows suit, with her narrator explaining that “[a]s I think Mr. Fairchild’s prayer may be useful to you, I will put it down in this place” and “[y]ou have never seen a corpse, I think” (Sherwood 18, 142). Both of these comments are followed by religiously-framed teachings spoken directly to the implied reader rather than addressed to the characters, meaning that the implied reader is also involved in learning the lessons that are being taught to the Fairchild children. Not once does the narrator leave the child reader to interpret events for herself, for “Mrs. Sherwood refused to allow children to trust to their own reason” (Rapple 252). And if a writer cannot trust a child’s “reason,” it follows that a child reader cannot be trusted to correctly interpret events in a story without being ordered in the right direction by the narrator. In other words, fears of being misunderstood and thus having their readers learn the wrong lessons led to both More and Sherwood providing clear explicit religious instruction by favouring heavily interfering narrators that direct the reader’s interpretation of the text.

These concerns do not have quite as great an impact on Yonge’s and Stretton’s writings, who were writing a little later in the century. This is not to say that the narrator’s voice stops attempting to help the reader understand events, but rather that the voice no longer directs the child
reader through lengthy interruptions designed to link moral judgments (such as the fact that Rachel was wrong to tell fortunes) and religious motivations (that only God can know the future) in the way that More and Sherwood do. The narrator still explicitly comments on the stories, but to a far lesser extent than the intrusive narrators of More and Stretton. Instead the narrator offers small comments on events to help the reader to understand whether characters are in the right or not. For example, when commenting on Ethel fairly early on in the novel, Yonge’s narrator notes that “[s]he thought her grown-up character had began, and was too secure to examine it closely” (Yonge 98). The narrator does not then go on to explain why Ethel is wrong and link her incorrectness back to religious teaching, as More and Sherwood would have done. Instead, the comment is left there for the reader to understand that Ethel was incorrect without the narrator ever explicitly addressing the reader with “you” or “we”. Lisa Wood refers to such commentary as subtle “embedded statements,” and sees them as existing to “implicitly support the text’s moral basis” (Wood 66). More and Sherwood also use embedded statements alongside intrusive interventions, but in Yonge’s and Stretton’s novels the embedded statements exist without the support of an intrusive narrative voice. Part of the reason for this is because they are building on the works of the earlier authors and thus no longer need to state what has already been said before. By assuming that they do not need to continue to compound lessons that have already been written, Yonge and Stretton begin the movement away from overtly stating how the child reader ought to interpret and understand the text, and start the transition continued throughout the rest of the century towards implied, covert moral and religious teachings instead.

In conclusion, then, the first half of the century shows a clear movement from explicit, didactic instruction to instruction that is still explicit but less intrusively so. Whereas in the earlier decades, the narrator directed the reader to avoid misinterpretation, in the 1860s the narrator was
merely helping the reader to understand the characters. Parent characters, even mothers, were allowed to be fallible later on where they had to be perfect at first, thus displaying a loss of faith in people if not in God, and child characters were allowed to be less intrinsically evil in order to compensate. The issue of female ambition, tied up with concerns over social unrest, is essentially treated in the same way (that is, as an evil that must be conquered) but with less heavy handedness in the later novels. Finally, spirituality is firmly associated with femininity, with religious duties now decidedly falling into the realm of the women in the household. In the end, Evangelical domestic fiction achieved its aim of creating a spiritually significant role for women so well that boy’s adventure fiction would later spend decades trying to fight off the perception that religious duties are feminine and unmanly. Even in this most conservative of genres the insistence on original sin and the inability of children to reason for themselves was gradually lifted and replaced with the more Romantic notions of childhood, finally just beginning to allow child readers to connect the dots between a character’s thoughts and actions, their moral value and the religious teachings connected with that moral for themselves. A genre built around a belief in the importance of religious instruction demonstrates the importance of linking those religious lessons not only to narrow moral teachings, but also to a much wider range of social concerns and ideas surrounding gender and identity. The novels also begin to allow the child reader to connect the dots between a character’s thoughts and actions for herself, including their moral value and the religious teachings connected with that moral. This laid down the foundations for the works of fantasy that began to be published in the 1860s, and will be explored in the next chapter.
Chapter Three: Religion, Fantasy and Social Class

Fantasy fiction as a whole is generally understood to be a reaction against the overt, heavy-handed instruction of the earlier domestic fiction. However, while the connections between religious imagery, moral lessons and social norms are not as overtly stated in fantasy fiction, they are nevertheless still very much present in the narratives of the tales. This chapter will discuss Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* (1863), Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877) in relation to the influence of fantasy and the representation of social class. Fantasy fiction is not an attempt to escape the world, but to find new ways in which to explore and understand it. I argue that in nineteenth-century novels for children, this meant that assumptions surrounding ideas like religious teachings and social class divides were not questioned or challenged, despite the fact that the genre of fantasy itself is often thought of as being destabilising. Therefore, despite the critical trend for seeing *Wonderland* as being the beginning of what Patricia Demers calls the “golden age” of children’s literature in which the desire to bring children “delight” as opposed to “instruction” is the primary motivation for writing, none of the works discussed here offer an uninstructive narrative. Even if the lessons are no longer explicitly stated, but rather exist implicitly beneath the surface of the texts, they are still present within the narrative. Instead, I argue that they all demonstrate ways in which, even when everything else has fallen into chaos, religious lessons and social class divisions remain constant, unchanging and unquestioned. Middle-class morality and middle-class values remain essentially unchallenged.3

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3 The term “middle-class morality” raises multiple questions about definition (What makes an instance of moral instruction middle class? Is it a strategy of governance? Is it being taught primarily to middle-class readers?). I am using the term “middle class” to mean those people who identify as being part of the professional classes and subscribe to a set of moral values that members of that class taught through charities and activism to the working
I contend that this constancy is achieved in three different ways. The first of these is by the use of Christian images throughout the novels in ways designed to make canonical religious ideas from different denominations make logical sense in an illogical fantasy setting. The second is by simply never questioning class divisions in any setting, and in places even going so far as to reinforce them. Finally, I argue that there is a shift in the way in which moral and religious ideas are represented. The role of the narrative voice continues the movement from explicit to implicit religious instruction begun in the domestic tales in the first half of the century. From 1800 to 1850, the narrator moves from being totally controlling to allowing the characters to lead any discussions around religion and morality and only commenting to help direct the implied child reader. The novels explored in this chapter continue this shift, moving from the narrator being heavily involved in moral and religious debates in *Water-Babies* to Beauty’s refusal to make moral judgements. More significantly for this thesis, I contend that this means that by the 1880s the link between social class and moral teachings, and then the link between morality and religion, is rarely directly stated by the narrator, under the assumption that the reader would still be able to understand the underlying implicit instruction without needing to explicitly state it.

Before beginning an examination of the texts, however, a moment must be taken to define what I mean by “fantasy.” John Clute and John Grant’s *The Encyclopaedia of Fantasy* recognises a number of devices commonly employed in fantasy fiction, such as the quest and the landscape, but does not attempt to claim that all works of fantasy invariably fit into all or even some of these categories. In fact, Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James write that the only thing that fantasy

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classes. The main areas of these teachings, aside from basic biblical stories, were ideas surrounding qualities such as cleanliness, temperance, abstinence and, most importantly, satisfaction with class alliance. This is not to claim that these ideas were taught only to the working classes: all of the novels explored here were written for the middle-class reader, providing a conservative idea of duties that the wealthy have towards the poor as well as a sort of fantasy of how the working classes could or should think about the upper and middle classes.
critics really agree on is that “fantasy is about the construction of the impossible whereas science fiction may be about the unlikely, but is grounded in the scientifically possible” (James and Mendlesohn 1). By this definition, fairy tales could be included as fantasy, but are left out of the genre because they are usually shorter than full works of fantasy and rarely, if ever, have rounded characters. However, the fact that fairy tales existed as a precursor to the fantasy genre means that Ann Lawson Lycas’s claim that Wonderland was “the pivotal nineteenth century masterpiece of the nation’s children literature, the classic that set an indelible stamp upon the culture of adults as well as children” seems rather absolutist, not because Wonderland was not popular and influential, but because it was working within a framework that already existed (Lycas 157). Hence, Kingsley’s Water-Babies, published two years before Wonderland, is not at all out of place in this study. Beauty also fits into this discussion, even though the fact that Beauty can think and talk and communicate, although fantastical in and of itself, is not set up as a “magical” element of the story. The novel could possibly be defined as a liminal fantasy (where the two worlds are separate and do not connect), although it would certainly be an atypical example of the genre. However, Beauty does fit into the earlier definition given by James and Mandlesohn of fantasy being “the construction of the impossible” and as such can confidently be included here even if the one impossible element of the novel is designed purely as a window into the very ordinary world of the everyday.

The oldest of the fantasy novels explored in this chapter, then, is Water-Babies, although claiming that Water-Babies is primarily interested in religious imagery is perhaps an odd way to begin exploring the novel considering that critical discussion surrounding Water-Babies has concentrated almost exclusively on Kingsley’s interest in science and evolution. Piers J. Hale claims that “[h]istorians have long noted Kingsley’s embrace of evolution. Gillian Beer’s Darwin’s
Plots will be the most familiar to historians of biology, but Colin Manlove, Amanda Hodgson and more recently Jessica Straley, John Beatty and Jonathan Conlin have also commented on this aspect of Water Babies” (Hale 553). Other critics interested in the same debate include Arthur Johnston in his “The Water Babies: Kingsley’s Debt to Darwin,” A. Niell’s “Marvelous Plasticity and the Fortune of Species in The Water Babies” and Naomi Wood’s article “A (Sea) Green Victorian – Kingsley, Charles and The Water Babies,” in which she argues that Kingsley was not only interested in evolution but was also a pro-environmentalist. However, none of these critics attempt to claim that Kingsley’s interest in scientific debates was in any way separate from his religious convictions. In Daniel Harris’s article on Kingsley’s discussion of compound organisms, he notes that Kingsley’s works are “social problem novels,” not scientific journals (Harris 64). He also mentions the Christian Socialists, an organisation that Kingsley belonged to, saying that “Kingsley’s novels reflect the influence of Christian Socialism in their early critique of laissez-faire economic policy and competitive models of the marketplace” (Harris 70). So even in critical studies interested in Kingsley’s science, there is a clear recognition of his religious focus.

In other words, to claim that Water-Babies is a work interested in religious concerns is not to suggest that criticism on its scientific focuses is irrelevant. Jessica Straley sums up the connection between religion and scientific debates when she quotes Kingsley himself saying “‘we knew that God was so wise that He could make all things, but behold, He is so much wiser even than that, that He can make all things make themselves’” (qtd. in Straley 584). Straley also notes that “In The Water-Babies, he created a fairy named Mother Carey who illustrates precisely this power, sitting at the centre of the world ‘mak[ing] things make themselves’” (Straley 584), thus demonstrating that religion and science are intertwined in Water-Babies. So to argue that Water-Babies is engaged with religious imagery is not to ignore the current framework of critical debate,
but rather to expand it. Perhaps it is this intense focus on the scientific debates in *Water-Babies* that has really prevented it from being considered a fantasy novel of the same kind of significance as *Wonderland* is, despite the fact that it clearly exists within the framework of the fantasy genre. In the end, I do not wish to claim that the scientific focus explored by so many critics is somehow less relevant or important than the religious imagery, but rather agree with Strailey and Harris that the social and religious aims of Kingsley’s novel existed alongside his interest in evolutionary debates.

With that established, I argue that *Water-Babies* is almost exclusively an exploration of limbo, with the world of the water babies working as a direct allegory for the world of dead children who were not taught about salvation and so cannot enter heaven. Key to this allegory is the way in which the protagonist Tom enters the world of the water babies. Maria Nikolajeva seems somewhat uncertain of how to approach *Water-Babies*, as she begins by stating that “[t]he main character is believed to be drowned, but in fact is just transferred into the secondary world where his trials are about to begin” and then later, when discussing fantasy worlds entered by dying, writes that “Tom drowns before he can experience the beautiful underwater realm” (*The Magic Code* 47, 80). By my reading of the text, Tom certainly died before entering the water, and his body (which he no longer inhabits) is later buried. Therefore, the clear implication of the text is that Tom is dead and cannot return to the world of the living and with Tom’s death established it becomes reasonable to discuss imagery of limbo in the novel.

According to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, limbo is “the state and place of souls that have neither been proportioned to the vision of God, nor merited eternal punishment through personal sin,” and the Limbo of Children specifically “was developed in response to the theological question of the fate of those dying with original sin only; thus generally
limited to children dying before baptism” (280). This may seem an odd thing to focus on given Kingsley’s anti-Catholicism, but in actuality the Limbo of Children was never an official doctrine of the Catholic Church (International Theological Commission, “The Hope of Salvation”). Kingsley, being a mix of extremely High Anglican and a Christian Socialist, could very conceivably have taken an interest in the infant limbo. In the novel, Kingsley heavily emphasises the fact that Tom had never been baptised, had never gone to Church and had never been taught to say his prayers, and that this is the reason why he was taken to the world of the water babies (9-10, 113, 120-121). Tom is not punished (in hell) like Grimes and others because he did not know that what he was doing was wrong. However, he is equally barred from the perfect land (heaven) because he was never taught about God and never learned to pray. There is even an overt reference to the Coventry children who according to the traditions of the medieval church went straight up to heaven instead of limbo. The narrator states that all poor children who were never taught to say their prayers end up as water babies “except, of course, the babes of Bethlehem, who were killed by wicked King Herod; for they were taken straight to heaven long ago, as everybody knows, and we call them the holy Innocents” (Kingsley 105). The comparison of children in the world of the water babies with the Holy Innocents confirms the fact that the water babies act as an allegory for the unbaptised infants in the Limbo of Children, thus demonstrating that teachings surrounding religious beliefs continued to be present in children’s literature in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Kingsley’s version of a children’s limbo exists within a larger framework of spiritual realms in which justice is being dispensed. For example, there are also references to those who are in a place of punishment of whom Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid says that “I look after them all the week round; and they are in a very different place from this, because they knew that they were
doing wrong” (Kingsley 111). The fact that other places of punishment exist indicates a heavenly justice based on motives and the heart because there is a clear distinction between those who did wrong without knowing (Tom and the other children who were never taught their religious and moral duties correctly) and those who did wrong despite knowing that it was wrong (the adults in “a very different place from this”). There are also some descriptions of heaven, the “beautiful place” that Tom is trying to earn the right to get to, where “the dear, sweet, loving, wise, good, self-sacrificing people who really go there, can never tell you anything about it, save that it is the most beautiful place in all the world; and, if you ask more, they grow modest, and hold their peace, for fear of being laughed at” (Kingsley 121). The children who have successfully learned their religious lessons and are now beginning to be accepted into heaven cannot describe it accurately to the children still in limbo, thus indicating that heaven is so perfect that those who have not experienced it cannot hope to understand it.

Eventually, after learning how to be good and being taught the difference between right and wrong, Tom is removed from the in-between world of the water babies and allowed a place in heaven. The great tragedy is that Tom would have been able to go straight to heaven in the first place if he had been properly taught how to say his prayers when he was alive in the human world; but as nobody would help him “go to the river and wash first,” either in the literal sense of cleanliness that the middle-class associated with goodness or in the metaphorical sense of being washed clean of sin, he had to be made clean after his human death instead (Kingsley 32). As such, Kingsley’s purpose, or at least his narrator’s purpose, seems to be to present the dreadful consequences that not having access to Church and Christian teachings have on the children of the poor, who are represented by the chimney sweep Tom. Kingsley thus places an obligation on the implied middle-class child reader to help to teach the working class children about Christ so that
the children of the poor can go home to heaven. This lesson is not stated in long didactic paragraphs as it would have been in More or Stretton’s writings, but the narrator does explicitly condemn the wrong-doings of the adult middle-class characters and expects the child reader to connect that condemnation to his or her own possible behaviours.

*Wonderland*, published two years later, approaches Christian imagery in a completely different way to *Water-Babies*; instead of a direct, uninterrupted allegory that continues consistently throughout the novel, *Wonderland* makes use of two separate instances of implicit allegorical and metaphorical references to specific biblical stories. The first of these is when Alice, whose neck is accidentally extended, meets the Pigeon who accuses her of being a snake trying to steal her eggs (Carroll 58-64). Snakes are loaded symbols in the Christian tradition, originating in the story of Eden when the devil disguises himself as a serpent and tempts Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (*New International Version* Genesis 3.1-6). As such, the story of Alice and the Pigeon is also significant because, having accidentally made her neck longer, Alice is essentially disguised as a snake, just as the devil was in the garden of Eden. The Pigeon makes it clear that even if she was to remove her disguise, there is no difference between her and a real snake if she eats eggs anyway, saying that “why then they’re a kind of serpent, that’s all I can say” (Carroll 62). Alice is being accused, in effect, of being the devil. And even though Alice does not want this particular pigeon’s eggs at this time, the fact that she does eat eggs means that in the eyes of the Pigeon Alice is by nature evil. The Pigeon is therefore accusing Alice of being born sinful. This allegory thus associates the Pigeon with the moral tale writers and other similar Evangelical preachers who taught the idea of original sin, because the pigeon is insisting that humans are “a kind of serpent” by nature because are naturally evil. Alice is evil not because she wishes to do evil but because she is human, and she must be redeemed. This passage is, to a
great extent, an example of Carroll’s satirisation of Evangelical teachings because the Pigeon is wrong about both what Alice is and what she wants, but her conclusion that Alice is innately corrupt due to her being born human (and thus being willing to eat eggs) still makes sense. Despite everything else in the novel being nonsensical, the issue of natural-born evil in need of redemption is still presented as logical.

Alice’s redemption from evil takes place during the second allegory two chapters later when she finds the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse at tea, where Alice shifts from being associated with Eve to being linked with a version of the Virgin Mary that retains a practical common-sense attitude. The other characters try to turn her away; “‘No room! No room!’ they cried out when they saw Alice coming” (Carroll 82). The exclamation “no room” is clearly associated with the story of Bethlehem where the Christ-child is born and his mother “wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2.7). In this parallel, Alice becomes associated with Mary, searching for a place to stay with no clear knowledge of future trials, and thus is redeemed from her earlier serpent/devil status. More significantly, however, she maintains her expectation of normality throughout. Alice is not only connected to the Virgin but is also associated with middle-class common sense through her extremely practical reply to the Mad Hatter’s objection; “‘There’s plenty of room!’ said Alice indignantly” (Carroll 82). As Mendlesohn explains, “the strangest aspect of the Alice books (in terms of the rhetoric) is that Alice proceeds as if she understands the world around her. In a reversal of the usual structure, Alice understands the rules of society and seeks to implement them, coming unstuck because those around her do not seem to understand them” (Mendelsohn 28). The “rules of society” that Alice “seeks to implement” are the rules of the British professional middle class.
Therefore, the norm that Mendlesohn sees Alice as attempting to enforce on the other characters is the normal of the middle classes.

Alice herself, having a governess and being taught to read, is clearly within this class and feels comfortable with its expectations and norms despite the challenges offered by the Mad Hatter and others because she never wavers from this standpoint. Lycas says that “Alice is of the professional middle class, like a typical model child” (Lycas 166). While it is true that Alice acts as a model of middle-class children, to claim that she is “typical” is somewhat dangerous, because to do so assumes that middle-class children are the normal, standard children that all other children are like. The use of the term “typical” in relation to the middle-class Alice demonstrates the prevalence of the idea that middle-class beliefs, ideas, actions and moral standards are the “norm” that the working classes deviate from and must be brought in line with. It is the idealised “sensible” attitude of the professional class that enables Alice, unlike the Virgin Mary, to join the other characters. Put another way, Alice is associated with the Virgin Mary and with the middle class at the same time, thus linking the middle class to the purity and spiritual superiority of the Virgin. Once again, the religious instruction that is foregrounded in earlier children’s literature is still clearly present, if not explicitly stated, even in the fantasy novels of the 1860s.

The latest novel, *Beauty*, reads in parts almost like *Pilgrim’s Progress*, as Beauty is taken from one trial to another. However, while Beauty certainly ends up in a good home he lacks the motive or the means for actually going anywhere in particular, which places limitations on the extent of such an association. Like the pilgrim he travels through different situations, becoming a victim of a number of human faults: fashion (Sewell 83, 175-177); carelessness and ignorance (65-69); drunkenness (90-93); thievery (110-112); conceit (113-115); and callousness and uncaring (179), for example. However, these are not generally trials specifically for Beauty to overcome but
rather windows through which the faults of men are displayed one after another. Equally, while Sewell does not belabour the point as some of the earlier domestic tale authors may have done, the moral faults being displayed are often linked back to religious teachings. For example, two instances discussed elsewhere in this chapter ensure that drunkenness is connected to the devil’s work (164-167) and cruelty to animals and people is associated with false religion and ungodliness—such as where James explains that on seeing another boy pulling the wings off of flies, his schoolmaster “said that cruelty was the devil’s own trademark, and if we saw anyone who took pleasure in cruelty, we might know who he belonged to, for the devil was a murderer from the beginning, and a tormentor to the end” (Sewell 48). In other words, Beauty explicitly links the moral problem of cruelty to a religious teaching about the devil, but through a human character rather than through the narrator Beauty himself making the connection.

Most of these lessons, connected to both moral judgement and religious concerns, are focussed around either how men treat animals or how men treat other men, and the lessons are for the human characters and the human reader, not for the horse narrator actually doing the travelling. Beauty and the other horses actually flatly refuse to pass any judgement on such behaviour, with one horse, Captain, even asserting that the choices of man are “more than a horse can understand” (Sewell 129). In this way, the association with Pilgrim’s Progress, although still there in part, is revealed as relatively tenuous because Beauty himself, by refusing to comment on events in the story, also effectively refuses to learn from them or be changed by them, a direct contrast to the purposeful journey of the pilgrim.

However, the major advantage of having a narrator that acts in this way is that it allows Beauty to spend time representing good and bad characters from all class backgrounds, even if these representations do not result in Beauty or any of the other characters seriously questioning
the existence of class divisions. Beauty’s favourite owners and grooms (John, James, Joe Green and Jerry) are all amongst the lower-middle or the working poor classes, meaning that the characters articulating middle-class ideas of morality are either directly from the lower middle-classes (such as John teaching James about cruelty) or from the “good” working-class characters who imitate the values of the middle class, such as Jerry. Jerry defends two of the pet middle-class philanthropic projects when he talks about giving up drink and keeping Sunday holy. He states bluntly that “[i]f there’s one devil I should like to see in the bottomless pit more than any other, it’s the drink devil,” providing a clear link between drunkenness and evil (Sewell 165). By having a working-class character make this point, the idea that drunkenness is a problem particularly associated with the working classes is enforced. Jerry then goes on to explain that “I had to say over and over to myself, ‘Give up the drink or lose your soul? Give up the drink or break Polly’s heart? But thanks be to God, and my dear wife, my chains were broken,” thus defending the temperance movement on both religious grounds (saving his soul) and moral ones (doing his duty to his wife) (Sewell 165-66). He then does the same with Sunday, following Truman’s statement that the Sabbath rest is “every man’s right and every beast’s right. By God’s law we have a day of rest, and by the law of England we have a day of rest” (Sewell 139). In both cases, these were causes taken up strongly by middle-class philanthropists and activists, and so Jerry demonstrates a loyalty, backed up by religious and moral language, to middle-class ideals and piety that contrasts him with other working-class characters. These characters who do not adhere to middle-class values hurt their horses and leave their families in want, like Reuben who leaves his wife desolate and permanently disfigures Beauty after getting drunk enough to cause his own death. Good characters who demonstrate an understanding of morality and the religious basis for moral lessons are thus clearly linked to the middle classes throughout the novel.
*Beauty* is not the only novel to concentrate on explicitly presenting the morals and religious teachings of the middle-class through the characters (even if in *Beauty* those lessons are actually upheld by members of the working classes); *Wonderland* does so almost to the exclusion of all else. Carroll makes both explicit and implicit references to the moral tales favoured as proper literature for children to read by the religious middle classes, stating outright early on that Alice “had read several little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them” (Carroll 8-9). This short statement in the very first chapter sets up an entire discussion of morality — or rather, of stories that claim to teach morality — that continues throughout the novel, focussing on teachings about patience and bad temper. An example of the type of story that Carroll is referencing is Sarah Trimmer’s “Ruth Ward,” where the main character loses her own leg after being “one of those cross girls no one loves to be with” who when there was nobody else to hurt “would catch flies and pull their legs, or tear their wings off, and laugh to see them in pain” (Trimmer 231). Ruth learns to be nice to others because she experiences the consequences of being in pain herself. By contrast, the warnings against bad behaviour in *Wonderland* ring false because there are no negative consequences for their behaviour. For example, one mother crab rather oddly warns her son to “[l]et this be a lesson to you never to lose your temper!” (Carroll 33) when nothing bad had befallen the character who had lost his temper, satirising the moral tales that show characters repenting after a downfall caused by their own failings by pointing out that the lesson does not work if nothing negative happens.

Alice herself loses her temper time and again, despite being warned against it by the Caterpillar — “‘I’ve something important to say!’ This sounded promising, certainly: Alice turned and came back again. ‘Keep your temper,’ said the Caterpillar. ‘Is that all?’,” said Alice, swallowing
down her anger as well as she could” — and yet, instead of being upset with her for doing so the implied reader is led to agree that she is justified in her impatience (Carroll 51). Lycan explains that “[t]he reader then becomes so complicit in the process of not accepting the role of submissive model child, and Alice and reader alike become opinionated, doubting rebels” (Lycan 162). This complicity is not merely in refusing to submit but a refusal to accept advice from characters that do not make sense. The lesson of keeping your temper fails because everyone except Alice is refusing to show sensible, sound middle-class judgement. The failed moral lesson satirises earlier moralising children’s fiction, such as in Sherwood’s The History of the Fairchild Family when the Noble daughter dies in a fire because she will not listen to her parents, and as such these failed lessons are implicitly linked to Christian teachings because the moral teachers linked their morality to religious ideas, such as Mr. Fairchild’s lecture about Augusta Noble’s funeral.

In other words, middle-class morality based on a middle-class idea of Christianity cannot work when it is taken outside of its normal cultural and social environment and placed elsewhere. Donald Rackin argues that Wonderland acts as “a comic horror vision of the chaotic land beneath the seemingly ‘natural’, permanent, and sensible ground works constructed by Western thought and middle-class social convention” (qtd. in Tuerk 517). However, his suggestion that the novel serves only to reveal the chaos that middle-class writings and norms attempt to hide does not go quite far enough. It is true that Wonderland successfully reveals the fragility of middle-class norms, but more than this, it actually confirms that these middle-class social conventions are the only reasonable, workable system of governing. This is because no viable alternative to middle-class systems of thought are offered, so the only way in which society can avoid the chaos of Wonderland is to maintain the very set of conventions and ideas that appear to be being undermined. The novel therefore demonstrates again the unquestioning acceptance of class
division. There is a movement away from explicit passages that urge working class readers to emulate middle-class values, but the implicit assumption of the superiority of those values continues to exist.

The narrator of *Water-Babies* is both more explicit in forming the link between morality and religion than *Wonderland* and clearer in its moral judgements than *Black Beauty* is, because the focus of these judgements in Kingsley’s novel are on the working-class characters and the fact that the middle classes do nothing to help them. Catherine Nealy Judd explains that the reason for this double focus is that according to Kingsley, the members of the working class that suffered in poverty and did not adhere to middle-class values “both threatened the social order and represented the ruling classes’ mismanagement of paternalistic duty owed to those destined for subordination in a divinely ordained, ‘natural’ social structure” (Judd 179). The “paternalistic duty” that Judd is referring to is a primarily religious duty, and so by failing in their duty to the poor, the middle classes “threatened the social order” because that order relied on “prosperous Britons to perform their ‘Christian duty’” (Judd 182). The working classes must be managed by the middle classes; the middle classes must teach morality and religion to the working classes, or the middle classes have failed in their duty. Tom is an example of this failure, because he has never had anyone give him his religious lessons. In the end, he is finally taught the right way by the aristocratic child Ellie, who “taught him, first, what you have been taught ever since you said your first prayers at your mother’s knees” (Kingsley 120). Here the narrator directly addresses the intended middle-class child reader spoken to on multiple occasions throughout the novel. The implication here is that Tom should not have had to wait until he goes to limbo after his death; like the implied middle-class reader, he should have been given religious instruction much earlier on. The implied reader is thus included in the list of those who have failed in their duty to teach religious lessons to the
working-class poor, and thus the moral failures of the working-class character Tom are the result of the moral failings of the middle classes.

Despite Tom standing as an example of middle-class failure, however, the class structure itself is never questioned at any point in the novel. Much criticism discussing social class in *Water-Babies* focusses on the first few chapters, with Judd claiming that “[g]iven *The Water-Babies’* opening chapters, one might suppose that in writing this novel, Kingsley was returning to his previous interest in social action and social justice. Yet within his fantasy, Kingsley discards his former authorial persona of impassioned social critic” (Judd 14). Judd seems to be implying that the less intrusive narrator in later parts of the novel results in a lesser focus on class-based issues, but this seems odd given the above discussion on how the world of the water babies would never have had to exist in the first place if the higher classes were performing their duties correctly. As such, I cannot agree that Kingsley’s voice as “impassioned social critic” faded out after the first few chapters. Jonathan Padley seems to agree with my assessment; he argues that discussions in later parts of the novel on social class are mainly focussed on the symbolic, such as the “implications of the otter’s comments [which] are obvious: literal and metaphorical big fish (salmon and otters) bully and hurt little fish underwater just as much as they do above it” (Padley 57). Thus, given the symbolism in the rest of the novel, claiming that Kingsley moves away from social commentary seems to be a narrow view of the novel’s approach to social criticism.

Instead of abandoning social critique when the world of the water babies comes into the novel, Kingsley continues to emphasise the fact that the heart of the entire problem is that the middle classes failed in their duty towards the poor and that Tom suffered for it. Instead, the solution is not to get rid of class divisions but rather to ensure that all of the social classes are performing their duties towards the other classes. The class divisions themselves are not
questioned; rather, they are reinforced by insisting that the middle classes have a moral and religious duty to impose their norms and expectations onto the working-class poor. This insistence is both explicit, when the narrator notes Tom’s disadvantages as compared to the implied middle-class reader, and also exists implicitly within the symbolism of the novel.

Despite the fact that all of the three novels uphold the divisions between social classes, there is a clear difference in the role of the narrator, which continues to develop throughout these works and leads to continuing the shift from explicit to implicit religious instruction. The oldest novel explored here, Water-Babies, is closest to the earlier domestic fiction in narrative style in places, although Kingsley does allow a sense of the ridiculous to come through, such as the narrator’s discussion of the hippopotamus major (Kingsley 83). Most of the narrator’s interventions are aimed directly at the reader, such as when he says “be like Sir John, my little man, when you are your own master” (Kingsley 79-80). The implication here is that Kingsley assumes that the reader of Water-Babies is a middle-class boy. The implied reader is therefore not so much implied as explicitly stated; Kingsley is expecting a middle-class boy, one who may not understand all of the scientific references – for example, where the narrator says half anxiously “I hope you understand all the big words” (Kingsley 39) – but who has enough rudimentary Latin and science to grasp the narrator’s word plays. Without this prior knowledge, most of the tangents that the narrator takes off on are inaccessible, meaning that Kingsley was not expecting a less well educated working-class child to be reading the novel.

Equally, this means that he does desire the implied reader to be involved in decoding the implicit lessons of the story using their own knowledge and understanding. Wolfgang Iser’s critical work The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett argues that this double effort of understanding a text, partly by the author and partly by the implied
reader, is fundamental to the novel form. He defines the term *implied reader* as “incorporat[ing] both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader’s actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process . . . and not to a typology of possible readers” (Iser xii). Iser’s exploration of implied readers is particularly relevant to this thesis as a whole because every novel explored here constructs a reader, who is always a child and almost always middle class, that the narrator and characters are teaching and responding to.

Iser’s criticism is also particularly interesting in terms of Kingsley’s work, because the reader that *Water-Babies* is intended for is not so much *implied* as openly stated. By openly and narrowly defining his intended reader, Kingsley’s narrator is aligned with the earlier moral writers, such as More and Sherwood, who also explicitly address a defined set of implied readers. However, there is a change in the style of this address. Kingsley’s narrator does make clear moral judgements in places, such as when he explains that if anyone tried to remove someone from a Church service “good old English law would punish that man, as he deserved, for ordering any peaceable person out of God’s house, which belongs to all alike,” clearly indicating the narrator’s own opinion on turning people out of churches in a way that expects the reader to agree (Kingsley 33). Alongside these morally clear statements, however, there are also moments when the direct intervention of the narrator is primarily humourous, or even occasionally sarcastic, trusting the reader’s ability to understand what the narrator is really trying to say. For example, when the narrator exclaims “Am I in earnest? Oh dear no. Don’t you know that this is a fairy tale, and all fun and pretence; and that you are not to believe one word of it, even if it is true?” (Kingsley 44), the narrator is not asking the reader to completely disbelieve everything, but rather to look through the fantastical elements of the tale and understand the “true” religious and moral elements that lie underneath them. In
these moments the narrator is both asking the implied reader to agree with him while at the same
time assuming that of course they will, as it is obvious that a story about water babies cannot be
true in a literal sense. Thus, by the mid-1860s some clear movement surrounding the role of the
narrator in delivering moral and religious teachings has taken place — Kingsley’s narrator still
directly intervenes and attempts to focus on moral and religious quandaries (specifically
concerning the plight of the working-class poor), but also does so for humour and expects the
implied middle-class child reader to pick up on most of these moments.

By contrast, the narrator of Wonderland makes direct references to moral teachings only
to mock them. As for religious teachings, they are never referred to explicitly but rather only
through the use of the allegories discussed above. These allegorical references to moral lessons are
never overtly discussed but are kept below the surface of the text. For example, Alice’s
misremembered rhyme “How Doth the Little Crocodile” that mocks Isaac Watt’s poem “Against
Idleness and Mischief” twists the moralising parts of the poem and omits the explicitly religious
references of the third stanza: “For Satan finds some mischief still / For idle hands to do” (Watts 82). This change from teaching to mocking initially seems like a substantial leap in the role of the
narrator in the space of two years, and may be part of the reason why Wonderland is generally
considered to be such a revolutionary text for children’s literature. In his discussion of the changing
role of the narrator in adult fiction, Iser claims that

While the eighteenth-century novel reader was cast by the author in a specific role,
so that he could be guided . . . towards a conception of human nature and of reality,
in the nineteenth century the reader was not told what part he was to play. Instead,
he had to discover the fact that society had imposed a part on him, the object being
for him eventually to take up a critical attitude toward this imposition. For him to
perform this function, i.e., to accept the role of critic, it was essential that the novel refrained from telling him what to do, for criticism must at least appear to be spontaneous if it is to have value (Iser xiii-xiv)

Iser’s discussion is concentrated on adult literature rather than children’s literature, if indeed it can be sweepingly applied to all adult literature written in the nineteenth century. The fact that Iser does not specifically address children’s literature does not, however, mean that it is not still possible to still use Iser’s idea of the readers’ need to feel that they have spontaneously reached an answer or conclusion to the story in order to understand the role of the implied child reader.4

However, where Iser’s constructed adult reader is encouraged to critique the text, the narrator in children’s fiction wishes for the child reader to conclude that social norms should be accepted. In this way, in “refraining from telling him what to do,” the narrator encourages the implied child reader to accept the class norms and the covert religious imagery in Wonderland, an acceptance that “must appear to be spontaneous if it is to have any value.”

Iser’s discussion of the role of the narrator in adult fiction is particularly relevant to Wonderland because so much of it is inaccessible to child readers, to the point where it has been argued that it is not a children’s book at all. Nikolajeva states that the three authors she recognises as particularly significant to the fantasy genre in the nineteenth century “(ab)use the child, Kingsley and Donald mostly in adherence to the Romantic tradition, Carroll as an object of spiteful and intricate adult games” (“Development of Children’s Fantasy” 51). As such, Wonderland is rarely viewed as being a novel exclusively or even primarily for children. However, the use of

4 The “implied reader” is also sometimes referred to as the “narratee,” a term used by Gerald Prince in his study Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative. Prince argues that “any sign in a narrative which refers to a narratee’s persona, his attitude, his knowledge, or his situation constitutes a sign of the ‘you’” (20). In other words, the narratee (or implied reader) is positioned and defined by the narrator not only when the narrator is directly addressing them as “you,” but throughout the entire text.
“adult games” does not negate the fact that child readers can still understand the novel on at least one level. In other words, *Wonderland* simultaneously critiques middle-class religious teachings and moralising didacticism for the implied adult reader while also reinforcing those religious teachings for the implied child reader. The narrator balances this process by directly addressing the reader in some places, such as near the beginning when the narrator explains “for, you see, Alice had learnt several things in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over” (Carroll 4), and refrains from commenting in other areas. In other words, there is a mixture of explicit and implicit references to instruction throughout the novel. It is this balancing of the explicit and the implicit that allows *Wonderland* to exist as a social satire that despite ridiculing middle-class norms (such as memorising and repeating impractical knowledge learnt at school) it in fact, as shown in earlier discussions of allegories within the novel, reinforces these norms and the moral and religious lessons taught by the middle classes.

Finally, then, is *Beauty*’s very different approach to the role of the narrator. The first person narrative of a horse gives an excuse for the narrator, Beauty, not to offer any specific moral judgement on the actions of the human characters around him. For example, Beauty accepts his role as a “dumb beast” but even so knows more than his human owner, stating that “If I could have spoken, I could have told my master where his oats went to” (Sewell 111). As discussed above, Beauty accepts his role of silent spectator and concludes that he cannot hope to understand men despite revealing that he knows more than the men talking about him do. The contrast between what he actually knows and what he is willing to say that he knows demonstrates that Beauty’s refusal to comment to the reader, who unlike the characters he can speak to, is not because he cannot do so, but because he does not wish to.
Aside from forcing the implied reader to make judgements of the tale for him- or herself, thus internalising the religious and moral lessons of the novel, the advantage of Beauty being as unintrusive as possible is that it minimises the impact of the fantastical elements of the tale. Wayne Booth argues that in bad fiction, the implied author fails to assimilate the implied reader to the norms of the novel because “the implied author asks that we judge according to norms that we cannot accept” (Booth 157). Beauty avoids falling into this trap of bad fiction by refusing to act in any way that a horse should not – such as, for example, receiving a magical ability to talk to humans. In refusing to step directly and obtrusively into the world of humans by refusing to comment on their morals and religious duties, Beauty as a narrator makes his impact on the human characters as small as possible, thus diminishing the number of unacceptable elements in the tale. When the unacceptable elements of the tale have been made as small as possible, the narrator can display the social commentaries of the story without running the risk of having the entire novel and all of the implications of the story dismissed as untrue because the fantastical elements are already too overwhelming to be able to easily see the portrayal of the ordinary human world behind them.

The implication of the horse narrator is that the human reader needs to consider the reasons for human behaviour and then decide for themselves whether those reasons are any good. It is this refusal to judge on Beauty’s and the other horses’ part that requires the implied child reader to make moral judgements on the horses’ behalf. When John teaches James about cruelty, saying that “there is no religion without love, and people may talk as much as they like about their religion, but if it does not teach them to be good and kind to man and beast, it is all a sham — all a sham, James, and it won’t stand when things come to be turned inside out and put down for what they are” Beauty makes no comment, leaving the reader to judge John’s rightness for themselves
(Sewell 48). And although Beauty complains about various bad styles of driving (Sewell 100-109), when he sees Ginger’s horrific distress he only cries only “Oh! if men were more merciful, they would shoot us before we came to such misery,” indicating sorrow and distress but without introducing any moral or religious reasons why men ought to be merciful (Sewell 154). Beauty relies entirely on the other characters and the reader to do that, in a way that the earlier moral tale writers would never have attempted out of a fear of being misinterpreted (Sewell 154). Thus, the movement from the narrator teaching clear moral and religious lessons directly to the reader to the narrator allowing the characters to present ideas to the reader and only offering some commentary on these ideas is made in this middle part of the century. This bridges the gap between the heavy guidance in earlier domestic fiction and the less intrusive narrators in later boys’ fiction, where the narratorial judgement eventually almost disappears completely. At this point in the century, the narrator is still supplementing the characters’ discussions of moral and religious questions, even if it is through a deliberate refusal to do so; later on, the implied reader will be left to consider the actions and thoughts of the characters entirely by him- or herself as the instructive elements of the novels become almost exclusively either spoken by the characters rather than the narrator or implicit, beneath the surface of the text.

In conclusion, then, although there is a change in the ways in which questions of social class are represented as instruction continues to move from the explicit towards the implicit, the superiority of the middle classes is never questioned. The earliest novel, *The Water-Babies*, is the most didactic and the most explicit concerning the link between Christianity and middle-class morality; the second, *Wonderland*, satirises these middle-class conventions through the narrator’s commentary while relying on two instances of allegorising to biblical stories and references to earlier moral and religious writings; and the last, *Black Beauty*, has a narrator that refuses to judge
at all and relies on other characters and the implied child readers to understand the right attitudes and correct moral standards, as well as the religious reasoning behind them, for themselves. The one thing they all do, however, is uphold the class structure as it is without question. Kingsley’s point is that the middle class owes a duty of care to the poor, not that the poor should try to change their lot for themselves. Carroll makes great fun of middle-class morality but offers no alternative, and even in Wonderland the class structure is adhered to, with the Queen giving such orders as she pleases which none but the King, as the only higher authority, can reverse and the servants being made to do the jobs that no one else wishes to. And Beauty would no sooner question human social structures than pass moral judgements, merely loving best those characters that choose to conform to middle-class moral and social norms and thus leaving any explicit references to religious teachings for the human characters to make, continuing the shift toward implicit instruction. In the end, whatever else these fantastical tales may or may not count as their achievements, toppling the British social class system is not one of them; there may be a steady change in the intervention of the narrator and the association of morality with religion as instruction moves from explicit to implicit, but there is none in the insistence on the need for standard social class norms. The links between the religious imagery and the social concerns being discussed is not as overtly stated in the way that it is in the earlier domestic children’s fiction, but the links between religion and unchallenged social expectations are still very much present.
Chapter Four: Religion, Masculinity and Empire

In this chapter, I argue that the movement from explicit to implicit religious instruction in nineteenth-century children’s literature is completed in the emerging genres of boys’ school fiction and boys’ adventure fiction. Both of these genres attempted to depict a masculinised idea of Christianity that focusses on action and discipline, but the instructional and religious elements of the novels become less clear as constructions of masculinity are questioned and nuanced. I will examine two works from each genre. The earliest novel is Tom Brown’s School Days: by an Old Boy, by Thomas Hughes (1857), and the latest is the other school novel, Rudyard Kipling’s Stalky & Co. (1899). The two adventure tales are R. M. Ballantyne’s The Coral Island; a Tale of the Pacific Ocean (1858) and Robert Lewis Stevenson’s Treasure Island (1883). I argue that the construction of a spiritually centred form of masculinity was necessary not only to counter (or at least create a space alongside) feminised forms of Christianity, but also because the continued expansion of the British Empire depended on an unquestioned faith in the superiority of white British men over every other nation and people. This superiority could not merely be in terms of force; the British characters had to be better than indigenous characters both in their religious faith (their spirituality) and in their masculinity. Because all aspects of the white characters had to be superior to all aspects of the non-white characters, superior spirituality had to mean superior masculinity as well; having a spiritually superior male character could not be allowed to mean that the character was in any way feminised, or less than the ideal man. However, I argue that the construction of spiritually masculine white men is increasingly destabilised in the later novels explored here. This does not mean that faith in the Christian God or conviction over the English right to rule faded (arguably, the opposite occurred – most historians point to the end of the nineteenth century as the period in which empire-building fever was at its height), but rather that
the construction of an ideal masculinity focused around spirituality and represented as the
definition of good Englishness comes under scrutiny.

I argue that in these novels, attempts at creating an ideal construction of masculinity linked
to a masculine spirituality and its later destabilisation takes place in three ways simultaneously.
Firstly, all of these novels banish the feminine presence to at least some extent. This means that
the male characters have no female characters to fall back on for spiritual guidance, and so must
guide themselves. In *Tom Brown*, the earliest novel, the process of removing feminine presence is
begun slowly through having a partially feminised male character (Arthur) provide spiritual
guidance until the main character, Tom, is ready to take on the role of guide himself for his friend
East. In this novel, it is this moment between Tom and East when spirituality shifts from a feminine
to a masculine pursuit. I then argue that the earlier novels establish masculine and spiritual
superiority as a specifically British trait, before the later novels question whether this narrowly
defined form of masculinity is in fact the most effective kind for empire builders to possess.
Finally, I argue that the most important tool for creating the assumption of white British superiority
is the fact that issues of race are almost totally ignored. The school stories establish British
masculine superiority without ever really discussing spaces in the Empire in detail, and of the
adventure tales only one depicts non-white characters. In the latest two novels examined here,
written right at the end of nineteenth century, the narrator has stopped intervening directly in the
tale at all and moral decisions made by characters rarely refer directly back to any religious
motivation, completing the movement from explicit to implicit instruction. In the end I argue that
by absenting non-white characters, failures and faults of white leadership within the Empire can
be implicitly revealed without fear of the white characters appearing inferior to their non-white
counterparts.
Before examining the texts, some of the ongoing critical discussions surrounding empire in literature must first be considered. One of the main focusses of the late nineteenth century was on the expansion and maintenance of the British Empire, a project that very much had religious ideas and reasoning at its core, however much these ideas have been contested since. That is, British imperialists believed that they had the physical ability to take from Indigenous groups because they were morally and spiritually superior to them; as Patrick Brantlinger puts it, “[t]here might be many stages of social evolution and many seemingly bizarre customs and ‘superstitions’ in the world, but there was only one ‘civilisation’, one path to ‘progress’, one true ‘religion’. ‘Anarchy’ was many-tongued; ‘culture’ spoke with one voice” (“Victorians and Africans” 166-67). In fact, as all Christians had a duty to missionize, to refuse to do so was an act against God and against the country. This is not, of course, to claim that the so-called “civilising mission” was in many cases much more than a cover for deliberate, calculated genocide (either literal or cultural), but it was usually presented to those back in Britain as benign, well intended and even compassionate. J. A. Mangan points out that even later on, evangelization was considered “inseparable from the doctrines of Christianity; a duty laid upon Christians by the direct command of God” (Mangan 779). It is therefore imperative to remember that the imperial project was justified by, and in large part believed to be, a quite literally divine duty laid upon the English. Questions of religion and empire were thus inextricably linked to one another.

But as the imperial project, even the non-military elements, was one of “action” that required skills that “were practical as well as spiritual,” it is also necessary to recognise that despite the large number of woman missionaries, the imperial project was also deliberately linked with a certain kind of masculinity (Mangan 779). Quite aside from his religious duties, the missionary was seen as “the bearer of civilisation, the promoter of trade, the advocate of a disciplined
imperialism, the creator of imperial boundaries and a philanthropist who won admiration irrespective of his doctrinal affiliations” (Mangan 779). In other words, these tasks and responsibilities were assigned to missionaries on the understanding that they were examples of “proper” Western masculinity; the performance of these supposedly religious duties demonstrated a character capable of order, control, management, physical endurance and strength. In doing so, a narrowly defined construction of masculinity emerged that was deliberately aligned with a construction of British identity. However, while associating masculinised tasks with the missionaries allowed some small beginning, a great difficulty facing writers of boys’ fiction was the problem of connecting religion to masculinity. The difficulty of relating faith to masculinity arose from the fact that, as discussed in the chapter on domesticity and femininity, spirituality had come to be linked in the social conscious with female traits and the ideal feminine form, not with men and masculinity. Since spiritual strength and leadership were so strongly associated with feminine attributes and ideals, there had to be found a way in which spirituality and religion could be linked directly to this idealised construction of a British masculinity.

In order to explore this, I want to establish the interconnected nature of masculinity and imperialism in Victorian Britain. In his ground-breaking criticism (not only his more famous Orientalism but also his later Culture and Imperialism), Edward Said argues that imperialistic thought permeated every aspect of life and the arts, especially the novel. However, when discussing boys’ adventure fiction, an equally informative voice is that of Brantlinger. In Rule of Darkness, Brantlinger argues that boys’ adventure novels rose to popularity as the edges of the colonial maps were beginning to be filled in and there was less excitement to be had in adventures in the real world: “[t]he fear that adventure may be a thing of the past in the real world led many

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5 Said’s Culture and Imperialism is of particular interest because it has been such a significant work in terms of exploring not only Joseph Conrad’s fiction and ideology, but Kipling’s as well.
writers to seek it in the unreal world of romance, dreams [and] imagination” (*Rule of Darkness* 239). If adventure novels were in fact a response to lost opportunities for real adventure, it makes sense that despite its origins for adult readers being considerably earlier, the genre did not really become a popular source of entertainment for children until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Without disputing Said’s claim that the end of the nineteenth-century saw the height of empire-building fever in Britain, Brantlinger also argues that “early and mid-Victorians expressed imperialist ideology in their writings” to no less of a degree, meaning that the period in which Ballantyne and Hughes were writing was one which had a strong interest in colonial discussion (*Rule of Darkness* 8). He also creates room for the discussion of school fiction to be included in this chapter by recognising that, like religion, “[i]mperialism, understood as an evolving but pervasive set of attitudes towards the rest of the world, influenced all aspects of Victorian and Edwardian culture” (*Rule of Darkness* 8). In fact, Brantlinger goes so far as to argue that “[i]mperialism itself, as an ideology or political faith, functioned as a partial substitute for declining or fallen Christianity” (*Rule of Darkness* 228). Taking into consideration more recent criticism that questions this narrative of decline of religious belief, it might be worth asking instead whether faith in empire is not a cover for a loss in religious belief, but for the loss of faith in something else – that is, in unshakable patriarchal rule centred around a narrow construction of ideal masculinity.\(^6\) In fact, whether or not there was some loss of religious faith amongst intellectuals, as critics such as Brantlinger argue, that loss is not demonstrated in the children’s literature of the period, which instead continues to implicitly connect the entwined debates of

\(^6\) As discussed in the introduction, critics such as G. R. Searle, William Gibson, Mark Canuel, Frances Knight, Mark Knight and Emma Mason all argue that there is no significant loss of faith in the Christian God over the course of the nineteenth century.
masculinity and empire with moral lessons that are in turn implicitly connected to religious teachings. The religious debates are still there, but are now beneath the surface of what appears to be a more secular, middle-class morality.

Brantlinger’s newer work, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, recognises the strong connection between masculinity and empire, stating at one point that “[t]he ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism reinforced each other” (*Victorian Literature* 64). As such, Brantlinger argues, the adventure fiction that focussed so much on imperialistic teachings also concentrated on displaying a particular, approved brand of masculinity: “[i]n most imperialist adventure fiction, masculinity is a problem only because it is not a problem at all. Boy-heroes are forever proving their manliness through their pluck and derring-do” (*Victorian Literature* 330). Here, Brantlinger recognises the incredibly close connection between manliness and success in empire – the Empire existed almost solely as a place for British boys to become British men. Brantlinger recognises the narrowness of this assumption when he writes that “[a]s an offshoot of patriarchy, misogyny was basic in imperialist adventure fiction, and more generally in imperialist identity. Adventure, exploration, hunting, conquest, and rule were men’s activities” (*Victorian Literature* 66). This link between empire and “men’s activities” was a serious problem, because it meant that the colonial enterprise was associated with an extremely restrictive notion of masculinity and male identity. Therefore, when later writers such as Stevenson and Kipling wrote novels that worked outside of or questioned this particular construction of masculinity, they risked questioning the imperialism with which it was aligned. In the earlier texts, the indigenous characters are shown to be morally and religiously inferior to the white characters as well as inferior in their masculinity or femininity in order to uphold imperialistic ideology. Later novels questioned the narrow construction of masculinity in the white characters, and therefore ran the risk of also questioning whether the white
characters were superior to the non-white characters in this area, and by association whether they were superior in terms of their morality and religion as well.

The major solution to this problem, utilised by both Stevenson and Kipling, was simply removing all indigenous characters, meaning that the definition of masculinity could be questioned without upsetting imperial ideology. However, the mere fact that the problem existed in the first place indicates the difficulty of criticising masculinity in nineteenth-century children’s fiction without also needing to examine attitudes to the British Empire as well. All of the boys’ fiction examined in this chapter, even the school fiction that seems on the surface to have little do with the Empire but is actually focussed on teaching boys how to prepare to become good imperial leaders, eventually connects back to the colonial project. A discussion of male identity must therefore of necessity also be a discussion of empire.

To begin, then, the earliest novel explored here, *Tom Brown*, begins shifting spirituality from being a feminised ideal to being permissible in male characters firstly through the character of Arthur, who blends typically female traits (his clear moral and spiritual strength) with a masculine courage that forces the titular character of the novel to recognise his own spiritual and masculine shortcomings. The character of Arthur is the focus of much of the critical work surrounding *Tom Brown*, and criticism of the novel tends to focus on gender roles and sexuality in middle class boarding schools. Andy Harvey, for example, notes that Arthur and Tom’s relationship contains decidedly homosexual undertones and that gender in the novel is fluctuating and uncertain (Harvey 18). Maureen M. Martin and Peter Stoneley temper this by suggesting that their relationship is likely more a mixture of homosexual and homosocial, and that the importance of their bond is not its sexual elements but the fact that Arthur provides a feminine character for Tom to protect and to receive spiritual guidance from. For the purposes of this chapter, Martin’s
and Stoneley’s arguments seem to come closer to recognising the difficulties of representing a male spiritual guide character in the mid-nineteenth century.

Arthur is the partially feminine character in need of protection so that Tom can work out how to be a spiritual guide without needing to embrace feminine traits. From the first day of meeting Tom, Arthur displays a courage that Tom envies by kneeling to pray and in doing so acts as the influencing mother figure by reminding Tom of his broken promises to his real mother and of his cowardice. Tom despairs when “the thought of his own mother came across him, and the promise he had made at her knee, years ago, never to forget to kneel by his bedside, and give himself up to his Father, before he laid his head on the pillow from which it might never rise” (Hughes 249), demonstrating that Arthur is the feminine ideal of a spiritual conscience that Tom needs. Stoneley claims that “[i]n the ways of masculinity, Tom takes the lead. But when it comes to feminine matters such as spiritual humility, Arthur has a courage that Tom himself has lacked” (Stoneley 77). This reading seems to be limiting, though, as it is this first action of displaying clear and deliberate courage, despite his feminine appearance and attitude, that first allows the typically feminine trait of spiritual guidance to display itself. The masculine and feminine are thus almost effectively blended — although for Arthur at least, the feminine traits continue to dominate over the more masculine act. Equally, as Martin argues, “like most Victorian heroes, Tom Brown needs an angel in the house. And in Part Two, Tom learns how to love and deserve his own angel through his relationship with a classic Victorian heroine — his gentle, loving friend, Arthur” (Martin 487). That is to say, Arthur and Tom’s relationship is not a straightforward husband and wife parallel. This is partly because of Arthur’s display of the decidedly masculine trait of courage, but also, as Stoneley points out, because their relationship sometimes switches to being closer to a parent-child relationship than a matrimonial one: “Tom and Arthur’s friendship takes on the guise of various
types of relationship, sometimes quasi-parental, sometimes quasi-marital” (Stoneley 78). The flexibility in their relationship that Stoneley recognises is what allows for the fact that there is some limited switching of which of the two is leading the other at any given moment (that is, whether it is Arthur teaching Tom or Tom protecting Arthur).

However, this switching is within a very narrow scope because it does nothing to prevent them remaining trapped in traditional gender roles. Tom’s masculinity is confirmed by his allowing a feminine spiritual guide to affect his actions, such as when he follows Arthur’s example and kneels to pray in the evenings (Hughes 222-23), while he himself displays traits of masculine activity and courage, such as in his fight or his prowess at cricket. In other words, Hughes’s novel does not attempt to address real masculinity and femininity but rather establishes a new construction of masculinity that is masculine despite incorporating the seemingly feminine trait of spiritual superiority. Tom accepts Arthur’s guidance and influence as a pseudo-angel in the house not because Arthur is pretty or has feminine grace like, presumably, the “pretty boys” (Hughes 257) that Hughes asks the implied child reader to despise, but because he recognises Arthur’s spiritual and moral superiority (Hughes 257). It is this superiority that really separates Arthur and Tom’s relationship from those between the “pretty boys” and their older protectors who “did all that they could to spoil them for everything in this world and the next” (Hughes 257) and thus were morally inferior with neither the younger feminine “pretty boys” nor the older protectors acting as moral or religious teacher for the other. Through all of this, Hughes’s narrator explicitly comments on the events of the story (such as when he is talking about the “pretty boys”) in the

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7 Despite the fact that homosexuality was illegal in Britain at this time, it is notable that a sort of “buddy system” existed in many boarding schools in which they essentially turned a blind eye to homosexual relations. For a fascinating insight into this system, read C. S. Lewis’s autobiography Surprised by Joy.
same way that Kingsley’s narrator does, indicating that the two novels written within ten years of each other approach explicit religious teachings in much the same way.

But it is ultimately not Arthur’s relationship with Tom, but Tom’s relationship with East, that finally begins a clear shift from a feminine spirituality to a masculine one, and thus creates a space for morally and religiously superior masculine male characters. Arthur’s blend of feminine spirituality with masculine courage creates an opening for Tom to also attempt to have a spiritual influence during his discussion with East about his confirmation. East displays a masculine hatred of hypocrisy and the courage to refuse to take part in it, meaning that his admission to breaking down in the Doctor’s office is not feminine excitability but the natural outworking of a masculine courage to face up to his own conceived failure (Hughes 378). It is Tom that persuades East to go to the Doctor, taking on Arthur’s usual role of spiritual advisor, seeing his fear not as weakness but as part of the ongoing fight that all Christian men had to fight, saying “there’s some dark strong power, which is crushing you and everybody else, That’s what Christ conquered, and we’ve got to fight” (Hughes 376). The military language used here keeps the otherwise sentimental conversation grounded in masculine imagery. East also states flatly that “I don’t want to be one of your saints, one of your elect, whatever the right phrase is. My sympathies are all the other way; with the many, the poor devils who run about the streets and don’t go to church” (Hughes 375). In other words, through his refusal to be confirmed East actually displays a moral superiority as well as masculine courage that makes him spiritually superior to the boys who had done it only in order to be part of the crowd. He is morally superior to them not because he has rejected religious teachings but because he has been honest about his confusion and doubt and is asking for guidance as opposed to falling into hypocrisy.
In fact, what is remarkable about this scene is actually how little questions of masculinity or femininity come into play, particularly as they are almost unavoidable in scenes surrounding Arthur and Tom. The feminine traits of virtue and gentleness are so blended with the masculine ones of honesty and fellow feeling that neither Tom nor East really lose any of their masculinity even as they begin to take on these “Christ-like,” supposedly feminine traits. Hughes allows no space for the uncertainty that permeates and troubles both Treasure Island and Stalky & Co. In the end, East becomes a military officer, and it is not unreasonable to assume that his sympathy for “the many, the poor devils who . . . don’t go to church” will make him an excellent and well-loved commander, thus ultimately completing the link between school and empire, between masculinity, Christian missionary work and English superiority. Hughes implicitly links the three ideologies together through both the conversations of the characters.

Working within the framework of the ideal spiritual masculinity as defined by Hughes in Tom Brown, when creating male moral and spiritual guides, both adventure novels introduce a spiritually superior mother character at the beginning before banishing her presence within the first few chapters, leaving the male characters to remember her lessons on their own. Ralph, from the earlier novel Coral Island, is more concerned by this than Jim in the later Treasure Island. In both cases Ralph and Jim are left with the memory of religious and moral guidance but also a need to work out a method by which their mothers’ feminine spirituality can inform masculine action, although the earlier novel Coral Island makes the link explicit where the later Treasure Island leaves the link to be implicitly assumed. On leaving home, Ralph recalls that “my mother gave me her blessing and a small Bible; and her last request was that I would never forget to read a chapter every day, and say my prayers” (Ballantyne 5), which is a classic example of how the mother enacts the role of spiritual guide but then cannot offer any practical, useful aid in the masculine
world of empire because she cannot leave the world of the home. Equally, Jim’s mother acts as a total contrast to the treasure hunters, pirates and professionals alike, by refusing to take any more than she is owed from the captain’s body: “‘I’ll show these rogues that I’m an honest woman’, said my mother. ‘I’ll have my dues, and not a farthing over’” (Stevenson 32). Her insistence on fairness, while not the explicit pleading to read the Bible and pray that Ballantyne’s mother character makes, still links the feminine realm with morality, and thus, due to the earlier association of femininity with spirituality established by the moral tale writers and satirised by Carroll, suggests that Ralph’s mother is not only morally but spiritually superior as well. In other words, through her demonstrated moral superiority, Jim’s mother’s spiritual superiority is implicitly assumed without needing to be explicitly stated.

However, unlike in the domestic fiction where the maternal presence is constant, neither Ralph nor Jim really mention their mothers again after they have sailed. Ralph mentions her once when he is regretting not keeping his promises as Bill dies (thus again reinforcing the association of the feminine with the spiritual), but there are certainly no Swiss Family Robinson style scenes of daily prayers, hymns and reading on Coral Island; in fact, the matter of daily devotions is never mentioned on the island at all. In the same manner, Jim gets caught up in the treasure hunt just like everyone else and appears to completely forget his mother while at sea. The adventure is a place for men and the female presence, along with the spiritual and moral guidance the mother was supposed to provide, is effectively banished. This banishment suggests that a masculine faith must be a faith of action, not of prayer and contemplation, and that feminine stillness in the form of contemplation and prayer has no use or place in the Empire.

It is not just adventure tales that exclude women; the boarding school, almost by definition, is also a world exclusively for men and boys. The only woman really mentioned by name in Stalky
& Co. is Mary, who is not a protector and guide for the boys with whom they can learn masculine courtesy and chivalry, but instead encourages Stalky and his friends in their worst behaviour. When they are being followed by the Sixth-Former Tulke, Stalky dares Mary to kiss Tulke: “[s]olemnly and conscientiously Mary kissed him twice, and the luckless prefect fled” (Kipling 208). The Sixth-Formers are then incapable of meting out justice to Stalky’s group because one of their own members has committed a social error by kissing a girl on the street. In this example, then, while there is (briefly) a female presence, that presence does not bring with it any moral or spiritual superiority. The male and characters are therefore equally incapable of providing spiritual guidance, thus placing the two sexes on the same level rather than elevating the female characters above the male characters in this area. However, while the characters are on an even level of “goodness” regardless of gender, that level is relatively low; neither the male nor the female characters attempt to take the lead in spiritual matters with any measure of success to show for it. Thus this later novel demonstrates a movement away from exalting a spiritual form of masculinity at all through a failure to focus on spirituality in characters of either gender, as well as a movement from doing this through explicit commentary from both the narrator and the characters to the link being implicitly assumed beneath the surface of the text.

With this link recognised, the argument can move to the second part of this chapter – the establishment of British superiority through their superior masculinity, a masculinity that is superior because it is not only physical but also informed by the spiritual superiority associated with the construction of British masculinity. The earlier texts are not only more explicitly insistent on this superiority than the later texts, where the superiority is implicitly implied rather than outright stated, but are also more successful at connecting spiritual superiority directly to masculinity because the construction of masculinity in the earlier novels is considerably narrower
than in the later texts. *Tom Brown* not only insists on linking spirituality to the most ideal form of masculinity, but links Englishness itself to this masculine Christianity by establishing that Christianity and Englishness are intertwined. Hughes links these ideas right at the start of the novel, as he describes the countryside in which Tom Brown grew up: “[i]t is altogether a place that you won’t forget, — a place to open a man’s soul and make him prophesy, as he looks down on that great Vale spread out as the garden of Lord before him” (Hughes 11). By linking the natural beauty of England with the garden of Eden, Hughes creates an assumption not only that England is in some way uniquely blessed beyond all other nations. The link also suggests that England is the true home of humankind just as Eden was, and that others have been exiled from it and must be returned to it just as wandering people must be returned to God (with returned to it referring to cultural customs and beliefs, not a literal movement of people).

Equally, the description of the birds in the valley “[r]epeating in true sing-song vernacular the legend of St George and his fight” parallels the idea of the heavenly host constantly singing in heaven’s throne room (Hughes 19). Like the angels, the birds are singing of glorious deeds achieved in the name and power of God, suggesting a likeness between England’s natural world (the birds) and the angels of heaven. When read alongside with the first quotation, the absolute certainty of English supremacy is cemented and therefore justifies the actions of the English in bringing other nations to the realisation of Christian, and hence English, superiority. Also significant is the choice of referring to “St George and his fight”, presumably meaning the legend of St George and the Dragon, an undeniably masculine form of action, rather than choosing to focus on the older story of St George’s death as an unresisting martyr. In concentrating on this particular narrative, Hughes implicitly associates Christianity with Englishness (St George being England’s patron saint) and at the same time opens up the possibility of demonstrating spiritual
superiority through force, particularly as St George is not only England’s saint but was also the main patron saint of the Crusaders.

It is only after establishing that Englishness and Christianity are inseparable that Hughes connects religion to masculinity and then reconnects both with the building of empire through the celebration of the patron saint’s day with a “veast,” the highlight of which is fist fighting (Hughes 30). His explicitly stated claim that “on the whole the effect [of the veast] was humanising and Christian” lays down the roots for Tom’s apparently healthy, Christian-spirited fight in defence of Arthur in the second half of the novel. Hughes was a known advocator of muscular Christianity, and his convictions are repeatedly emphasised in the use of action and force to achieve spiritually motivated ends. Dennis W. Allen goes so far as to argue that “[a]lthough muscular Christianity is explicitly predicated on an analogy between physical and spiritual vigor . . . Hughes's novel is subtly animated by an alternate, ascetic doctrine of the incommensurability of the corporeal and the spiritual” because the spiritual and the physical are split between the two characters of Arthur and Tom (Allen 116). However, Tom does not fail to take up and adapt to Arthur’s spirituality and Arthur does grow physically stronger, meaning that the divide between them is not as absolute as Allen suggests. Instead, as William E. Winn notes, “[e]specially repugnant to Hughes was the belief held by some that Christianity was no faith for fighters . . . To the contrary, urged the man who had been the Colonel of the Volunteer Bloomsbury Rifles, Christians were under the obligation to fight with their bodies, minds and spirits against whatever was false” (Winn 69). Hughes’s ideal form of muscular Christianity is thus demonstrated in his insistence on the value of masculine traits of a desire for justice and the willingness to fight for it, underlying which is the assumption that God will grant strength and victory to the just.
This ideal is confirmed in the second half of the story when Tom fights in order to defend Arthur from a bully. The entire incident is represented as being completely justifiable; indeed, if he had done nothing Tom would have been at fault for leaving Arthur without protection (Hughes 311-334). The narrator is particularly intrusive throughout the entire chapter of the fight, reflecting Hughes’s desire to assert that good, Christian masculinity has a right to justified violence in defence of another. At the beginning of the chapter, the narrator exclaims:

> From the cradle to the grave, fighting, rightly understood, is the business, the real, highest, honestest business of every son of man. Every one who is worth his salt has his enemies, who must be beaten, be they evil thoughts and habits in himself or spiritual wickedness in high places, or Russians, or Border-ruffians, Bill, Tom or Harry, who will not let him live his life in quiet until he has thrashed them. (Hughes 312)

By phrasing the opening of the chapter in such a way, Hughes links the physical fight (the fight against others) to the spiritual one (the fight against “evil thoughts and habits”) without differentiating between the two, thus effectively suggesting that they are, or at least can be, one and the same thing. He also widens out the entire discussion to beyond the school yard by asserting that fights against “wickedness in high places, or Russians, or Border-ruffians” are also the “honestest business of every son of man”. Widening the borders of the topic allows for a connection to the work of the Empire, granting a spiritual right to the English military to take by force. The physical, moral and spiritual rights are woven together so as to insist that using physical force is a part of the construction of true masculinity, which in turn is spiritually and morally superior. While the link is implicit rather than explicitly stated by the narrator, the association is wholly necessary to the attempts to justify the continued expansion of the British Empire and the use of force in doing so.
In a similar manner in which religion and the use of force in the Empire are linked in *Tom Brown*, the natural beauty of the Coral Island, presented in both religious and scientific terms, is implicitly linked to the superiority of the British characters in terms of their spirituality and their active abilities to adapt and survive – that is, in their masculine traits. Firstly, the island is recognised as an example of God’s glory through His creation: “My heart was filled with more delight than I can express at the sight of so many glorious objects, and my thoughts turned suddenly to the contemplation of the Creator of them all . . . I was constantly surrounded by the most beautiful and wonderful of His works” (Ballantyne 22). Here, Ballantyne associates foreign natural beauty with the Christian God, the opposite of Hughes’s association of English natural beauty with Him. However, their ultimate effects are similar. Where Hughes does so to prove the spiritual superiority of England, Ballantyne does so to suggest that the English boys on the island are capable of finding or creating a home for themselves anywhere, as the Christian God and His “beautiful and wonderful works” are everywhere.

Next, the island’s beauty is analysed from a scientific standpoint, thus linking the Creator God and scientific reason (as indeed they were assumed to be naturally linked in the first half of the nineteenth century), for example in Jack’s explanation of the bunyan tree (Ballantyne 83-84). In connecting scientific understanding and reasoning to the island after attributing its beauty to God, the narrative implies that scientific exploration is itself similar to an act of worship, because it is a way of understanding and marvelling at God’s power and beauty in creation. The narrative then moves to introduce the cannibalistic natives to the scene, and the moral outrage felt by Ralph and his companions (Ballantyne 173-179) can be linked by association to both a spiritual and a biological distance between them and the native of the islands, just as faith and science are linked through the descriptions of the island. In this way, the superiority of the spirituality and the
scientific understanding (a stereotypically masculine trait) of the British boys as well as the interconnectedness of these traits is clearly established. The occasional explicit references to religious teachings allows the implicit connections of religion, empire and masculinity to come through under the surface of the text more clearly, because the few explicit moments of commentary frame the novels as being focussed on religious ideas. Therefore, the leap from those explicit references to assuming an implicit connection between constructions of masculinity and religious beliefs appears to be logical.

However, there is less confidence in the idea that this particular, narrow definition of masculinity is the most effective kind in leadership positions in the later novels, resulting in far fewer explicit references to religious instruction. Like *Coral Island*, *Treasure Island* also displays an interest in the natural world, but the effect is quite different. A. Valint argues that Jim’s interest in the beauty of the island separates him from the greed of both sets of treasure hunters and makes him a sort of romanticised eternal child, the only crew member with a reliable moral compass: “[w]hile the doctor describes the stockade only in terms of gain, Jim understands the loss that underwrites such gain. Jim, therefore, seems to be cognizant of and even in opposition to the colonial investments” (Valint 7). Valint’s argument supports part of the main thesis of this chapter because he argues that *Treasure Island*, one of the later novels of the century, is far less comfortable with the narrowly defined superior masculine characters than the earlier novels. The implicit message is that adult treasure hunters are interested only in economic gain and incapable of appreciating the God-given natural beauty of the island, and thus destroy the island rather than protect it.

The implication of this implicit message is thus that British empire builders are incapable of truly appreciating or protecting the Empire itself. Valint asserts that Jim is an exception to this
rule, as “although Jim has his moments of play on the island, he ultimately does not escape ‘moral laws’ but becomes the only one to embrace them” (Valint 24). Where the other characters, both pirates and treasure hunters, discard the ideals of spiritualised masculinity formed by Hughes and Ballantyne, Jim retains his connection to it by seeing the destruction of the island in melancholic terms. David Sergeant agrees with this assessment, stating that “[i]t is through Jim that *Treasure Island* registers the true cost of the pursuit of profit” (Sergeant 912). However, while these points are certainly not incorrect, to claim that Jim redeems some moral goodness through his spiritual connection to God’s creation of the natural world ignores the fact that Jim, despite recognising the cost of imperial destruction, still partakes in it. In other words, the right of the treasure hunters to destroy the beauty of the island (to exploit it as empire builders) is never questioned, even if their form of masculine superiority and the implicit assumption that this masculinity is spiritually and morally superior is questioned.

Similarly, the other of the two later novels, *Stalky & Co.*, also implicitly questions the links between Christianity and the moral superiority that supposedly gave England a spiritual right to rule (although not whether they had the right), and Kipling begins this process by questioning Hughes’s ideas surrounding the kind of masculinity that should automatically be associated with leaders. In fact, the first mention of Christianity in *Stalky & Co.* is not uplifting or masculine at all. The first reference to a higher power is Beetle’s incensed defence of a fox against poaching: “you must sack your keeper. He’s not fit to live in the same county with a God-fearing fox. An’ a vixen, too — at this time of year!” (Kipling 11). It is a notable irony that the fox is referred to as “God-fearing” when the boys themselves are clearly not, and their continual disregard for male authority figures (as mentioned above, there are no female authority figures in the novel at all) is both what allows them to complain indignantly to a local landlord about unorthodox hunting and what
permits them to commit multiple unorthodox acts themselves. Lynn M. Rosenthal notes that “[i]t is paradoxical that Kipling, known later on for his authoritarian politics, should, in this novel about school life, have seemingly approved such a concerted challenge to institutional authority” (Rosenthal 16), and this challenge is maintained without any serious consequences and with a clear bias towards them in spite of (or even because of) their actions.

Don Randall also remarks on the clear link between Stalky’s disobedience, untruthfulness and deviousness at school and his success as a military officer, saying that “Stalky, the roguish school boy of Part I, elucidates, and is elucidated by, Stalky, the unconventional imperial commander of Part II. Similarly, Stalky’s two worlds, the school world and the Indian empire, are rendered analogous” (Randall 169). As a schoolboy he constantly usurps authority and uses unconventional methods through which to achieve vengeance for perceived slights, and as a commander he does the same, to the point where in retelling his escapades the most repeated phrase is “don’t you remember” as the characters refer back to Stalky’s school exploits as they discuss his army ones (Kipling 323-348). In other words, Stalky is a successful military commander not in spite of his lack of respect for authority and his refusal to adhere to any of the traditionally praiseworthy masculine norms, but because of it. Where Hughes encourages honesty, forthrightness and obedience to authority, all traits lauded as found in the ideal construction of the masculine Christian, Kipling’s characters are irreverent, swear almost constantly, lie either outright or by omission in every chapter, and have no respect even for the school masters that they claim to like. None of these traits can easily be linked back to religious teachings, resulting in any discussion of religious beliefs having to fall beneath the surface of the text. The religious beliefs themselves are not questioned, but because they cannot be linked to masculinity in a simplistic fashion, discussing religious teachings explicitly within the text is rendered impossible. In other
words, the association of the narrow construction of masculinity advocated in earlier texts with religious teachings is unbalanced.

Part of the real issue that the boys take with the authority of their housemasters is their claim to be acting “in loco parentis” (Kipling 18). The school masters are all as flawed as the students, although most (barring King) are represented as well meaning, in a similar way to Yonge’s representation of Dr. May. Unlike Dr. May, however, not one of the masters recognises their own flaws and seem to expect the kind of worshipful obedience that the supposedly perfect Mr. Fairchild demands from his children despite the fact that Kipling’s characters are clearly unworthy of it. What is more, there is no mention at all of any of the boys’ real parents, so these flawed and blind “in loco parentis” guardians are all that they have. None of the masters, not even the Reverend, show any real interest in bettering the boys’ spiritual welfare, focussing instead on their abilities in the classroom and their supposed physical defects due to their refusal to pretend to be interested in games. As their teachers are not their moral superiors, on any matter from dispensing justice to successfully controlling and understanding their classes of boys to King’s dreadful instance of encouraging the boys in his House to bully the boys in other houses, their teachers cannot therefore be their spiritual guides; they cannot show them the correct path to God. Despite the fact that Kipling’s entire narrative questions almost all of Hughes’s other assumptions, the implicit link between the lack of moral guidance and the lack of an interest in either the teacher or the students in spiritual and religious guidance is still clear. There is no equivalent to Tom Brown’s Arthur for the boys to protect and be protected by either, except possibly the distressed Clewer who is never directly spoken to and reverts to being an ordinary school boy, not a spiritual leader, once he is freed from bullying. This means that aside from beating up Clewer’s bullies in a truly brutal fashion utterly unlike Tom Brown’s fight, the boys’ covert, generally non-physical
fights are all for their own sake, not someone else’s. Yet despite their lack of spiritual superiority linked to the ideal construction of manliness, all of the boys become successful empire builders, furthering the strain on the implicitly assumed link between empire building and the construction of a spiritually superior form of masculinity even as the explicit references to religious and moral instruction fade out of the text.

The final part of this chapter discusses the lack of representation of non-white characters in two genres that were ostensibly focussed on teaching boys how to become effective empire builders. However, I wish to start by discussing the only one of the four texts that does directly show non-white characters – *Coral Island*. Arguably, these depictions are part of the reason why *Coral Island* may be less successful in insisting on British superiority than the other novels, even though the later ones question constructions of masculinity and spirituality to a far greater extent. *Coral Island*, while as confident in the superiority of Englishness and Christianity as *Tom Brown*, does allow some doubts over every form of Englishness being automatically superior to the island’s inhabitants. This is achieved primarily by contrasting the actions and attitudes of the pirates with those of the indigenous characters converted to Christianity, and the suggestion that their conversion may make them more “English” (or at least better at striving to be English) than the pirates themselves. Nursel iÇÖZ claims that the adventures in the second half of the book “on the whole have the aim of justifying the British Empire” (iÇÖZ 112). This, while true in the main, seems a little oversimplified, because most of the second half of the book is concentrated on the atrocities committed by the pirates rather than on the non-English characters. Martine Hennard Dunthiel’s explanation that “*The Coral Island* illustrates the transition from early Victorian optimism and relative naivete in the depiction of colonial relations to a more brutal, self-conscious and anxiety-ridden discourse” certainly seems closer, as she recognises that “conversion itself does
not resolve or abolish” the differences between the Europeans and the natives (Dunthiel 119). This is a problem unavoidable in the anxiety of empire building – even when fully converted to Christianity and thus clearly the spiritually and morally superior of the pirates, the non-white characters cannot be allowed to be the spiritual and moral equal of the white Christian characters, because this would unbalance the assumption that moral, spiritual, physical and biological superiority must of necessity go together and so call into question part of the religious justification for the project of empire.

In other words, the main focus of the narrative of Coral Island is not on the struggles between the pirates and the white missionaries or on the non-white Christians and the white missionaries, but on the pirates and the non-white Christians. In this way, the non-white characters are merely a testing ground on which the faults and limitations of the pirates are displayed, and through them, Ralph’s faults and limitations. Brantlinger explains this tendency in boys’ adventure fiction, saying “Africa was a setting where British boys could become men . . . Africa was a great testing – or teething – ground for moral growth” (Brantlinger). In other words, Brantlinger’s argument that non-white characters and Africa itself existed in adventure fiction only as a place of testing for the white characters can logically be assumed to mean that places within the Empire were useful in this genre of fiction only in order to teach the white characters how to grow and mature. In summary, the lessons aimed at Ralph and what he learns both about the more sympathetic pirate character Bill and about the Christianising of the islands’ inhabitants are the real focus because it is these combined that link together religion, masculinity and empire in order to justify the imperial project.

Therefore, the most important part of the entire section of the story that deals with the pirates is Bill and Ralph’s conversation. Bill laments his lack of faith, saying “I wish I had the
feelin’s about God that you seem to have, at this hour” (Ballantyne 261). He is a representative of British citizens who did not have access to education and were working from a young age without ever having gone to Church. He is, in effect, an English heathen and therefore, spiritually speaking, in the same perceived need of guidance as the islands’ inhabitants are. On hearing Bill’s confession, Ralph feels a great shame in admitting to his own neglect of the Bible, saying that “it flashed across me that I was actually in the sight of God a far greater sinner than this blood-stained pirate; for, thought I, he tells me that he never read the Bible, and was never brought up to care for it; whereas I was carefully taught to read it by my own mother” (Ballantyne 261-62). The contrast between the correctly-raised Ralph and the unfortunate Bill mirrors the ignorance of the indigenous peoples; once they have converted to Christianity, they become utterly different – as Bill himself says, “we find that wherever the savages take up with Christianity they always give over their bloody ways, and are safe to be trusted” (Ballantyne 221). By comparison, even Ralph lapses in his devotions and the pirates, despite the fact that as white men they should be morally superior, are certainly not “safe to be trusted” with anything. Ralph even remarks of the captain that “I wondered in my mind whether it were possible for any missionary to tame him!” (Ballantyne 217).

In other words, the native peoples are almost the spiritual superiors of the colonisers, because they allow their Christianity to guide their actions in a way that they white characters decidedly do not.

However, this is never allowed to be fully realised because the non-white Christians are always made dependent on the white missionaries. After fully converting, the non-white groups are under the care and guidance of the missionary teacher, and the local teacher is always accompanied by “an English gentleman” (333), never allowed to lead his own people. In this way, the Christianised islanders are still left in need of guidance, protection and teaching from the white missionaries. Thus, the Christian non-white characters do not trouble ideas of English superiority.
because they are still apparently in need of the white characters’ aid. Ballantyne is actually strengthening the link between empire expansion and religious duty in what he is presenting as being the correct context of truly masculine, truly English, spiritually sound characters (Ralph and his friends) in contrast to the behaviour of the pirates. Through the explicit discussion of faith between Ralph and Bill, the narrative demonstrates that the pirates fail in their superiority because their brand of masculinity, while still disciplined and action-oriented, is not centred around moral and spiritual concerns in the way that the truly ideal construction of British masculinity should be.

None of the other novels attempt to directly engage with non-white characters. Instead, in both boarding school novels, the Empire exists only as a place for the British characters to be tested in and grow from. References to the spiritual elements of this preparation are made explicitly in *Tom Brown* and are left to be implicitly assumed in *Stalky & Co*. As discussed earlier, Tom Brown’s association of violence and justice deliberately refers to foreign enemies, thus simplistically connecting imperial aims in with true British manliness. Equally, Stalky’s superb, if unconventional, leadership is demonstrated in a discussion between his old school friends about his exploits in India, where the non-white characters are focalised through the eyes of the white characters and exist only to prove Stalky’s genius, such as when Dick Four says that “[t]he last [company to come in] was Stalky’s. He was at the head of the road with some of his pet Sikhs” (231). The fact that non-white characters are not represented, or are represented only through the white characters (and even referred to as pets), is extremely significant. As Pierre Macherey explains, “the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence. This is why it is useful to ask of every production what it tacitly implies, what it does not
say” (Macherey 95). In other words, the successful manliness of the white characters is dependent on their being superior to the non-white characters.

However, the non-white characters are missing and therefore cannot offer any resistance to white masculine superiority. Their voices are totally silenced, absented from the discussion altogether. Macherey claims that “[f]or there to be a critical discourse which is more than a superficial and futile reprise of the work, the speech stored in the book must be incomplete; because it has not said everything, there remains the possibility of saying something else” (91). In this instance, then, it is the very fact that the non-white characters are not allowed to speak that is significant, because it means that the narrow definition of Christian and masculine Englishness discussed throughout this chapter can exist without any challenge. In the later novels, when the construction of spiritually defined masculinity is being questioned, this means that Stalky & Co. can question the construction of masculine leadership without ever questioning the right of the white man to lead. The ideal leadership in the Empire can be revealed as unstable without ever revealing flaws in the Empire itself. As Said points out, faith in the Empire was at its height in the late nineteenth century, and that faith was a faith in English superiority: “England is to rule the world because it is the best; power is to be used; its imperial competitors are unworthy; its colonies are to increase, prosper, remain tied to it” (Culture and Imperialism 104). Therefore, it was imperative to omit non-white characters when discussing failures in English characters, such as Mr. King’s failure as a moralist and the chaplain’s failure as a spiritual leader, because if their failures were presented alongside non-white characters, it would imply a lack of faith in the Empire itself – an implication that had to be avoided at all costs, especially as implicit instruction itself was depended on to a far greater extent in these later novels.
Treasure Island also sets up an implicit discussion of the failures of the narrow definition of ideal spiritual masculinity by first removing all indigenous people who act as a contrast to the white characters. This removal then means that there is space to suggest that the supposedly upright members of English society (that is, the group of treasure hunters that include the doctor and the Squire), while perhaps stronger in force than the pirates, are not their spiritual superiors without the risk of suggesting that white men are not superior to non-whites. While their spoken references to God and Christian ideas are almost always in the form of curses or hyperbolic descriptions, the pirates most frequently make religious and biblical references, such as “‘[t]hey was the roughest crew afloat, was Flint’s; the devil himself would have been feared to go to sea with them” (Stevenson 82). These are certainly not the revered references to God that might be expected from a character designed to symbolise goodness, but the other treasure hunters are little better, calling on God and heaven as they swear violence to the pirates: “in the name of heaven, I’ll put a bullet in your back when next I meet you” (Stevenson 156). There is, or seems to be, very little difference between this language and the curses of the pirates, and the violent language of both sides is matched with violent action, which implicitly suggests that neither is really morally or spiritually the better of the other.

The pirates also spend considerably more time, thought and conversation on religious questions than the supposedly upstanding treasure hunters, and although this is usually presented as irrational superstition, real belief in spiritual powers is implicitly ever present. One major example of the superstition amongst the pirates that has little to do with the Christian faith at all is when Dick rips up his Bible in order to give Silver the black spot (that is, to warn him that his crew intend to revolt and then to kill him); “‘What soft-hearted lubber had a Bible?’ ‘It was Dick,’ said one. ‘Dick, was it? Then Dick can get to prayers,’ said Silver. ‘He’s seen his slice of luck, has
Dick, and you may lay to that’” (Stevenson 226). The use of the term “soft-hearted” implies that the pirates still associate spirituality with femininity, thus making them appear old-fashioned and backwards-looking in comparison to the treasure hunters. Alongside this, the pirates all agree with Silver that destroying a Bible intentionally will result in horrific suffering and bad luck. This discourse can hardly be called respectful or grounded in solid theology, and yet the underlying assumption that the Bible, as the Word of God, has power and that to desecrate it is a terrible thing indicates a fearful sort of faith at complete odds with the confidence with which the treasure hunters swear oaths in heaven’s name. Dick, despite protests, clearly believes that there is some kind of supernatural power within the Bible and suffers from the stress, with Jim noting that “Dick had his Bible out, and was praying volubly” and that “Dick, who had dropped behind us, and now brought up the rear, was babbling to himself both prayers and curses, as his fever kept rising” (Stevenson 253, 257). Superstition and Christian devotion are mixed together by the combination of “prayers and curses,” indicating again that while there is a general belief in a spiritual power and some basic understanding of the Christian God having some link to it, the biblical knowledge of the pirates is extremely lacking. Their superstition is clearly at odds with the clearer-minded, strategic thought processes of the other treasure hunters, suggesting a rationality amongst them lacking in the pirates, but at the same time also suggests an unwillingness to engage with matters of spirituality to the same extent that the pirates do. Both the rationality and the unwillingness are only suggested rather than stated, however, signalling that the movement from instruction surrounding religious teachings has now moved completely from the explicit to the implicit.

But it is also a pirate, or at least former pirate, who displays the strongest commitment to Christianity and the assumption that Christianity is irrevocably linked with English societal norms, particularly surrounding the manner in which worship should be conducted. Once again, there is a
clear difference between the way in which *Treasure Island* approaches linking the two as compared to *Tom Brown*; the moment of explicit references to English spiritual superiority through St George are gone, leaving the implied reader to infer that the English are superior through the undertext. Ben Gunn, who was stranded, describes his makeshift services to Jim, telling him that “I come here and prayed, nows and thens, when I thought maybe a Sunday would be about doo. It weren’t quite like a chapel, but it seemed more solemn-like; and then, says you, Ben Gunn was short-handed — no chapling, not so much as a Bible and a flag” (Stevenson 118). Ben Gunn’s understanding of Church and Church services is entirely rooted in the English Anglican traditions and is concerned with the physical, visual trappings of religious ceremony rather than the inner spiritual ones. He links the chaplain (a white male spiritual leader), the Bible and the English flag together as though these things (white male spiritual leadership, religious doctrine and Englishness) are irrefutably intertwined

Later, when he has returned to “civilisation”, he still retains his religious devotion in the same traditionally English fashion; Ben Gunn “still lives, a great favourite, though something of a butt, with the country boys, and a notable singer in Church on Sundays and saints’ days” (Stevenson 273). The implication of this appears to be that Christianity and Englishness are linked, thus assuring the spiritual and moral right of the English to rule and control other lands, even going so far as to link together the Bible and the flag as though the two were not only inseparable but of equal value. In the end, through Ben Gunn’s religiosity, the pirate’s commitment to spiritual (if superstitious) ideas and the lack of interest in anything but economic concerns amongst the treasure hunters, it is thoroughly unclear which of the two sides (the pirates or the treasure hunters) is supposed to have the moral and spiritual superiority over the other; both seem equally spiritually lacking.
This lack of moral clarity troubles assumptions of earlier works, particularly *Tom Brown*, that spiritual superiority and military victory must be absolutely associated with one another, indicating the movement towards uncertainty and anxiety surrounding the British Empire seeping even into children’s literature. This perhaps also helps to explain how different to Sherwood’s attitude is Jim’s attitude towards Silver; where Sherwood insists through Mr Fairchild that it is better to be punished here in this life than in the afterlife, Jim hopes that Silver “perhaps still lives in comfort with [his wife] and Captain Flint. It is to be hoped so, I suppose, for his chances of comfort in the next world are very small” (Stevenson 273). Even the supposedly morally upright narrator has made no push throughout to bring Silver or any of the pirates (or other treasure hunters) to a place of Christian morality, something that would have been unthinkable in Sherwood’s narratives. In fact, the narrator makes no detailed commentary on the matter at all aside from the half-sarcastic remark above, leaving the implied reader to reach the conclusion that Silver is a morally corrupt character without ever explicitly stating that he is, thus completing the final movement from explicit to implicit instruction in children’s literature.

To conclude, then, the ideas of masculinity and Christianity needed to be linked, either explicitly or implicitly, in order to provide justification both for an idealised form of masculine leadership and for the continued expansion of the British Empire. The white man had to be not only physically but also spiritually superior to his non-white counterpart. Earlier school and adventure fiction attempted to connect the three parts neatly, but struggled uneasily with questions of spiritual superiority when the non-white characters had been converted to Christianity (*Coral Island*) and with representing a purely masculine form of spirituality as the best kind (*Tom Brown*). The later adventure novel, *Treasure Island*, did not even attempt to grapple with the issue of race and further complicated questions of spiritual superiority automatically leading to victory and good
leadership, and Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* completely undid previous assumptions of what the ideal form of masculine leadership looked like. Throughout all of this, the correct way for the implied reader to respond to the actions of the characters and the religious teachings connected with the moral debates of the novels become ever closer to implicit instruction, moving continually away from any explicit commentary.

In the end, the last part of the century is marked by a continued strain on the gendering of spirituality and an additional strain on the theological justification for the expansion of Empire, meaning that the attempts to neatly tie masculinity, spirituality and Empire together had essentially failed in children’s literature. The implicit references to religious lessons in the later books do not make a clear connection between those lessons and the narrow construction of masculinity and empire favoured by Ballantyne’s and Hughes’s texts. Earlier school and adventure fiction attempt to connect the three parts neatly, but struggle uneasily with questions of spiritual superiority when the non-white characters had been converted to Christianity (*Coral Island*) and with representing a purely masculine form of spirituality as the best kind (*Tom Brown*). The later adventure novel, *Treasure Island*, does not even attempt to grapple with the issue of race and further complicates the idea that spiritual superiority automatically leads to good leadership. Equally, Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* completely undoes previous assumptions of what the ideal form of masculine leadership looks like. The fact that imperial assumptions and attitudes continued to be printed in children’s books for decades afterwards (and even, implicitly, now) only shows how deeply ingrained the belief in the right to rule and to “teach” was; even well into the twentieth century, the assumption of white Western superiority remained. However, white superiority remains an assumption rather than a stated fact; the novels in the final part of the century have moved away from the explicit didacticism of More and Sherwood and rely on the implied reader to understand the implicit
instruction underlying the text. One of the results of this change is that religion is rarely explicitly engaged with in the two later novels, aside from occasional comments from the characters. However, these few references and the fact that the texts build on the teachings of earlier texts that morality and spirituality are linked means that moments of religious instruction are still present within the moral instruction (for example, as discussed above, when Jim’s mother refuses to take any more money than is owed to her). In the end, the lessons are still present, and the fact that the implied reader now has to connect the pieces to reach the correct answer to the lessons for themselves is arguably not a loss of power of instruction in children’s literature, but rather indicates an enforced internalisation of social and cultural norms.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

In conclusion, the importance of religious teachings remained essentially unchallenged in children’s literature in the nineteenth century. However, the instructional elements of the texts gradually changed over the course of the century from being concentrated primarily on explicit moments of didacticism at the beginning of the century to almost all religious instruction being implicit and below the surface of the text at the end of the century. Equally, the religious justification for, and even the practicality or morality of, attitudes towards class, gender and leadership in the Empire were increasingly questioned. In the early parts of the century, children’s domestic fiction grappled with the difficulty of creating a spiritually significant role for women that was not dependent on being physically pleasing to men. These works were so successful that in the second half of the century, boys’ fiction novels struggled to create masculine characters that did not lose their masculinity when they engaged in spiritual leadership. In the middle of the century, the chaotic fantasy novels demonstrate the ways in which assumptions surrounding class divisions remained constant and unquestioned. In all of these cases, the moral questions surrounding attitudes towards masculinity, femininity and social class were linked back to and justified by religious teachings; the two things (morality and religion) were so intertwined that one was never really discussed without the other either being explicitly stated or implicitly involved.

However, to state that religious debates continued to be of importance is not to claim that nothing fundamental changed in children’s literature throughout the nineteenth century. While the instructional aspects of children’s literature did not become less significant, they did become less invasive with the change in the role of the narrator as instruction shifted from explicit to implicit. At the beginning of the century, the narrator intrudes into the story regularly in order to tell the
implied child reader how to understand the tale. By the middle of the century, those intrusions are less common and less lengthy, and instead of orders on how to read the text they are more hints as to whether a character’s attitude should be approved of or not. By the end of the century, the narrator has stopped directing the implied reader’s interpretation altogether, leaving him or her to decide how best to respond to events in the novels alone. In other words, there is a clear movement from explicit to implicit religious instruction in children’s literature throughout the century.

However, while changes in the role of the narrator indicate both a difference in style and an increased trust in the abilities of the implied child reader to interpret the text, these changes do not mean that the instructive elements of the works become less significant. The instructional elements of the children’s fiction discussed above surround the ways in which religious convictions and assumptions should inform the actions and attitudes of good characters (and hence the implied reader). Ultimately, no matter how uncertain parts of some of the texts, particularly the later ones, may be with certain ideologies, the need for a spiritual or religious explanation for those ideologies permeates the century’s children’s literature. While everything else is changing, a focus on religious instruction remains, in children’s literature at least, essentially constant. This constancy is significant, because it demonstrates the ways in which implicit assumptions surrounding ideologies of gender, class and empire remain, even if they may have lost the explicit voices stating them as fact. The assumptions themselves still exist within children’s literature texts that are read and recommended to children today, such as *Wonderland* and *Treasure Island*. The question of how effectively these lessons speak to their modern readers is one that would certainly be worth exploring in the future.
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