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THE JUNGLE OF EDEN: KIPLING, WOLF BOYS, AND THE COLONIAL IMAGINATION

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THE IDYLLIC FREEDOM OF THE CHILD OF NATURE was a popular notion in both the Romantic and Victorian periods. But the wild child, or what we might call the child of nature taken to extremes, stirs the imagination in deeper ways. This is the child represented as radically orphaned, existing outside of language, and alienated from human social bonds; yet it establishes bonds with the natural world that mimic human object relations and thus suggests an oceanic dyadic connectedness with the non-human. Linking the idea of wildness with the idea of child, the nineteenth-century adult imagination generates a figure of "danger and desire" (1.472), to appropriate Wordsworth's evocative phrase, one which represents both impossible connection and irremediable alienation.

The most celebrated wild-child cases of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the wild girl of Champagne, Victor the Savage of Aveyron, and Peter of Hanover, shared a peculiar feature: unlike the earlier bear-boy or sow-girl accounts cited by Linnaeus or the mythical Romulus and Remus and their fairytale descendants, none of these children was raised by animals. Rather they suggested to the imaginations of their chroniclers and the reading public an integral connection between the landscape and the developing psyche and body of the child. Romantic literary evocations of the child of nature tended to develop this aspect of the figure, exalting the brutalizing "state of nature" of the eighteenth century into a "state of blissful solitude" with a maternalized landscape.

In the late-nineteenth century, however, the wild-child figure is more often represented as a "betwixt and between," as Peter Pan called himself: half-animal (or half-bird), half-human. Fin-de-siècle literature manifests a striking resurgence of the pastoral wild-child figure with many of its Romantic resonances intact, but this figure reflects, too, the question of human origins as it arises in Darwin's work and, in a broader sense, in the developing Victorian discipline of anthropology. Inevitably, it also reflects the role that question plays in discourses of Empire — anthropology, as George Stocking and others have convincingly demonstrated, was very much a tool of imperialism in its early formulations. One immensely popular fictional wild child of the period, Kipling's wolf boy Mowgli, exemplifies such manifestations of the wild-child figure. The Mowgli tales register anxieties about the colonial "other" and demonstrate the anxieties of identity that result

from the double perspective of the second-generation colonizer, one whose childhood attachment to the place of nativity is complicated by a sense of exile as well as by cultural attitudes toward those indigenous to the colonial place. Mowgli's characterization in *The Jungle Books* confirms as well the relationship between the wild-child figure and the psychic terrain of the pre-oedipal that ultimately became a province of the science of psychoanalysis just emerging at the time Kipling was creating his wolf boy. In the colonial situation, the pre-oedipal itself is an area where doubleness prevails, as my discussion of Mowgli's two mothers will show. The mixture of envy and gratitude generated by the Anglo-Indian child's upbringing is a factor in the pathology of colonial racism not yet sufficiently explored.

Kipling's colonial world is India, and his creation of a wolf-boy protagonist reflects the complexities of England's longest relationship of imperial domination. In the mid- and late-nineteenth century, wolf-child stories seized the British imagination, and most of these accounts came from India, from the hill country outposts of the Raj. A number of wolf-child case histories were included as apparently extraneous material in a report later published as *A Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh,* by General William Sleeman. His report recommended strongly against the annexation of the semi-autonomous kingdom of Oudh; Sleeman seems to have published it a year after the outbreak of the infamous Indian Mutiny of 1857 as a sort of "I told you so" gesture, for his advice had been ignored, and the annexation contributed to the tensions that engendered the Mutiny.[1] The wolf-child stories had been extracted from this lengthy report and published separately in 1852; they were reprinted again in popular magazines of the 1890s, *Lippincott's* and *The Field.* In this paper, I examine Rudyard Kipling's creation of Mowgli the wolf boy in relation to these two foci of public attention and fascination, the wolf-boy stories and the Mutiny of 1857. I trace the "missing link" between wolf boys and the Mutiny via Victorian theories and anxieties about origin and inheritance and, more specific to Kipling's stories, via Kipling's father's work on Indians and animals called *Beast and Man in India.*

I consider the story in which Mowgli first appears — the frequently overlooked "story for grown-ups" as Kipling called it (*Jungle Book* 131), "In the Rukh" — as both a reflection of and an attempt to resolve, in fantasy, the anxieties that persist from the Mutiny. Most critics who deal with this story at all it out of the chronology of production and treat it as the culminating or final Mowgli tale, though it was actually written first, probably in 1892. They are justified in doing so by the fact that in the Outward Bound edition of *The Jungle Books,* published in 1897, Kipling chose to include "In the Rukh," moving it from its place in *Many Inventions.* I find it more fruitful to take the order of writing into consideration, however. The originary Mowgli tale recounts the end of this wild-child case history, but that end is radically revised — in fact, I contend it is effectively replaced — when Kipling writes the two *Jungle Books.* The tale Kipling designates as final there, with the words "this is the last of the Mowgli tales" (175), is "The Spring Running," which adamantly refuses closure. "In the Rukh," on the other hand, imposes a tidy and definitely an imperialistic, resolution on Mowgli's history. As Kipling wrote his way "backward" into Mowgli's infancy and development, then, the blending of self and other that recurs in literary productions of the wild child takes over and steers the narrative toward disruption. Not surprisingly, in Kipling's case, the "other" that the wild child represents in anxious tandem with the self is the colonial other; Mowgli's status as wild

child enables him to enter the blurred borderland that figures in the official imperialist code as the rigidly defined border between civilized and barbarous, between "sahib" and "native."

That Kipling's child-heroes, particularly Mowgli and Kim, in some way reflect the split his colonial upbringing produced in him is, of course, no new idea. Salman Rushdie, in his introduction to a 1993 re-edition of two volumes of early (1888) India tales, expresses his sense of the split that manifests itself in Kipling's fiction:

> I once thought of borrowing Buñuel's idea [two actresses splitting the female lead role in *Cet obscur objet de désir*] for a TV programme about Rudyard Kipling. I wanted him to be played by an Indian actor as well as an English one, to speak Hindi in some scenes and English in others. After all, when the child Rudyard was admitted to his parents' presence, the servants would have to remind him to "speak English now to Mama and Papa." The influence of India on Kipling — on his picture of the world as well as his language — resulted in what has always struck me as a personality in conflict with itself, part bazaar-boy, part sahib. . . . The early Kipling is a writer with a storm inside him, and he creates a mirror-storm of contradictory responses in the reader, particularly, I think, if the reader is Indian. (ix)

As Rushdie says, while "Kipling's racial bigotry is often excused on the grounds that he merely reflected in his writing the attitudes of his age [i]t's hard for members of the alledgely inferior race to accept such an excuse" [ix]. Yet the introduction concludes: "There will always be plenty in Kipling that I will find difficult to forgive; but there is also enough truth in these stories to make them impossible to ignore."[2]

The ways in which Darwinian theory and Victorian anthropology supported the "attitudes of his age," reifying white racism and male supremacy, are well-documented.[3] Certainly, the increasing sweep of British colonialism was being justified by race theory long before Darwin; like Freud's, Darwin's science (and its popular interpretations) was an effect of his time as much as a cause. Patrick Brantlinger documents the prevalent view of the conquest of India from the early 1800s as the "natural — almost accidental — result of the virtues of individual British adventurers" (81) whose ingrained heroism and innate superiority seemed destined to subjugate "a people so thoroughly fitted by nature and by habit for a foreign yoke," in the words of Macaulay at mid-century (80). Sir John Seeley, later in the century, put it thus: "Nothing great that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally, so accidentally, as the conquest of India" (81). Having "accidentally" conquered an entire subcontinent with a huge population, England's duty was to establish and maintain a benevolent despotism which would counter what John Stuart Mill called the "despotism of custom" in *On Liberty* that paralyzed Indian society, like Asia in general considered a once-great civilization long since fallen into irremediable degeneracy and decadence.

Orientalist theories of degeneration were increasingly invoked as nineteenth-century anthropology came to include comparative studies in ethnography, philology, and religion. Linguists, for example, theorized a common root language, and the notion of an Indo-European proto-language that had originated and gained great sophistication in Asia before migrating to Europe became widely accepted. Under the influence of Max Müller, among others, this led to the idealization of an "Aryan race," an ancient, "pure" strain; but imperialist contempt for the peoples of India and Indonesia created a curious

paradox in anthropology — the superiority of Aryan ancestry seemed at odds with the inferiority of those "naturally" destined to colonial domination (Stocking 59). And reactions to the Mutiny of 1857 strained the viability of theories of common ancestry. As George Stocking notes: "the 'Indian Mutiny' led a larger number of Britons to reject the notion of common Aryan brotherhood with Hindus, who thenceforth were increasingly to be assimilated within a generalized dark-skinned racial fraternity stigmatized by the epithet 'nigger'" (63).

This paradox was resolved in various ways by different theorists: polygenism and theories of races as biologically distinct subspecies arose to maintain hegemonic hierarchies. In addition, the old idea of the exhaustion and decline of civilizations over time took on new force under the influence of the theory of natural selection. Both scientists and laymen tended, as did Darwin himself at times, to dilute natural selection to some extent with the neo-Lamarckian idea that acquired traits were somehow inheritable. Clearly this helped to justify colonialist projects. It was argued that the unremitting — one might say relentless — influence of a superior Anglo-Saxon civilization would either reverse the degeneration or quicken the progress of inferior races, depending on which doctrine one adhered to. The Mutiny of 1857, however, seriously undermined the philosophy of benevolent despotism.

It would be impossible to overemphasize the persistent power of the Mutiny over the British imagination. The public's reaction of outrage, fear, and fascination is reflected in the voluminous literature — memoirs, histories, novels, poetry, melodrama — that grew out of the Mutiny. Brantlinger shows that even genocide was fantasized as a solution in the immediate wake of the Mutiny and cites a letter of Charles Dickens in October 1857, wherein Boz says that were he "Commander in Chief in India" he would "do [his] utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested" and would "blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the Earth" (207).

Increasingly, the subject of "the late cruelties" brings the question of cruelty as a "racial trait" into the mixture of curiosity and revulsion aroused by the Mutiny. To the qualities typically attributed to the "Oriental" character by European racism — indolence, licentiousness, cunning — cruelty and brutality are added and emphasized.

The question persists throughout the century, as exemplified by John Lockwood Kipling's descriptive and anecdotal treatise on *Beast and Man in India,* first published in 1891. Lockwood Kipling refers obliquely to the Mutiny in his introduction and suggests its connection with his purpose, which is to explore the Indian character through the relations of Indians with the animals they have domesticated. "It has seemed to me that an elementary study of Indian animals, their treatment and usage, and the popular estimates and sayings current about them . . . , opens a side door into Indian life, thought, and character, the threshold of which is still unworn" (14). Lockwood Kipling represents himself as a defender of this character, for "it would be a task as difficult as hateful to prove that the people at large have any abnormal and inborn tendency to cruelty," yet his confidence in the opposite argument is heavily qualified: "The shadow of evil days of anarchy, disorder, and rapine has been lately cleared away and given place to an era of security, when, as the country proverb says, 'the tiger and the goat drink from one ghat.' The people are better than their creeds, but it is not easy to defend their practice, though it is often more due to necessity, custom, and ignorance than to downright brutality of intent" (14).

Beast and Man defends its apparently liberal thesis throughout with this sort of one step forward, two in retreat manner, and Lockwood Kipling shows a strong tendency to compare Indians to their animals unfavorably as in this instance: "It is with the cattle as with the people of India, the more you learn about them the more you find to interest you. But in regard to the cow and the ox one's admiration is unstinted, nor need it be qualified by hesitation and reserve" (116).

Lockwood Kipling's book reflects, at best, a return to the reform-era notion that India was redeemable through the auspices of imperialism, that "a few generations" of British education "may do something in the course of time to lighten this 'blind side' of Oriental character" (13). His intent is also to lay to rest the notion "hinted" by some parties "in England" that "Orientals must have learned cruelty, as they have learned drunkenness, from brutal Britons" (1). He does so by locating brutality firmly in the Indian national character, while excusing it as an effect of a moribund cultural heritage. One begins to see how Rudyard came by his bigotry and his jingoism, by Lamarckian adaptation, as it were.

At the end of a chapter on India's dogs, Lockwood Kipling remarks that "India must be the cradle of wolf children stories" like that of the Boy of Lucknow. His treatise, because it deals with the domestic, rather than the wild, is not the place for these. The remarks of a commentator on India's wolf children in 1874 suggest, however, that accounts of wolf children may also "open a side door" into the Indian character so much a subject of speculation in the post-Mutiny years. A "remarkable feature of these stories," according to the Reverend Erhardt, Superintendent of the Sikandra Orphanage where two wolf boys were housed in the 1870s, is "that the wolves are invariably alleged to have communicated much of their natural ferocity and notably untamable disposition to their foster children" (Singh and Zingg 165–66 n33). Reading this remark in light of the popular interpretation of evolutionary heredity as including the transmission of acquired traits suggests that the commonplace demise of Indian wolf boys in the wild or after captivity was probably a desirable thing in the view of Europeans.

The history of the Boy of Lucknow to which Lockwood Kipling refers was reported by General Sleeman. This was one of the most detailed of the many cases recorded in *A Journey through Oudh* and in J. L. Kipling's opinion the most credible because supported by the testimony of Europeans. This story shares some features with Kipling's Mowgli tales. One feature is common to all Sleeman's wolf-child cases: the wolf-boy of Lucknow has "hardened marks upon his knees and elbows, from having gone on all fours" (qtd. in Singh and Zingg 151) — this is the characteristic the head forester, Muller, uses to identify Mowgli as a wolf-boy in "In the Rukh." Sleeman's account also includes a scene strikingly similar to scenes in Kipling's stories where Mowgli interacts with his wolf "brothers":

> One night while the boy was lying under the tree, near Janoo, Janoo saw two wolves come up stealthily, and smell at the boy. They then touched him, and he got up; and instead of being frightened, the boy put his hands upon their heads, and they began to play with him. They capered around him, and he threw straw and leaves at them. . . . The night after three wolves came, and the boy and they played together. A few nights after four wolves came, but at no time did more than four come. They came four or five times, and Janoo had no longer any fear of them; and he thinks that the first two that came must have been the two cubs with which the boy was first found, and they were prevented from seizing him by recognising his

> smell. They licked his face with their tongues as he put his hands on their heads. (qtd. in Singh and Zingg 152)

When Mowgli must leave the jungle, his wolf brothers tell him they "will come into the croplands to play with thee by night" (42). In the story "Tiger! Tiger!" Mowgli leaves the stifling village hut to sleep under a tree, where he is awakened by Gray Brother as "a soft gray nose poked him under the chin" (98). The illustration shows a scene much like the one described in Sleeman's report, though there is only one wolf waking the boy. In "In the Rukh," there is a scene where Mowgli plays a bamboo flute and his four wolf brothers dance before him on their hind legs in the moonlight; later he pats their heads fondly and encourages the servant's daughter to "stoop down and pat them" (259). Mowgli's litter-mates, however, lick his feet rather than his face; his unmeetable human gaze has rendered them abject.

In "In the Rukh," much is made of the fact that Mowgli has survived to young manhood. Muller marvels, "But why he is not dead I do not understand" (253) and later adds, "[O]nly once in my service, und dot is thirty years, haf I met a boy dot began as this man began. Und he died. Sometimes you hear of dem in der census reports, but dey all die" (254). Likewise, General Sleeman concludes in *Journey through Oudh:* "I have never heard of a man who had been spared and nurtured by wolves having been found; and, as many boys have been recovered from wolves after they have been many years with them, we must conclude that after a time they either die from living exclusively on animal food, before they attain the age of manhood, or are destroyed by the wolves themselves." He speculates that after the mother wolf who has adopted the child dies, "other wolves may kill or eat [the wolf boys]" or tigers may kill boys who attempt to scavenge prey from them: "Tigers often spring upon and kill dogs and wolves thus found feeding upon their prey. They could more easily kill boys, and would certainly be more disposed to eat them" (qtd. in Singh and Zingg, 154). The tiger Shere Khan, of course, is Mowgli's mortal enemy in *The Jungle Books,* and it is because of a rogue tiger that Mowlgi decides to approach Gisborne the Forest Ranger in "In the Rukh" and offer his help in tracking the man-eater. These details, and Lockwood Kipling's reference to the Boy of Lucknow story, suggest that Rudyard may well have read Sleeman's report, or the pamphlet extracted from it, and perhaps drew some of his wolf boy lore from that source.

IN 1897, HILDA GREGG REVIEWED nine novels about the Mutiny of 1857 and found them all wanting; Brantlinger reports that "she lamented that Rudyard Kipling had not yet writen about it" and goes on to say that "[p]erhaps Kipling intuitively avoided a subject that so tempted other writers to bar the door against imaginative sympathy" (199). In fact, Kipling did write about the Mutiny, in two early tales, called "One View of the Question" and "The Lost Legion,"[4] and in a *Jungle Book* tale, "The Undertaker," which features a vicious old crocodile that had acquired its appetite for human flesh by devouring corpses, first English ones and then, in greater numbers, Indian, as they floated downriver from the scenes of the Mutiny "thirty years" earlier. I suggest that Kipling's initial creation of Mowgli in "In the Rukh" may also have been written in the "shadow of evil days" of the Mutiny that still haunted the colonial imagination, thirty-five years later in 1892.

The story's central concern is with the search for the lost father; in the story Mowgli identifies himself to Gisborne, the lone-sahib forest ranger, only as a man "without caste" and "without a father" (228). Neither Mowgli's human nor his wolf mother is mentioned

in the story. Yet the mystery of Mowgli's origins which Muller solves is the riddle of the two mothers — of Mowgli's double state, born of woman but raised by she-wolf. When Kipling invents Mowgli's developmental history in *The Jungle Books,* as I will show, the issue of the two mothers and the essential confusion of identity that results, repeatedly, in alienation become central.

"In the Rukh," on the contrary, presents Mowgli as a sort of Aryan figure, a throwback to a pre-historic India; at the same time, he is the "noble savage" who exposes the shortcomings of civilization. The character Muller, the head forester who manages to identify Mowgli as a wolf boy, is something of a Victorian evolutionist; one wonders whether his name, and his German accent, are meant to refer to Max Müller (who shared with Kipling's character, if nothing else, an intense interest in wolf children). Speculating on Mowgli's origins leads Muller down several of the paths Victorian anthropology was pursuing. Mowgli is initially described as a godlike youth, and his attributes — his garland of jasmine blossoms, his flute-playing, his sensuality, and his mysterious ability to herd the wild *nilghai* as if they were tame cattle — all suggest the Hindu pastoral deity Krishna. But Muller calls him "Faunus," emphasizing his sexuality by naming him as "son of Libidina and Priapus," but divorcing him at the same time from Hindu mythology by conflating its symbols with those of Greek myth. Muller suggests, too, a Darwinian history of origins for Mowgli, making of him a biological anachronism as well as a cultural one.

The wolf boy grown up is presented, in Muller's words (and in Muller's burlesque accent), as "an anachronism, for he is before der Iron Age, and der Stone Age. Look here, he is at der beginnings of der history of man — Adam in the Garden, and now we want only an Eva! No! He is older dan dot child-tale, shust as der rukh is older dan der Gods" (254). In the jungle, representing primal India, Kipling creates a Darwinistic proto-Adam, and he does indeed provide him with an Eve; at the story's end, Mowgli seduces the thirteen-year-old daughter of Gisborne's Muslim servant. Although Gisborne assures the irate father that she will convert him, instead Mowgli initiates the young girl into his animistic creed. In the idyllic final scene, Gisborne and Muller come upon a "naked brown baby" apparently about to be devoured by the wolf looming above it (263). The servant's daughter, calmly confident and freed of her Muslim veil, enters the forest clearing just as Gisborne deflects Muller's rifle shot; she explains that the wolf brother has been baby-sitting while she and Mowgli were fishing downstream.

But Mowgli's potential for subversiveness is sharply curbed by his creator. Amazingly, the "son of the forest" winds up working for the forest service, becoming a cog in "the wheels of public service which turn under the Indian Government" (222). He acknowledges readily that "It is the Sahib's rukh" and takes seriously Gisborne's offer of "work for pay for the Government" with "a pension at the end of long service" (239–40) (without even asking for a definition of "pension"). His goals are not only the bourgeois ones of present security and future retirement, of course; as a child of nature, he approves of Gisborne's work in the rukh: "It is always good to cherish young trees" (239). Most importantly, he has found in Gisborne the father he lacks; when he finally accepts formal employment, he tells Muller, Gisborne's superior, "I serve, *if* I serve in this rukh and no other: *with* Gisborne Sahib and no other" (254). In Mowgli, in fact, Kipling has created the ideal subaltern, the native without the "native problem," by engendering a new Indian race disturbingly divorced from Indian history, culture, and tradition. One of Mowgli's virtues, as Gisborne sees it, is "his ignorance of all forms of ceremony and salutations," of

the "customs and use" Gisborne finds so deplorable in the buffoonish servant, Abdul Gafur (238).

Moreover, the story's ending suggests that Mowgli's half-wild, brown descendants will flourish like the trees the British are planting to repair the carelessness of past centuries, which "creep forward over the . . . ground in orderly lines of saplings" (224), accomplishing the "reboisement of all India" decreed by the Raj. John McBratney notes that the ending of "In the Rukh," with Mowgli in control of his wolf brothers and Gisborne in benign authority over Mowgli, suggests Kipling's hope that the earlier doctrine of paternalism, which "sought to create an administration of benevolent, personal rule," might replace "the remote, coldly efficient Utilitarianism that dominated British government after the Indian Mutiny" (289). But Kipling's fantasy of a new genesis goes beyond paternalism, I would argue, for in Mowgli, Kipling forges an evolutionary "missing link" that would obviate the problem of the Mutiny and its possible future re-eruptions; with sepoys like Mowgli, the Mutiny never would have happened. There are hints in Kipling's neo-romantic Darwinism of the political directions the idea of eugenics would take in the early twentieth century.

KIPLING RETURNED TO THE MOWGLI CHARACTER a couple of years after this "story for grown-ups," as he refers to it in "Tiger! Tiger!" (131), apparently compelled, like Muller, to speculate further on the wolf boy's origins and development. In "In the Rukh," the self/other split was firmly defined in the two characters, Gisborne and the wolf boy, and the narrative stance was limited third-person emphasizing Gisborne's point of view. When Kipling delves into Mowgli's developmental history, however, this safe distance is lost, and we move much closer to Mowgli's point of view, though with a third-person narration that allows for occasional editorial intrusions. This shift represents the slippage the wild child facilitates. Moving beyond the fantasy of transforming the native other in order to control him, the *Jungle Book* Mowgli tales offer vicarious satisfaction of the desire to *be* the other.

Reading the *Jungle Book* stories, it is hard to imagine the Mowgli we encounter there ever growing up to be Gisborne's loyal subordinate. As Kipling writes backward into the past, the Mowgli character becomes something of an iconoclast or even a sociopath; this child of nature spends a good deal of his time wreaking havoc in pursuit of vengeance. My focus here will be the matrix of events leading up to Mowgli's complete obliteration of a village in "Letting in the Jungle," for there his double or split identity, and what we might call the pre-oedipal riddle of Mowgli's two mothers, figures strongly. In addition, it seems likely that the attack on the village would have brought to the minds of British and Anglo-Indian readers the scenes of atrocity attributed to Indian mutineers; the paradox here, of course, is that Mowgli is destroying a Hindu village. But the contest is between the jungle animals he identifies with, certainly preeminently indigenous to the area, and the villagers who have encroached, like colonizers, on the jungle domain. Still, to attribute any sort of fixed equation of representation to the players in the story — to say the villagers are colonial settlers and the animals are the native population in rebellion — would be simplistic. I would argue, rather, that the confusion is the point, in a sense, and the rage manifested in this tale, with its strong element of infantile rage, expresses the pain and confusion of inbetweenness, of the character who feels outcast from both elements of his society.

The jungle is a male domain, as Kipling represents it; from the dearth of female animal characters, one could not readily see how any species are propagated at all, and while

"survival of the fittest" is clearly a central tenet of Jungle Law, it is not linked, as Darwin linked it, to the forces of sexual selection. There is quite a diversity of species in Mowgli's world, but a remarkable monotony of gender. None of Mother Wolf's many litters seems to contain females — a tale called "Mowgli's Sisters" is hard to imagine.[5] In both jungle and village, the single exception is the mother figure: Raksha, the wolf who saves him from the jaws of Shere Khan the tiger, and Messua, the village woman who calls him "Nathoo" and believes him to be the child a lame tiger stole from her years before.

Mowgli's two mothers represent the doubling of identity at its core, the confusion between "bazaar boy and sahib," the mixed sense of identification with and alienation from the colonial entity, "India," and the places, languages, cultures, peoples of India. After Mowgli makes a commitment to return to his human mother at the end of the *Second Jungle Book,* he tells Baloo, his old mentor, "By night and by day I hear a double step upon my trail. When I turn my head it is as though one had hidden himself from me that instant. I go to look behind the trees and he is not there. I call and none cry again, but it is as though one listened and kept back the answer" (173). At last, Mowgli's shiftings between two worlds have ended; from now on he will live in one world, the world of men, but he himself will be split. In fact, he has always suffered this condition; what is new is his perception of it, and its internalization.

The two mothers may suggest cause for, as well as serving to represent, the divided loyalty and confusion of identity that is resolved by imperialistic domination, by rage and retribution. The practice of wet-nursing, although in the decline in England during the nineteenth century, was still common practice in the colonies, especially in "tropical countries such as India and Malaya," where "employing native women to wet nurse [Europeans'] children was relatively widespread" (Fildes 205).

Wet nursing itself presents a paradox, for the belief that milk influenced a child's character was widespread and persistent, despite efforts in medical treatises to refute it; in fact, the way physicians in successive decades take up the problem as if they were proposing something new suggests in itself how intransigent the notion was in the popular imagination. Yet, white bourgeois parents who were thoroughly classist and racist in their views apparently saw nothing wrong with having women of color and women of the "dangerous classes" suckle their children, although to be sure they demanded a high level of control over the prospective nurse's health and habits, especially as the nineteenth century progressed.

Virginia Fildes points out that colonial and Southern United States lore held that "colored women had more, and better, milk than white women" (205); similarly, lower class women were perceived to be more robust physically and tougher emotionally than the self-consciously fragile middle class woman. In tropical lands, white women suffered from the climate and it was thought their children would thrive on native milk. Yet horror stories circulated, too, about dhyes who gave children opium, either directly or through their milk, in order to keep them quiet, or who "promise to abide solely and wholly by the food given to them from their mistress's table, or to that which is prepared by the lady's cook; but will obtain, by an insidious contrivance, garlic, ghee, etc, and partake of the most sour and acrid vegetables; all of which the poor little infant sucks to a certain degree in the milk." This same commentator counseled: "[Even] where there is ever so little milk, I would rather give that little, than incur the danger arising from native nurses" (qtd. in Fildes 204–05).[6] Other stories abounded, as well, of children who forgot their mothers

when the latter had been away on long trips; this is reminiscent of that popular subject of male painters in the late-eighteenth century: the scene of the babe rejecting its birth mother and clinging to the wet nurse.

Kipling's own accounts of having to be reminded to speak his parents' native tongue, not the "natives" tongue, on his visits to the drawing room strongly suggest a comparable early attachment and a confusion of identity, at the fundamental level of language, as Rushdie points out. Kipling's childhood was not unusual for a boy in British India, characterized by early bonding with the people, the languages, and the place of his birth; he spent a good deal of time in his earliest years among the native servants who raised him, not just in the household but in the marketplace as well. At age six he was wrenched away from what felt like home to "return Home," to the England he had never seen, for what were apparently very unhappy years at Southsea. Such a transplanting was not unusual either; boys were generally sent to England for all or most of their school years. The idea seemed to be that the brutal process of a British public school education would purge children of any taint their characters might have taken from the indulgences of the ayahs and native servants who had provided their earliest nurture.

The influence that wet-nursing and child-rearing practices had on second- and third-generation colonial children has not been much considered in the discourse on imperialism and racism. The Mowgli tales offer intriguing insights because their genre is fantasy, and because they center on the figure of the wolf child, that ultimate fantasy of surrogate parenting. And here the idea of the influence imbibed with milk seems to link up with the lingering paranoia engendered by the Mutiny. Kipling's assigning to Mowgli a she-wolf for a wet nurse brings to mind the Rev. Erhardt's remark that "the wolves are invariably alleged to have communicated much of their natural ferocity and notably untamable disposition to their foster children." Mother Wolf's name is Raksha, the Demon; as she confronts Shere Khan on the day the "naked man cub" enters her cave, Father Wolf recalls the days "when she ran in the pack and was not called the Demon for compliment's sake" (13). While his male mentors teach him Jungle Law and interspecies sympathy, then, Mowgli apparently gains his ferocity, his loyalty, and his penchant for blood vengeance, as well as his prodigious strength, from the wolf he refers to simply as "my mother." As Jenny Sharpe points out in *Allegories of Empire,* in reports on the Indian Mutiny "Indian women are spoken of . . . as the worst offenders in the rebel crimes. Hags, she-fiends, or bazaar whores — these are the cruel women behind the barbaric acts of rape and mutilation" (74).[7] Yet anyone who has read *The Jungle Books* knows that Raksha, for all her ferocity and her "demon" name, is definitely represented as a "good-enough mother," to borrow Winnicott's phrase (237). And when Mowgli takes leave of Raksha, just after being cast out by the pack, she offers him words sweet to any fostered child's ears, words that may suggest an element of sibling rivalry underlying the imperialist drive to dispossess native peoples of their motherland: "Listen, child of man, I loved thee more than ever I loved my cubs" (42).

One might be tempted to draw a simple equation concerning the symbolism of the two mothers — that the she-wolf represents the native nurse and the human mother the birth mother — in other words, that Kipling is repeating his father's tendency to draw close parallels between Indians, particularly Hindus, and animals. But the ambivalence in Kipling's rendering of Messua suggests that she, too, may represent the confusions about relationship that haunt the colonizer child. In his argument against wet-nursing in *Emile,*

Rousseau notes first that the mother who hires a wet nurse will "abdicate [her mother's rights] in favour of a stranger" and will "see her child loving another more than herself"; he then traces the way the child learns contempt for his nurse from his parents' attitudes. Rousseau's concern at this juncture is not with the inequities of class that are perpetuated by this practice, but he does recognize the confusion that learning to "look down on their nurses, to treat them as mere servants" causes in bourgeois children (13). Kipling's work suggests even more radical confusion between love and contempt, and between mother and nurse.

In psychological terms, Raksha could be said to represent the archaic or pre-oedipal mother, powerful, simultaneously life-giving and life-threatening, as her name, Demon, paradoxically merged with her tenderness, suggests. Messua, then, functions more like the mother that figures in the classic Freudian oedipal drama, desired and disturbingly desiring. However, perhaps because she does not represent the birth mother but rather the surrogate native nurse, Kipling's resolution of that drama in his wolf-boy fantasy does not lead to the father's "no," but rather to the "mother's" passionate, the son's ardent but unwilling, "yes." Mowgli's varied responses to Messua — his rescues of her and resistances to her — suggest a later stage of the relationship of colonial boy to his caretakers: a period when established hierarchies of gender and race have been made apparent to the child as part of his education as "sahib," but when the different sorts and sources of power, as children register power, remain internally and externally confusing and conflicted.

THE TWO MOTHERS STAND, AS IT WERE, at the portals of Mowgli's two worlds, jungle and village. When he leaves the village with Shere Khan's hide — leaves bitterly, because the people have stoned him — his last words are to Messua, that by killing the tiger he has "at least paid for thy son's life" (125). His first stop on his return to the jungle is at Raksha's cave, where he displays the tiger's hide for her approval and as the fulfillment of his promise to her to take vengeance. In the song that follows this tale, Mowgli first expresses his sense of split identity; at this early point, he can express it only as confusion. The song represents his dilemma as living between two places and, metaphorically, between two species: "As Mang [the bat] flies between the beasts and birds so I fly between the village and the jungle. Why?" The question "Why?" is repeated five times as his song of triumph over the tiger becomes a lament for his own doubly outcast state. He answers his own query with "I am two Mowglis," but this is no solution; the song ends: "My heart is heavy with the things that I do not understand" (133).

Mowgli's relationship to Messua is very different from that with Raksha. The she-wolf he accepts simply as his mother, against all evidence to the contrary, as if confirming the identity of the act of nursing rather than birth-giving with maternity. When, on his first attempt to enter village (i.e., human) society, Messua takes him in, Mowgli seems to form no great attachment to her and still thinks of himself as Raksha's cub. He is grateful to Messua for her kindness but resists her wish to identify him as her son Nathoo, lost to a marauding tiger as an infant.[8] In "Letting in the Jungle," when he hears she has been accused by the villagers of spawning a "devil-child," he wonders, "What have Messua and her man to do with me?" (41). But he goes to her rescue, and when he sees her "gagged, and bound hand and foot, breathing hard, and groaning," his odd double reaction is to quickly free her and then "look around the hut for some milk" (44–45). Later, explaining the villagers' suspicions of her, she tells him: "I gave thee milk, Nathoo. Dost thou

remember? Because thou wast my son, whom the tiger took, and because I loved thee very dearly. They said that I was thy mother, the mother of a devil, and therefore worthy of death" (45).

Maternal love and milk forge dangerous bonds, clearly, and not just for Messua. Mowgli's striking propensity for violence, especially for blood vengeance, culminates most horrifically in the story "Letting in the Jungle." There, in response to the villagers' rejection of him and to their threat of bodily harm to the native woman who claims he is her lost son, he launches the systematic obliteration of the village in scenes strongly reminiscent of the horror stories circulated of atrocities allegedly committed by native mutineers. It is significant, though, that this is Mowgli's second "casting out." *The Jungle Books'* first tale takes us all the way from Mowgli's arrival at the wolf den as a baby to the end of his idyll, the awful night when the wolves cast him out of the pack, insisting he is man, not wolf. "Tiger! Tiger!" ends with Mowgli stoned and cast out of the village as a "sorceror who can turn himself into a beast at will." Mowgli underscores the irony: "Again? Last time it was because I was a man. This time it is because I am a wolf" (124). "Tiger! Tiger!" is the third Mowgli tale, and the last of them in the *First Jungle Book;* without its sequel, Mowgli's history would reflect starkly the impossibility of finding a place at all for the child born between two worlds.

In "Letting in the Jungle," however, the balance of power shifts in Mowgli's favor. This time it is the villagers who are cast out, mercilessly, their village systematically returned quite literally to the earth by the elephants that Mowgli musters like a squad of Sherman tanks. Echoes of the Mutiny seem to resound here, especially in the elephants' history of their "Sack of the Fields at Bhurtpore," in which many men were slaughtered. Bagheera the panther, too, seems to evoke the demonology of the Mutiny when he loses his head, briefly, and cries, "Is it killing at last? The singing and the sight of the men climbing up the trees [in fear] have made me very ready. What is Man that we should care for him?" (49–50). To both enraged animals, significantly, Mowgli insists that men will be driven out for their crimes against him, but not killed; yet the elephants' tusks are described as red with the clay of the village, as they were red with blood at Bhurtpore, and the last thing the villagers see before they flee is "the savage, clay-streaked heads of the wreckers in the ragged gap" of the breached village wall (61–62). As I have said, the story is no simple allegory of the Mutiny, of course, and its plot has as much to do with evoking infantile rage and the satisfactions of fantasized revenge as it does with colonial history. Nonetheless, the sympathy Kipling occasionally manifests for the mutineers' cause, as in the early story "One View of the Question," may underlie Mowgli's treatment of the village, as it represents both hidebound convention and in a sense the colonization or cultivation of space that would otherwise belong to the original inhabitants, in this case, the jungle animals.

In *The Jungle Books'* final tale, "The Spring Running," the vicarious identification with the native is complicated by other desires, however. While "In the Rukh" ended with Mowgli and his Muslim Eva happily inhabiting a New Eden within the bounds of "Gisborne's rukh," in *The Jungle Books* it is sexual desire that lures Mowgli out of his beloved jungle. And there sexuality, the force by which "Mowgli . . . cast[s] out Mowgli," is powerfully linked, even confused, with maternal love or love for the surrogate maternal.[9]

Messua rouses mixed emotions in Mowgli; she offers him milk and identity as her human son, but his responses to her suggest that she is subtly seductive as well. Her

husband does not seem to be Nathoo's — and therefore possibly Mowgli's — father, yet he and Mowgli spar verbally like rivals, and he is conveniently eliminated in *The Jungle Books'* closing tale, when Mowgli is at last ready to take his place in the world of Man, represented here by the hut of his human mother.

"The Spring Running" is a remarkable tale for what are ostensibly children's books. Kipling clearly considered "In the Rukh" to be a story for adults, yet the sexual energies of the closing tale in the *Second Jungle Book* are far more intense, as is the level of violence and bloodshed in the Mowgli stories overall. (Were a really faithful rendering of *The Jungle Books* ever made into a TV movie, V-chips everywhere would be triggered.) Here Kipling evokes in sensuous imagery the "time of the New Talk," that is, mating season in the jungle, signalled by "the morning when the smells change," a season when "all the voices of the Jungle boomed like one deep harp-string touched by the moon — the Moon of New Talk" (167).

This particular spring, when Mowgli is seventeen, he, too, feels the effects of the New Talk in himself, and he feels it as "poison," (164). His notion of a cure is to set off on a lengthy endurance run — some forty miles in a single night — but the poison follows him, driving him on far from his usual haunts. In fact, it drives him directly to his foster mother's door, although he had no idea where she was living after he sent her off toward the British outpost some years before. Once there, he recognizes Messua at once, though she is less sure of him, believing him to be a "Godling of the Woods"; she has stolen Muller's line, and Kipling repeats here the description he had given of Mowgli in "In the Rukh," but without the allusions to Greek myth: "strong, tall, and beautiful, his long black hair sweeping over his shoulders, the knife swinging at his neck, and his head crowned with a wreath of white jasmine, he might easily have been mistaken for some wild god of a jungle legend" (167).

Being in his mother's house offers Mowgli no respite from the sexual poison that pervades his body. Mowgli inquires after her husband, she tells him he has been dead a year; she now has a baby of about the age Nathoo/Mowgli was then the tiger seized him. Thus the infant slot in this family romance scene is filled, and the position of spouse is open. Messua prepares him "warm milk" to drink, but, not surprisingly, this proves no antidote: "all manner of strange feelings that he had never felt before were running over him, exactly as though he had been poisoned, and he felt dizzy and a little sick" (169). Messua is equally ambivalent in her responses to him, "not quite sure whether he were her son Nathoo of the long ago days, or some wonderful Jungle being, but glad to feel that he was at least flesh and blood (169)." She tells him ardently that he is "beautiful beyond all men," "Never have I looked upon such a man." When he leaves, summoned by Grey Brother, she throws her arms around his neck "again and again" and begs him "Come back! Son or no son, come back, for I love thee." Mowgli answers, in a thick voice, "I will surely come back" (170–71).

This "last of the Mowgli stories," as its final lines identify it, threatens to replace the Edenic marriage that ends "In the Rukh" with this marriage to the mother or surrogate mother. Significantly, the jungle animals all assure Mowgli that what is happening to him is "natural" and fit, merely a "new trail," while he persists in feeling poisoned and deeply confused: "I know not what I know! I would not go; but I am drawn by both feet" (318). The Jungle Law, in so many other respects suspiciously like the rules of Western civilization, seems to hold no jurisdiction over illicit passions like incestuous desire or perhaps

the threat of miscegenation it seems to represent here, and Mowgli's mentors cannot help him when the enemy is the seductive foster mother.

Here, as elsewhere, the wild child provides a "missing link" to a possible future, initially an idealized possibility, but ultimately hollowed out into tragedy and loss. In "In the Rukh," as I have argued, Mowgli represents the desirable other successfully transformed into willing subaltern; in *The Jungle Book* tales, the wolf boy as protagonist comes to represent the colonial self, born between two worlds, and his fate ultimately is to surrender helplessly to the pull of the dangerously desired native mother. In the Mowgli tales, the problem of paternity is political/racial, and Kipling resolves it in "In the Rukh" by substitution: substituting the British government as *pater unfamilias* for Mowgli the New Adam, and putting Mowgli's new-minted values, a mixture of Jungle Law and British Forestry code, in place of the culture and traditions of India. The problem of double maternity goes much deeper, apparently, for it both propels and troubles the plot of *The Jungle Books* and ultimately leaves Mowgli in the midst of an uncompleted and painful transition. His story as a wolf boy is finished with his ascendancy to "Master of the Jungle," but his story as a man is barely begun. In a radically ambiguous reunion with the native mother, the oedipal scenario doubles as a fantasy of miscegenation. At that point it is abandoned, unwritten.

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NOTES

We are sorry to announce that Jane Hotchkiss passed away on June 22, 1999. The editors have seen her essay through to publication.

1. My source for excerpts from Sleeman's *Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh* is Singh and Zingg. In a portion of the Preface to the 1858 edition, which is also reprinted there, its unnamed author takes pains to make Sleeman's position clear and attributes the Mutiny to the annexation much more directly than is common in contemporary accounts:

   > The annexation of Oude to the British dominions followed, but not as a consequence of Sir William Sleeman's report. No greater injustice can be done than to assert that he advised such a course. His letters prove exactly the reverse. He distinctly states, in his correspondence with the Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, that the annexation of Oude would cost the British power more than the value of ten such kingdoms, and would inevitably lead to a mutiny of the Sepoys. (142 n3)

2. For an extended discussion of Kipling's childhood in connection with his oeuvre and his ambivalence as an imperialist, see Sullivan. As the abstract preceding the text states, "Sullivan sees in Kipling's ambivalence his negotiation between the desire for union with his golden, 'best-beloved' India and the historic imperatives of separation from it." Sullivan's treatment of *The Jungle Books* is quite minimal, however; she discusses *Kim* at length, as well as Kipling's autobiographical writings and various tales, early and late.
3. See, for example, Stocking and Gould.
4. These tales, like "The Undertaker," situate the Mutiny thirty years ago. In "One View of the Question," a Muslim narrator argues for cooperation with the "good" British as a way to gain ascendancy over the rival Hindustanis. The implication is, however, that ultimately this cooperation may lead to a reinstatement of "Moghul" rule, as was attempted through the wrong method of bloody rebellion in Delhi in 1857. In "The Lost Legion," a troop of

would-be mutineers literally haunts the region where they were slaughtered, not by the British but by greedy hill tribesmen; again, the ghostly regiment winds up helping the British against the rival race of Indians. Kipling here manifests the divide and conquer philosophy that underpinned colonial policy in India and elsewhere.

5. It is intriguing that all of the many cases Sleeman reports involved wolf boys, not girls. The most well-documented case of Indian wolf children in the twentieth century is that of Amala and Kamala, two little girls found in a wolf's den and raised by an Indian Christian minister and his wife.
6. Fildes's contemporary source is cited as F. Corbyn, *Management and Diseases of Infants, under the Influence of the Climate of India . . .* (Calcutta, 1828), quoted in *Lancet* 16 (1828).
7. Thanks to John McBratney for recommending Sharpe's book to me.
8. This, too, is a feature which seems to correspond with Sleeman's wolf-boy accounts. A repeated scenario there is the poignant attempt of a woman to reclaim a captured wolf boy she is sure is her lost son, perhaps because of identifying marks; inevitably, her efforts to get the boy to recognize the former mother-child bond are defeated by his lack of response or remembrance.
9. In an endnote to his article on "felicitous space" in *The Jungle Books,* McBratney remarks that "the importance of Messua here and Mother Wolf earlier suggests the need for an understanding of the maternal in *The Jungle Book*" (292). Interestingly, McBratney deals at some length with "In the Rukh," arguing for its legitimate inclusion as the final tale in *The Jungle Books* because it "has the important role of rounding off the Mowgli story" (292). My focus on the ambiguous significations of the maternal exposes the radically unrounded quality Mowgli's history had in the original *Jungle Books,* a quality worth preserving, perhaps, for post-colonial readers to reflect on.

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