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Ideology in Victorian Children's Literature Views on Empire and Imperialism



Abstract

This thesis will examine the extent to which Victorian attitudes towards empire and imperialism were present in children's literature. During the Victorian era, attitudes towards empire and imperialism were not consistent, as there was relatively more critique on empire and suspicion of government activities during the middle years of the era, and patriotism and pride for empire during the late Victorian years (McCord and Purdue 322; Brantlinger 4). These attitudes towards empire are connected to Victorian Britain's ideology. Ideology is nearly always present in literature, since it is impossible to write a text without including a society's ideas and values and, therefore, it is possible to research this Victorian ideology through children's books (Kutzer, "Introduction" 1).

During the Victorian era, the West regarded themselves as superior cultures and the inhabitants of the East were regarded as inferior cultures (Brantlinger 2). This resulted in tensions and power relationships. Subsequently, postcolonial theory is suitable for this research for it focuses on these power relationships and the differences between cultures related to white superiority. This imperial ideology is the most apparent in children's literature and, therefore, the two books that are discussed are *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* (Kutzer, "Introduction" 2). Each book shows a different attitude towards empire, which will be connected to their historical context and to the British population in general.

The introduction will discuss the historical contexts of the novels and introduce the main themes of this thesis. The first chapter will expand on ideology in children's literature and the theoretical framework that is used. The second and third chapters are the literature chapters in which *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Books* are discussed, and in the conclusion the results of this thesis will be examined and connected to their timeframe.

Keywords

Empire, Imperialism, Postcolonialism, Children's Literature, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Jungle Book*, Victorian, Ideology.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5.
2. Chapter 1: Children’s Literature and Ideology.....	11.
3. Chapter 2: Down the Rabbit-hole to a New World.....	16.
4. Chapter 3: The Law of the Jungle; Rules and Hierarchies.....	24.
5. Conclusion.....	31.
6. Bibliography.....	34.
7. Appendices.....	36.

Introduction

Kutzer, the writer of the book *Empire's Children; Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*, establishes that “a story, even a children's story, is more than just a story, no matter how simple it may seem” (1). Every story represents a deeper meaning or a certain intention, and the novels *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* are no exception. Both books were part of a new development during the Victorian era, namely, the rise of a new kind of children's literature (O'Sullivan 190). Attitudes towards children were changing, since “a greater concern for children and the drawing of firmer lines between adults and children were gradual but persistent developments during the nineteenth century” (McCord and Purdue 366). Romanticism also influenced the perception of children in the Victorian era, as it encouraged the idea of innocence in children, and childhood as a special and formative period in life (McCord and Purdue 366). Literature was adapted to these ideas. Children's literature ceased to focus solely on education and started to focus on the interests and the mind of the child (O'Sullivan 190). These books still educated children on morals and, because of their different approaches to children, became more popular (O'Sullivan 190). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* are two examples of this new kind of literature. Since children's literature is still a relatively new research area, several themes of these children's books have not yet been discussed. This thesis will try to answer the research question: in what ways do children's books like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* represent Victorian ideas about and attitudes towards imperialism? ‘Ideas about and attitudes towards imperialism’ are part of the ideology of Victorian Britain. This will be discussed in more detail further in this thesis.

This thesis builds on critical and scholarly discussion previously conducted in this research area. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* can be interpreted as either in favour of imperialism or as opposing imperialism. This thesis will argue for an anti-imperialist reading. Bryan and Bivona both establish a link between *Alice* and Victorian Britain's ideology related to empire. Bryan argues that this book can be read as “a political discourse, detailing the perils of imperial attitudes and colonial practices” (Bryan 22) The postcolonial reading of her article, however, is different from the reading conducted in this thesis, since Bryan argues that the creatures of Wonderland represent Imperial Britain, while this thesis will argue Alice herself represents Britain. Bryan's work is still relevant for this research as background information and to point to important themes in the *Alice* book related to empire. Bivona is another critic who has researched empire in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. His reading of

the Orient and Occident is in line with this thesis and shows how this novel is critical of empire. As Bivona also argues from an anti-imperialist point of view, the reading in this thesis will elaborate on his argument through incorporating new themes like Alice's height, which has often been claimed to symbolize adulthood but will be connected to empire in this text, the fact that Alice is a female protagonist, and Alice as an example for Victorian children.

The articles written about Kipling's *The Jungle Book* largely claim this novel is in favour of empire. An example of a critic supporting this claim is Hotchkiss (435). He explains that "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 colony" (Hotchkiss 435). Kutzer supports this claim in his chapter "Kipling's Rules of the Game" and adds that most of "his writings consciously dealt with the anxieties and ambiguities of empire." ("Kipling" 1). This thesis is different from these earlier articles as Hotchkiss focussed on a pastoral reading of *The Jungle Book*, with special attention for Mowgli, whereas Kutzer did not focus on Mowgli at all. He is only mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. In both articles, moreover, multiple works of Kipling are discussed which causes their discussion to be less focused on *The Jungle Book* itself. This thesis will elaborate on previous research by incorporating undiscussed themes like the monkey kingdom in relation to law, a discussion of the way in which *The Jungle Book* stories together form a perfect support for imperialism and Mowgli as a Victorian role model.

As ideology is nearly always present in literature, it is possible to investigate the ideology of Victorian British Society through these two children's books (Kutzer, "Introduction" 1). Hollindale establishes that "one of the most useful insights of modern criticism has been that no work, even the most apparently simple book for children, can be innocent of some ideological freight" (18). In order to review this ideology, postcolonial theory will be used. Articles of, for example, Said, Brantlinger, McLeod and Quayson will provide the necessary theory for this thesis. But first an overview of the history of the British Empire will be necessary to create an understanding of the historical contexts of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book*.

Due to colonisation of areas far away from Britain, the British public was introduced to cultures and products they had never seen before. The 'exotic' was brought to Britain, since "tea, sugar, spices, cotton, opium, wool, gold, rubber and many other commodities arrived at British ports on a daily basis" (Hall 425; Brantlinger 3). The foreign and unknown became a spectacle and an attraction. The Great Exhibition in 1851, which was organised in order to show the world Britain was in the vanguard of world progress due to its industry, trade and

liberty, is an example of this (Brantlinger 3). Both public and private life were entwined with empire, and “the business of the empire seemed to be everyone’s business” (Hall 425; Brantlinger 3). This was reinforced by the fact that many Victorians had relatives in other parts of the realm (Brantlinger 3). Moreover, the population of Britain was educated on empire through public lectures, exhibitions, photographs and news articles (Hall 417, 421-423). In the years before 1880, the presence of the empire caused imperial affairs to be inescapable knowledge for any educated Briton and caused the whole British population to be aware of its presence (Brantlinger 7). Furthermore, “for many late Victorians and Edwardians, [...] imperialism was virtually a secular religion, even though its scandals continued to be glaring for those who cared to notice them” (Brantlinger 7). The presence of empire was noticeable everywhere in Britain.

This thesis will focus on the middle and late Victorian era, since *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* were written in these periods. The middle part of the century indicates 1850-1880, and the latter part of the century indicates 1880-1914. The empire developed and experienced success and failure during these years. This can be seen in the main developments of the empire in the middle and late Victorian era. From 1820 until 1870, the empire increased at a steady rate and peace returned to Europe after the Crimean War had ended (Steinbach 63; McCord and Purdue 274). However, in 1857 a new crisis began, namely the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, which occurred simultaneously with a crisis in the Far East; the China War (Steinbach 67; McCord and Purdue 274, 323). The Indian Mutiny was suppressed in early 1858, which enabled Britain to send more troops to the China War (McCord and Purdue 275). A peace treaty was signed in 1860 (McCord and Purdue 275). These events changed attitudes towards colonies and their populations since “the imperial conflicts of the 1850s and 1860s, together with unrest in Ireland and political reform in Britain, reinscribed race, gender, class, and respectability as critical indicators of who was deserving of self-government and participation in political processes” (Steinbach 69). The imperial growth from 1870 until 1914 was even faster and more aggressive (Steinbach 69). A subsequent major development occurred in the late 1870s, as “[...] the governments of Britain and France had compelled the Egyptian regime to accept a joint Anglo-French supervision of Egyptian finances”, which caused the empire to obtain even more influence and power (McCord and Purdue 400). This control did not last long since rebellions occurred, which eventually resulted in a political disaster for the British government in 1885 (McCord and Purdue 401). In the meantime, the Irish Nationalist Party in the House of Commons had been a constant irritant (McCord and Purdue 401). The number of ‘outrages’ increased yearly,

despite several attempts of the government to calm the situation. (McCord and Purdue 403,404). In 1883 there was improvement in the Irish crisis, as some steps towards Home Rule were made (McCord and Purdue 404). However, Home Rule itself was only introduced in 1912 (McCord and Purdue 440). The South African War from 1899 to 1902 was the most significant conflict at the end of Victorian era (McCord and Purdue 419). This conflict eventually caused the Transvaal to formally become a British colony (Steinbach 70; McCord and Purdue 419, 421).

Because the empire experienced success and failure, the attitudes towards imperialism were not consistent during the Victorian era. Therefore, it is not surprising that “[...] much nineteenth-century writing about the empire was ambivalent, at once approving and disapproving” of empire (Brantlinger 2). On the one hand, there was a lot of patriotism and support in Britain; taking pride in the empire was an important part of this phenomenon (Brantlinger 2). There was a belief among the British population that the Anglo-Saxon race was superior and predestined to rule the supposedly inferior races of the world (Brantlinger 2). A peak of interest for the empire occurred during Joseph Chamberlain’s term as Secretary of State for the Colonies, for his enthusiasm and political importance injected energy into the department, which increased the level of attention devoted to colonial matters (McCord and Purdue 478). During these years, there was little doubt about the validity of Britain’s imperial mission and the empire was perceived as “the greatest instrument of good” the world had seen to that time (McCord and Purdue 478). Patriotism and pride were at their high point during the latter part of the century, especially in the 1880s and 1890s, but this does not mean that patriotism and pride did not occur during the earlier years of the Victorian era (Brantlinger 4).

The Victorians who lived during the earlier part of the century were certainly not absent-minded about the empire, since there developed both critique and support among the British population (Brantlinger 6). In the years after 1846, the British population was greatly suspicious of the actions of the government; “[...] colonial affairs attracted the attention of a vociferous band of radicals [...]”, who believed that “[...]imperial expansion often included subservience to unsavoury vested interests and unprincipled oppression of native peoples” (McCord and Purdue 322). This group was able to stir the opinions of society during these years and inspired doubts “[...] about the competence and honesty with which Britain’s imperial possessions were governed” (McCord and Purdue 322). This was fuelled by a cry for cheap government as “cost-cutting was one strong motive for the grant of increased autonomy to the more settled colonial possessions” (McCord and Purdue 322, 478). The opposition between critique in the middle part of the century and patriotism, which was often

indistinguishable from racial chauvinism, in the latter part of the century, influenced literature from these periods (Brantlinger 2). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* were written during these two distinct periods in the Victorian era and can, therefore, be expected to represent different attitudes towards imperialism.

Children's literature is a relatively new literary genre. After the Victorian era, children's literature was marginalised and placed beyond the realm of serious consideration (Nel 23). However, "children's literature has been making its way back into the halls of academic respectability" during the last forty-five years (Nel 23). Up to this moment, research on empire and imperialism in literature focused mainly on adult literature. Subsequently, "little critical attention has been paid to imperialism and its intersections with literature intended for those "future rulers of the world"", as children are the future generation of a society and culture (Kutzer, "Introduction" 3; Nel 23). It would be interesting to research how the Victorian ideology was passed on to children through children's books. The ideology concerning imperialism was especially of importance, as the growth of the British Empire and, subsequently, its power was one of the major developments of the Victorian time (Steinbach 59). Through research on this topic, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the way in which the British population saw themselves during the Victorian era and how they thought about imperialism itself. It would contribute to research in the genre of children's literature in general and how these novels can be used to encourage children to support a certain ideology when they are adults. Outcomes of this research contribute to new research on the effects of literature on children, Victorian attitudes towards empire and imperialism, and the role of children's literature in general. Moreover, previous research on this subject mainly focused on one children's book or writer, or focused exclusively on ideology. This research intends to combine these aspects and aims to compare two different children's books in order to obtain new insights.

The ideology represented in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and in *The Jungle Book* might contradict each other. Postcolonial theory will provide a means of research in order to identify and explain this difference. This theory is suitable for this thesis since imperialism and empire caused great oppositions between cultures, and postcolonialism focuses on these oppositions. Imperialist narratives tend to stress the racial superiority of the colonizer and to highlight their 'character,' which amounts to virtues, as "the vanquished lack character – they are 'savages' or 'barbarians' because they are racially inferior and perhaps 'unfit' to survive" (Brantlinger 38). This results in a process of 'othering'. Knowledge is power and the information about the Orient was apt to be reductive and, subsequently, a

reinforcement of Western authority (Brantlinger 75). As postcolonialism focuses on the theory of “othering” and Orientalism, this theory can be used to highlight the ideology of the Victorian British society in these two children’s books (Brantlinger 2).

The first chapter of this thesis will concentrate on ideology in children’s literature in general and will provide more information about postcolonialism. The second chapter will focus on *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the manner in which the ideology of this children’s book could have been passed on to the next generation. The third chapter will do the same for *The Jungle Book* and in the conclusion of this thesis, the results will be compared and connected to their historical context. This thesis hypothesises that *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* conveys an anti-imperial underlying meaning while *The Jungle Book* promotes empire and imperialism. The preliminary assumption of this thesis is that the main reason for this difference is the historical context of the novels.

Chapter 1: Children's Literature and Ideology

This chapter is divided into three sub-chapters. First the history of children's literature will be discussed to create a historical context for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book*. Subsequently, ideology as an aspect of children's literature will be examined and, lastly, the theoretical framework of this thesis will be discussed in more detail. Through this first chapter, it will be established that ideology is nearly always a part of children's literature and, as a result, can be researched through *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book*. Moreover, it will be explained why postcolonial theory is the most suitable way of researching this imperial ideology.

Historical Context

Until the seventeenth century, there was no children's literature available comparable to contemporary children's literature. Nowadays, children read books for entertainment but during the years before 1600, the books children read most frequently were their school books (Avery 1-2). These books had no entertaining elements and children were seen and treated as "[...] greybeards, while they were still in petticoats" (Avery 12). Adjustments to the interests and mind of the child were not made in the majority of the books meant for children. This was because the child was seen as a *Tabula Rasa*, following from John Locke's ideas, which meant that a child was thought to be like a blank slate when it was born. It was up to the parents to make sure the child obtained knowledge, good morals and behaviour. Besides the upbringing of the child, schoolbooks were thus of great importance, since they were what formed the literate adult (Avery 2). However, these attitudes changed remarkably during the next 300 years (Avery 6).

The first changes occurred during the eighteenth century. It was still considered very important that children's books taught its readers their religious and social obligations (Kinnel 26). Children were expected "to read their Bibles, think on death and hell, avoid idleness and evil company, obey their parents" (Kinnel 28). However, the eighteenth century is also the era in which new literary forms were introduced, for example, the fairy-tale (Kinnel 28). Although these fairy-tales still contained strong moral lessons, they were more pleasurable to read than previous literature. Furthermore, in schoolbooks rhymes and pictures were used to capture children's attention "and so acknowledged the growing movement towards a softer approach to children's reading needs in and out of school" (Kinnel 34). The business of children's literature began in the middle of this era with the publications of John Newsbery.

His children's books contained illustrations, Dutch floral binding, and an amusing tone, which "mark them out as early examples of child-centred literature which married teaching and entertainment" (Kinnel 34). The importance of education in children's books had not lessened but amusement had become acceptable (Leary 230). Moreover, the chapbook became immensely popular, which provided their readers with eye-catching illustrations (Kinnel 42; 45). All these developments were derived from the thought that books were meant to deliver education, and education experts of that time supported this view (Kinnel 45; Mickenberg and Valone 6). However, the children's book was still not meant to be read solely for entertainment.

During the early years of the Victorian era, children's literature evolved from this heavily didactic nature to a slight focus on the mind and interests of the child, as utilitarian values were still considered to be of great importance but "there were increasing signs of some relaxation of discipline in the treatment of children" (O'Sullivan 190; Avery and Kinnel 101). To achieve this, protagonists in children's books functioned as role models for its readers (Leary 231). They portrayed characteristics adults found to be preferable. Publishing for children flourished and the stages of childhood were more specifically defined, which resulted in books written for certain ages (Avery and Kinnel 53). There was a widening range of children's books available and some books were printed in colour. The rise of Victorian fantasy children's books, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "is clearly related to this revival of interest in fairy-tales and the romantic movement's earlier unease at the primacy of rationalism" (Avery and Kinnel 90).

During the latter half of the century, children were allowed to choose their own books from a wide range of genres, such as adventure stories, school stories, fairy-tales and nonsense (Briggs and Butts, 130). The stories included boy-heroes, far-away lands, sentimentality and more vivid pictures (Leary 233). Verse was included in many books and the focus had shifted from didactics and morals to entertainment and decoration. The books were bought by many; "the Victorian age had established the legitimacy of children's literature as a form in its own right" (Briggs and Butts, 165).

Ideology

These children's books were read more often in the Victorian era than they are today, as nowadays books compete with film and the internet, for example. Consequently, books were important forms of entertainment and able to encourage children to develop in a certain direction, for literature is rarely ever objective; to read and "to imagine a story... is to imagine

the society in which it is told” (qtd. in Kutzer, “Introduction” 1). Aspects of the Ideology of this society play an important role in all stages of the writing of a book; the choosing of heroes and villains, the setting, the plot and the characters (qtd. in Hollindale 18). Children can be viewed as ideological constructs; they are the future of a society and, therefore, they are formed to support certain dreams and values, namely the dreams and values of the current society (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2).

One of the values many nineteenth century children’s literature encourages is pride of empire (Kutzer, “Introduction” 3). Edward Said stressed this as he claimed that the reading of novels was “immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences” (qtd. in Kutzer, “Introduction” 3). Briggs and Butts add that children’s books “usually articulated the belief that the British possession of such virtues was unequalled, and that the British empire was an unrivalled instrument for harmony and justice” (151). The readers are encouraged to support empire and imperialism, as its presence was ubiquitous and of the utmost importance in Victorian Britain (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2). Subsequently, “finding a critique of empire in a children’s text is rare”, however, it is not impossible (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2). *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is one of the few novels that can be interpreted as critical of empire and imperialism.

This imperial ideology is present in texts in three different ways. The first way is the explicit mentioning of ideological assumptions, for example, when a writer states what his particular aim was by writing a story (Hollindale 27). This form of ideology is naturally the easiest to detect, for “its presence is conscious, deliberate and in some measure ‘pointed’” (Hollindale 28). The second manner refers to everything the writer implicitly states in a story (Hollindale 30). This form is harder to detect since these values can be passive and unexamined, as it is hardly possible for a writer to write a text without including his own values and ideas (Hollindale 30). The third form of ideology is connected to a culture as “the power of ideology is inscribed within the words, the rule-systems, and codes which constitute the text” (qtd. in Hollindale 32). In the first instance, these values seem hard to detect but the opposite is true; these values are taken for granted by society and, thus are widely shared (Hollindale 30). This implies that ideology is inescapable in every written text. Moreover, it implies that ideology is not something that is created within children by the reading of literature, but that “it is something which they already possess, having drawn it from a mass of experiences far more powerful than literature” (Hollindale 35). Children are not simply “[...] colonized by the books they read [...]” (Kutzer, “Introduction” 8). Literature only strengthens these already present assumptions and ingrains them in the mind of the child.

The ideology of a text is not simply the ideology of the writer; “a large part of any book is written not by its author but by the world its author lives in” (Hollindale 32). Children’s books form “a kind of national allegory, an imaginative picture of the dreams, desires, and fears of a particular culture” (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2). This implies that writers are the transmitters of the values of their societies (Hollindale 33). Not only has the ideology of the society been ingrained in the mind of the writers too, there is a lot of pressure to conform to this ideology. Ideology is expected to be visible in at least the surface features of the text (Hollindale 24-25). Therefore, writers are not completely free in writing a story. The story has to fit the society it was meant for. Moreover, it is not only the writer that is part of creating the ideology in a book. The reader also engages in this process, as “reading practices are never politically neutral; how we come to read a text will always tell us something about the values we hold, or oppose” (McLeod 46).

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory developed years after the Victorian era had ended. However, this theory is very suitable for researching the ideology in 19th century children’s books. Postcolonial theory exists of several ideas and theories about colonised countries and their colonizers. Examples of this are Orientalism and Mimicry. In this thesis, the theory of Orientalism will be used to research ideology in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book*.

Edward Said’s definition of Orientalism has been the most influential and, as a consequence, has shaped postcolonialism (McLeod 46-47). He claims that Orientalism “[...] is neither science, nor knowledge, nor understanding: it is a statement of power and a claim for relatively absolute authority. It is constituted out of racism, and it is made comparatively acceptable to an audience prepared in advance to listen to its muscular truths” (Said 97). Moreover, Said’s work brought together earlier interwoven strands of the field (Quayson 3).

In his theory, it becomes clear that binary oppositions are central for Orientalism (McLeod 49). More specifically, the binary oppositions between the Orient and the Occident. Said’s “Orientalism” refers to the sum of the *West’s* representations of the Orient, and it is with the powerful effects of these which concern Said for the most part” (McLeod 47). These ‘effects’ refer to the inequality within the binary oppositions, namely, the Occident is nearly always represented as the ‘better’ of the two. The Orient represents everything the Occident does not want to be, for example, if the Occident is brave and intelligent, the Orient must be cowardly and ignorant. There was hardly any opportunity available for the Orient to contradict this and, as a consequence, “the Orient was [...] not Europe’s interlocutor, but its

silent other” (Said 93). These assumptions justified the actions of the colonizers; they thought themselves to be superior and more civilised than other cultures which made it their duty to lead and civilise inferior peoples. This perceived duty is called the “white man’s burden” (Quayson 5; Brantlinger 30; 35; Arnold 420)

These oppositions create a line separating the West and the East. This is what Edward Said called ‘imaginative geography’, since this line is created because of assumptions and differences and not because of geographical reasons (90). The difference between the Orient and Occident is simply created by human beings and can be called “communities of interpretation” (Said 90; 93).

There is also critique on the theory of Orientalism. For example, Codell and Macleod argue that Orientalism should not only be about the influence of the West on the East but also the other way around. Therefore, they argue that British culture and Orientalist assumptions were modified in the Colonies (Codell and Macleod, 1-2). Furthermore, Orientalism has been claimed to attack virtues of certain cultures, political beliefs of certain people and to falsify the nature of the Islam (Said 94-95). It is possible to argue with many of these claims and, despite this critique, Orientalism is still used to examine texts. This thesis will follow in this line.

Orientalism was part of the Victorian society and, therefore, it is undeniably connected to the Victorian British ideology. Even though these differences were based on the Western imagination, they were often accepted as facts (McLeod 50). This caused peoples from the colonized countries to be “[...] glibly homogenised and robbed of their individuality as Orientalism mobilised a set of generalised types”, which were believed and acted upon by the Western countries (McLeod 53). Thus, since Orientalism is linked to differences between cultures and, differences were created and highlighted by the British Empire in this era, Orientalism can be used to identify and investigate these differences and, more importantly, analyse what these differences indicate for the ideology of that time.

No matter in what time books are written, ideology is always present in literature, no matter how simple a text may seem at first sight. Postcolonialism and, more specifically, Orientalism form a means to investigate this ideology by focusing on binary oppositions and power relationships in the texts. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* will be used for this purpose. It is expected that the ideology in these books is very clear since they were written for children, and adults tend to be even more insistent and clear about desired behaviour, dreams and morals than they would be in texts they write for themselves (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2).

Chapter 2: Down the Rabbit-Hole to a New World

The Orient and the Occident

In order to examine *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, this thesis will focus on instances of Orientalism, namely on binary oppositions between cultures or groups and the power relationships that emerge from these oppositions. Subsequently, these power relationships will be interpreted in the context of the British Empire, assuming that one culture or group is perceived as dominant and the other one as inferior. Since this dominant and inferior group also occurred in the British Empire itself, namely the colonizers and the colonized, the groups from the children's book and the groups from the history of the British Empire can be compared and, subsequently, interpretations can be made. Most children's books express positive attitudes towards empire and rarely question empire or imperialism (Kutzer, "Introduction" 2). In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, however, Lewis Carroll did just that (Bryan 22). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* raises questions about Western superiority and imperialism through the main protagonist Alice. A short summary of the book is included in the first appendices.

As the colonizers and colonised can be seen as two separate groups, so can Alice and the creatures of Wonderland. This divide is apparent from the beginning of the story. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* starts by introducing the main character Alice. She feels sleepy and she is a bit bored while she is reading a novel with her sister. Suddenly, she hears a rabbit complaining about its own tardiness. Alice decides to follow the rabbit and this is how the story begins. By following the rabbit she leaves her own 'world' and 'intrudes' into Wonderland. This is the first indication that Alice can be interpreted as England and Wonderland as the Orient, as the English colonizers left their home countries too in order to explore different worlds. Throughout the novel, Alice keeps intruding the parties and houses of other characters (Bivona 148). Not long after she first arrives in Wonderland, she enters the house of the white rabbit without permission, for example. In these paragraphs, Alice "[...] went in without knocking [...]" and was afraid the housemaid of the rabbit would find her (Carroll 38). In the white rabbit's house, she drinks from a bottle which did not have the invitation "DRINK ME" on it this time, and grows to a size which causes the rabbit to be unable to enter its own home. In her attempts to keep the rabbit away, Alice breaks glass and makes an aggressive impression by spreading her hand and making snatches in the air (Carroll 42-43). Even though she is clearly not welcome in the house, she reacts aggressively and makes threats to the rabbit when they try to remove her. She might have intruded the house

without making a conscious decision, but the following aggressiveness is conscious, as she carefully thinks about these moves: “[...] then, saying to herself “This is Bill,” she gave a sharp kick, and waited to see what would happen next” (Carroll 43). This is also apparent in later scenes in the novel, for example, during the tea party and at the house of the Duchess, where the inhabitants confirm they experience her presence as an intrusion by stating “*Are you to get in at all? [...] That’s the first question, you know*” and “*It wasn’t very civil of you to sit down without being invited*” (Carroll 59; 68). All these intrusions refer to the intrusions of England in its colonies, as England also entered these countries without being invited and occupied and settled in these lands with forms of aggression similar to Alice in the house of the white rabbit. Therefore, Alice can be read as England and Wonderland and its inhabitants as the colonies and its populations.

A second indication that Alice represents the colonizers is the fact that Alice is a girl. In the Victorian era, most adventure novels for children chose boys as their main protagonists, as “adventure, exploration, hunting, conquest, and rule were men’s activities” (Brantlinger 66). *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is, therefore, part of a minority. The female protagonist follows from the fact that nations were often referred to as female during the Victorian era, possibly because Britain was led by a Queen during these years (Brantlinger 63). Moreover, the “body of a woman is often depicted as a repository for ideology, the nation in miniature” (Cozzi, 16). Therefore, if Alice is to embody a nation and its ideology, it is only logical that a female character is used. Furthermore, nations have been referred to as goddesses several times and, as this is also a female role, this strengthens Alice’s ties to England (Brantlinger 63).

Moreover, England and the colonies are mentioned in the novel in relation to Alice. It is stated that Alice speaks English in the book, as she is said to be “[...] so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English” (Carroll 23). This indicates Alice is indeed English herself. Furthermore it is implied that the English language is not the creatures’ first language. This becomes clear when the Dodo is telling a story about the history of England and the Eaglet responds “I don’t know the meaning of half those long words, and what’s more, I don’t believe you do either!” (Carroll 33). Alice does not express any trouble understanding the meaning of the story but the inhabitants of Wonderland apparently do have trouble.

Furthermore, Alice’s assumptions about other countries can be compared to the interpretations of the Victorian population about other countries. When Alice is falling down the rabbit hole, she thinks about where she might possibly end up. The first two places she

thinks of are New Zealand and Australia, which are both areas of British colonisation (Carroll 17). This means that her first assumption is that she must end up in the colonies after such a long fall, which might refer to the journey over sea. While she is falling she also speculates about the inhabitants of those countries. She states “How funny it’ll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards! The antipathies, I think-” (Carroll 17). The word ‘antipathies’ might refer to the negative image many British people had of the inhabitants of the colonies. This quote also already shows the faulty assumptions that the West kept about the inhabitants of the colonies, as Alice appears to think that they walk with their heads downwards, which is not true. Even though for the reader humour is at work here, Alice seems to be completely serious when she utters this sentence.

This kind of misperceptions are a key theme of Orientalism; information which is not based on facts but is still treated as facts (McLeod 50). Alice likes to think she is very smart and treats much of her knowledge as facts while they are incomplete or simply false. Other examples of this are poems she recites and her conversation with the Caterpillar, in which she claims to know what he is going through even though that is impossible. Alice as a character, therefore, can be interpreted as an example of Orientalist discourse.

Culture Clashes and Power

Alice perceives herself as superior in comparison to the creatures during her time in Wonderland. Her usage of the word ‘creatures’ underlines this as this term is “[...] both an insulting term that diminishes the Wonderland beings and a class name that raises questions about their place in the scale of creation (are they animal or human?)[...]” (Bivona 147). Alice’s attitude can be related to the belief of the Western colonisers that they are superior over other peoples (Hall 413). Alice represents this culture and, therefore, assumes this too. The West’s superiority is connected to the ‘white man’s burden’, which causes Alice to try to ‘colonize’ Wonderland with attempts of forcing her culture unto them (Arnold 420).

However, she is the only character in the novel who believes she is superior and her self-proclaimed superiority is undermined by every other character in the novel. This angers Alice since she does not believe this is right. Therefore, she finds it very hard to accept that the creatures of Wonderland might perceive discussion topics and gestures differently from her, since she believes everything she does is appropriate. This results in a number of tensions, for example, when she is trying to speak to a mouse. She first addresses the mouse in English in a rather strange way, which earns her an inquisitive look from the animal. She falsely derives from this look that it cannot speak English and decides it must be French.

However, the first French sentence she uses is offending and shocking to the mouse as she says “Où est ma chatte?”, which translates to ‘Where is my cat?’ (Carroll 29). After Alice has apologized to the mouse, it attempts to help her understand why he does not like cats and says “Would *you* like cats, if you were me?” (Carroll 29). Alice admits that she would possibly not like them anymore if she were a mouse, but immediately continues talking about her cat and a rat-catching dog, which eventually results in the mouse leaving her. Her English conversation topics are offensive in Wonderland and she does not make an effort to understand the mouse at all.

The mouse is not the only creature she offends. Further in the story she speaks to a Caterpillar. She implies that she understands what it is like to turn into a chrysalis while she cannot possibly know. The Caterpillar makes her aware of this, which irritates her, as the Caterpillar “[...] refuses to be comprehended by Alice's categories of meaning”, and instead of answering his question about her identity she claims “I think you ought to tell me who *you* are, first” (Bivona 151; Carroll 49). There is no reason why the Caterpillar should identify himself first, especially because he was the one who asked first. She might only state this because she thinks she is in a power position and knowing one’s identity strengthens a power position. The Caterpillar, however, does not give in and, eventually, neither knows the name of the other.

Alice experiences the same difficulty in understanding the rules of Wonderland. She assumes that they must be the same as the English rules, since she believes her Western culture is superior. In the story, well-known English games are incorporated, games like chess, croquet and cards, but the rules of these games “[...] do not remain within the domain of those systems” (Quayson 45). These rules in Wonderland are not the English rules reversed, Wonderland “[...] is not simply a world upside down, but a sideways world in which most things are equal”, which indicates that the rules have little or no relation to the English rules (Quayson 51). Even though the rules are completely different from the rules in England, Alice assumes the English rules are universal and, therefore ignores these differences (Briggs and Butts 141).

Her inability to recognize the difference between the rules in Wonderland compared to the rules in England results in a number of misunderstandings and conflicts. The scene in which this becomes quite clear is the croquet match at the Queen’s palace. When the Queen enters, all the knights, which are cards in Wonderland, lie down on their faces on the ground. Alice refuses to copy this behaviour as “[...] she could not remember ever having heard of such a rule at processions [...]” (Carroll 78). Her perception of the correct rules replace the

behaviour all creatures show around her. Alice feels she is superior to the rules of Wonderland and she dares to argue with the Queen about her knights which are “[...] only a pack of cards, after all”, about the Queen’s punishments, for Alice replies to the Queen after hearing her own punishment “Nonsense!” and about other character’s punishments: “You sha’n’t be beheaded!” (Carroll 80). The Queen forgives her and Alice is invited to a game of croquet, which looks very different from what she is used to: “[...] it was all ridges and furrows: the croquet balls were live hedgehogs, and the mallets live flamingos, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and stand on their hands and feet, to make the arches” (Carroll 81). Alice concludes in these situations that these creatures and their games and traditions are simply absurd, instead of recognizing there might be a culture difference. She complains to the Cheshire-Cat that she doesn’t “[...] think they play at all fairly [...], and they all quarrel so dreadfully one ca’n’t hear oneself speak – and they don’t seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them [...].” (Carroll 83). The only two options Alice identifies are that there are either no rules at all or nobody attends to the rules. She ignores the possibility that she does not understand the rules and that the quarrelling and the different aspects of the game are part of the rules (Bivona 148-149). Since she is Western, she assumes her culture is dominant and, therefore, all other cultures are different and strange. The conclusion she makes says more about Alice’s focus on her own culture and her perceived dominance over this culture, than it does about Wonderland and the behaviour of its inhabitants (Bivona 150).

Furthermore, Alice changes multiple times from size in the story. Her length is nearly always related to her journey into adulthood, however, it can also be argued that her size symbolizes her sense of power, which can be connected to the West’s colonial sense of power. “When she is small, she is humiliated by a caterpillar, menaced by a puppy, and almost drowned by her own tears [...],” which refers to how little control she has over these situations (Briggs and Butts 141-142). In these passages her power is limited and she is unable to impress or intimidate the inhabitants of Wonderland with her own perceived cultural legacy. However, this lack of power is compensated by the believe of the creatures that she is harmless and, therefore, accepted. For example, the white rabbit mistakes her for his maid and calls out to her “Why, Mary Ann, what *are* you doing here? Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan!” (Carroll 38). Due to her small size, the rabbit does not recognise her. Alice’s lack of power in this scene causes her to be mistaken for a housemaid. However, the fact that she is mistaken for the rabbit’s housemaid implies she is accepted as one of the creatures of Wonderland, since the housemaid is a creature from Wonderland. This

can refer to England's behaviour in the colonies. If they did not try to control the populations of the other countries and had accepted the culture differences, the Western colonizers would not be perceived as possibly dangerous or as threats.

When Alice is tall, she is not accepted and acted upon as a threat but, in those paragraphs, she is in control. For example, in the scene in which she grows very tall after eating a mushroom of the Caterpillar and a pigeon mistakes her for a serpent. Although the pigeon thinks Alice is a threat to her there is nothing she can do about it (Carroll 55). This also occurs in the house of the White Rabbit, where she grows very tall after eating a cookie. The creatures decide she is dangerous and that they must burn the house down to kill the intruder (Carroll 55; 44). Alice is still in control in this scene since she is able to stop the creatures from doing this. Her size implies her power at that moment and thus the power of the West. Even though the creatures see her as a threat she cannot be harmed. This can imply the Western power in their colonies. Even though the natives possibly see the presence of the West as an intrusion, there is nothing they can do about it because of the power difference.

Alice is aware of the importance of her height and often wishes to be taller than she is. She relates this to the Caterpillar by saying "Well, I should like to be a *little* larger, Sir, if you wouldn't mind, [...] three inches is such a wretched height to be" (Carroll 53). She wishes to be larger and, thus, to have more power in Wonderland. The Caterpillar responds; "It is a very good height indeed!" (Carroll 53). The Caterpillar is also three inches tall and does not think Alice needs to be taller than him. Alice answers "But I'm not used to it!" (Carroll 53). She is used to being a member of the most powerful culture and, consequently, being an equal to the Caterpillar is not normal to her. The Caterpillar does not agree and responds "You'll get used to it in time" (Carroll 53). This passage can be read as a discussion between the colonizer (Alice) and the colonized population (the Caterpillar), in which the colonized makes clear that he does not agree with the perceived superiority of the colonizer. However, he is only able to tell the colonizer this since she is not in a power position and they are equals at the moment.

Alice awareness of her size is also visible in the scene where she enters the Queen's croquet ground. She has just left the tea party and thinks "Now, I'll manage better this time" (Carroll 76). It is not completely clear what Alice thinks she should manage better, as she does not seem to blame herself for the behaviour of the creatures at the tea party since she states "At any rate I'll never go *there* again! [...] It's the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!" (Carroll 76). Her aim to do better can thus refer to her efforts of forcing her culture unto the Wonderland inhabitants and, in order to achieve this, she takes an extra bite from a piece of mushroom she had been carrying with her, which causes her to grow taller. In order

to do better she feels like she has to grow taller. She needs the power position her length gives her.

The same occurs after she has fled from a giant puppy. To avoid any more dangerous situations she says to herself “The first thing I’ve got to do [...] is to grow to my right size again [...]. I think that will be the best plan” (Carroll 45). She has to regain her power position in order to be safe in Wonderland. This might imply the vulnerability of the West in the Eastern countries if they were to lose their power position. Without their power and forces they cannot protect themselves, as the natives might not accept their behaviour anymore.

Postcolonial Interpretations

All these different themes and storylines are used to convey an underlying meaning. Alice tries to force her culture and rules onto the creatures in Wonderland but she is punished almost every time she tries to do this. When she starts discussing topics that are considered to be rude, she is left alone. When she complains about the absurdity of Wonderland it becomes clear she is the only character in the story that thinks so. Even though she tries her best, Wonderland does not give in and she is not able to gain a stronger power position, even though she thinks she deserves it due to her own country and culture. She is denied this superior position but she refuses to change. This can be compared to the Western countries. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is critical of any country trying to force their culture onto another population. There is no use and eventually the colonizing country will lose. Just because a culture is not yours does not mean it is inferior. It only means the colonizers do not understand this new culture yet. The culture the colonizers perceive as inferior could actually perceive the other culture as inferior, if it was not for the power position the West had obtained during that era. Alice is alone and is, therefore, unable to change Wonderland. In this story, her Western culture is perceived as inferior by the creatures of Wonderland.

At the end of the novel, Alice is frustrated about her inability to direct the culture of Wonderland and the creatures of Wonderland have grown tired of Alice’s demands. When Alice calls the instructions of the Queen “Stuff and nonsense!” and ignores the warning of the Queen who says “Hold your tongue!”, Alice offends the Queen again by stating “Who cares for you? [...] You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” and is attacked by all of the cards of Wonderland. Her belief in Orientalism, that she is part of a superior culture and has a right to dominate other cultures, does not end well. Orientalism is not used in this text to make the West appear superior, but to imply Orientalism might not be correct. Alice’s actions wake her up and, subsequently, she is forced to leave Wonderland; a land where she was an intruder in

the first place. This ending of the book can be interpreted as a warning that this could happen to England too one day. The inhabitants of the colonies have a right to their own culture and they might rebel one day against the demands of the West.

Chapter 3: The Law of the Jungle; Hierarchies and Rules

The Orient and the Occident

Rushdie once wrote about Kipling's works: "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." (qtd. in Hotchkiss 437). This sums up perfectly the discussions about his books and novels. Kipling's works have been researched with focus on his anxieties and ambiguities of empire. His opinions about other cultures and peoples are very much in line with the dominant Victorian view of Western racial superiority, which causes many of Kipling's texts to be described as racist. However, since these texts reflect a part of Victorian British society, they are useful to several kinds of research. This thesis will focus on one of his children's books; *The Jungle Book*. Since *The Jungle Book* consists of seven separate stories, a short summary of each story is included in the second appendices. *The Jungle Book* reflects the views of white superiority and glorifies the British activities and laws in India while it Orientalises India's inhabitants. Subsequently, this text reflects positive attitudes towards empire.

The Jungle Book can be divided into two different sections, namely the Mowgli stories and the other stories. It is not a simple task to establish which characters are representatives of the Occident and which characters represent the Orient in the Mowgli stories. It can be argued to some extent that Mowgli could represent the colonizers, as he is an intruder into the Jungle and is able to change parts of the jungle to his own will (Kutzer, "Kipling" 27). In the last Mowgli story, for example, he has defeated the dangerous tiger and the wolves admit they were wrong by sending him away. Mowgli wanted to get approval from the wolves and to create a safe jungle and both eventually happen. Furthermore, Mother Wolf states moments before Mowgli has to leave the jungle "Come soon [...] little naked son of mine; for, listen, child of man, I loved thee more than ever I loved my cubs" (Kipling 23). She openly states that she loves her adopted son more than any of her own children which can be linked to Mowgli's perceived superiority over the animals in the jungle. Mowgli's other siblings accept this immediately and do not show any form of jealousy or misery over this fact. Mowgli simply comes from a 'better' culture than they do. Moreover, Mowgli cannot be looked in the eye by any of the other animals, which also suggests his superiority. This power of Mowgli is explained to him by Bagheera, the black panther. He explains that "Not even I can look thee between the eyes, and I was born among men, and I love thee, Little Brother" (Kipling 16). Bagheera is portrayed as the most powerful animal in the jungle and Mowgli's friend, but he

is still not able to overcome the superiority of men. He cannot deny the superiority of Mowgli's background.

These arguments cause Mowgli to appear like a symbol for the Western colonizers in the story. However, these arguments are complicated because Mowgli is Indian. This becomes clear from the passage in which Mowgli is found by the wolves, which is described as "Directly in front of him, holding on by a low branch, stood a naked brown baby who could just walk [...]" (Kipling 8). This indication of his skin colour immediately makes clear that Mowgli is not European. Orientalism often establishes a favourable image of the West with detriment to the East. However, in *The Jungle Book* a favourable image of an Indian character is created. This could result in an anti-Orientalist reading of the text. Moreover, Mowgli still has to abide by the law of the animals in the jungle, which undermines his own power position (Kutzer, "Kipling" 27). He is not able to do exactly what he wishes to do because the animals' rules are more important than him as a colonizer. Mowgli is simultaneously in a power position and in a subordinate position, which complicates the reading of Mowgli as a colonizer.

Even though Mowgli comes across as the superior character in his stories, it is difficult to read *The Jungle Book* as a novel against imperialism. Namely, this reading is complicated through Kipling's racist remarks throughout the whole book. Remarks like: "For he was an Aleut, and Aleuts are not clean people", "For every mule hates to be reminded that his father was a donkey" and "Of course he is [white]", said Vixen. 'Do you suppose I'm looked after by a black bullock-driver?'" (Kipling 74; 130; 134). These remarks show that even though Mowgli possesses a certain amount of power and superiority in his stories, he cannot be compared to a colonizer. Kipling makes clear that non-Europeans are lower in rank than Europeans and, as Mowgli is Indian, this story is not meant to be read as a story against empire and Western superiority. In combination with the other stories in *The Jungle Book*, it becomes clear this is a story in favour of the British Empire.

This claim is strengthened since it is easier to identify the Orient and Occident divide in the other stories. For example, in "The White Seal" the main character has a different fur colour than the other seals which makes him superior, and in "Toomai of the Elephants", "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" and "Servants of the Queen" the importance of the main characters is only established on the grounds of their values to their superior characters. These stories and certain themes of the Mowgli stories will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

In addition to the racist remarks, the descriptions of the supporting Indian characters in *The Jungle Book* are similar to Oriental stereotypes. This is very apparent in the "Tiger-

Tiger!’” story, in which Mowgli is cast out of the Jungle since the wolves are convinced a man does not belong in their pack. The village where Mowgli is forced to go to is shown to be corrupt. Mowgli offends the priest during his time in the village and the priest threatens him with the anger of the god of the temple. The solution to this problem is described as “It was a horrible scandal, but the priest hushed it up, and Messua’s husband paid much good silver to comfort the god” (Kipling 53). The silver has most likely been given to the priest so he would not make the scandal public. In addition, the villagers are portrayed as discourteous, as Mowgli’s courteous deed; to help a man whose donkey has slipped into a clay-pit, is punished since the man was from a lower caste (Kipling 54). Other Orientalist features are the water-pipes which are used all night during the story telling, and the superstition of the villagers as they believe Mowgli is a sorcerer at the end of the story. They scream “Sorcerer! Wolf’s brat! Jungle-demon! Go away! Get hence quickly, or the priest will turn thee into a wolf again!” (Kipling 54; 63).

Orientalism does not only occur in the Mowgli stories, but also in the other *Jungle Book* stories. For example, the two cobras of “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi”, who symbolize the natives of India, are portrayed as duplicitous and untruthful (Kutzer, “Kipling” 31). These features are also linked to Indian characters in other stories as well, as they are two features the West did not want to be themselves (Steinbach 62).

Law, Hierarchy and Help

These assumptions are strengthened through certain themes in the book. One of the most consistent themes in *The Jungle Book* is The Law of the Jungle and a variation on this; The Rules of the Beach. In *The Jungle Book*, every area in India adheres to a certain set of rules and laws, which are similar to western laws and rules (Hotchkiss 447-448). Since these laws tend to resemble the imperial laws of the British, and the West perceived themselves as superior in their organisation of a country, these laws and rules can be read as an allegory for India under the rule of the British (Stevenson 358). Laws are important for order, and order is what the British wanted to establish. There is great emphasis on Mowgli’s schooling of the law and the punishment of lawlessness in, for example, the chapter “Kaa’s Hunting”. The chapter begins with an introduction about Mowgli’s lessons so far. Baloo, a bear, is the Teacher of the Law, and even though the rest of the wolf pack stopped their lessons after they had learned the Hunting Song, Mowgli has to continue schooling because he is a man. A man in the jungle is weak against the animals as Baloo explains “A man’s cub is a man’s cub, and he must learn *all* the Law of the Jungle”, as without it he will never be safe (Kipling 26).

Forgetting the laws could have led to his death which indicates that the laws are of the utmost importance to him. Mowgli's correct usage of the law saves him twice in "Kaa's Hunting". First when he is kidnapped by the monkeys and uses the Kite Call, and second when he dropped in a pit full of snakes but is able to use their call and message them that he is not a threat to them.

The need for a law is strengthened by the monkeys in "Kaa's Hunting", who are the opposite of Mowgli as they do not have a law at all. They are looked down upon and ignored by the rest of the Jungle. Baloo is the first character to mention the monkeys and says "Thou hast been with the Monkey-People – the gray apes – the people without a Law – the eaters of everything. That is a great shame" (Kipling 28). It becomes clear that it is unacceptable to interact with the monkeys. They are presented as liars, thieves, cheats and outcasts, who have to be avoided at all costs. (Kipling 29). Talking about them is even avoided since "they are very many, evil, dirty, shameless, and they desire, if they have any fixed desire, to be noticed by the Jungle-People. But we do *not* notice them even when they throw nuts and filth on our heads" (Kipling 29). Talking about them is exactly what the monkeys try to achieve by their annoying behaviour. The monkeys resort to extreme ways of obtaining attention from the other Jungle-People, which shows how much they feel like outcasts. Their lack of law causes them to feel miserable and to be uncontrollable. They act like children and are unable to organise anything. This connects to an allegory used to describe the British empire, namely as a family (Kutzer, "Kipling" 9). The colonizers described the natives as the children of the empire who are "[...] too immature and volatile to govern themselves [...]" and Queen Victoria as the mother, who helps their children grow (Kutzer, "Kipling" 9). The monkeys, who act very immaturely, might represent the population of India without the rule of the British. This passage strengthens the importance of law in *The Jungle Book*. The story implies that without law there is merely chaos and savageness.

In addition to the incorporation of the British law, British hierarchy is introduced to India (Kutzer, "Kipling" 73). As has been established in the previous paragraph, the Monkey-People are lower in the jungle hierarchy than the rest of the Jungle-People, for nobody wants to be in their company or even talk about them. It is also clear that the wolves are in the top ranks of the hierarchy as no one is able to protect Mowgli after he is cast out of the pack and is forced to travel to the village. Bagheera explains this to Mowgli by saying "The Jungle is shut to thee indeed henceforward" (Kipling 22). Bagheera, Baloo and Mowgli's mother and brothers do not want him to leave but they are mere individuals and have not enough power to prevent his exile. Moreover, the wolves are described as the Free People. Freedom is power.

They do not have obey others and are able to act as they please. This is emphasised when Akeela, the wolves' leader, exclaims "What have the Free People to do with the orders of any save the Free People?" (Kipling 11).

In other *Jungle Book* stories this hierarchy is equally apparent and even more clearly connectable to empire. For example, in "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" the superiority of the white colonizers is emphasised. The family is immediately marked as English in the beginning of the story, as the father is described as "He was an Englishman who had just moved into the bungalow" (Kipling 88). The mongoose, who is adopted by the family, admires the colonizers and wants to protect them for "[...] every well-brought-up mongoose always hopes to be a house-mongoose some day and have rooms to run about in; and Rikki-tikki's mother (she used to live in the General's house at Segowlee) had carefully told Rikki what to do if ever he came across white men" (Kipling 89). The mongoose is happy to give up his freedom in order to serve the white settlers, since they are superior to him.

In "Servants of the Queen", this theme is also re-established as a troop-horse, a mule, an elephant, camels and bullocks discuss why they are going to fight for their people in the morning. They conclude that "all you have to do is to obey the man at your head and ask no questions" (Kipling 133). They accept that hierarchy is a good thing because otherwise "[...] you'll stop all the battery, beside getting a thrashing" (Kipling 133).

Furthermore, the importance of hierarchy is underlined in the story "The White Seal". The White Seal has to put himself at the top of the hierarchy to give the other seals a better life. The two reasons which are given for his determination in the story are: he had seen the killing of his friends and "[...] Kotick was a white seal" (Kipling 78). The fact that his fur has a different colour implies that he is special and is, subsequently, able to think about the seals' futures, contrary to the ordinary seals. Further in the story, Kotick hears from an old seal that there is a prophesy about a white seal finding a safe island and he interprets this prophesy as his fate. The old seal tells him "[...] there was a story on the beaches that some day a white seal would come out of the North and lead the seal-people to a quiet place" (Kipling 80) The other seals need the White Seal's leadership, since they are not able to find this better island by themselves. The White Seal establishes himself as their leader by fighting any other seal at the dangerous island. He is angry that the other seals do not understand him and that he has to use violence in order to improve their lives and asks them "Will you come with me if I win?" (Kipling 83). To establish hierarchy in this violent manner is necessary in order to obtain better living conditions for the other seals. At the end of his fights, "he was not a white seal any more, but red from head to tail" and he roars "Who comes with me to the Sea Cowes

tunnel? Answer, or I shall teach you again” (Kipling 85). There are no objections uttered and the White Seal is now the leader of all seals. The violence would not have been needed if hierarchy had already been established. This underlines the importance of a clear hierarchy in order to avoid bloody conflicts as described in “The White Seal”.

Moreover, the help of natives to the British colonizers is rewarded in *The Jungle Book*. This is an important aspect in the argument for *The Jungle Book* as a novel in favour of imperialism. It establishes that the help of natives is necessary to achieve an India under control of the British, an India that was, according to the Western perception, civilized. The story in which this aspect of *The Jungle Book* is emphasised is “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi”. The white family with whom Rikki-tikki, a mongoose, lives, are supporting characters in the plot of the snake-killing (Kutzer “Kipling” 28-29). The story focuses on Rikki-tikki and the two cobras. Since the Mongoose and the cobra are native animals from India, an alternative reading can be connected to the story. “Rikki-tikki is between domesticated and wild, both catlike and weasel-like, as the narrator tells us”, which was comparable to some natives in India (Kutzer, “Kipling” 30). Some Indian natives accepted the British control, which made them too in between ‘domesticated’ and ‘wild’, according to the West’s perception. The natives that were cooperative to the British were indispensable for the growth of a British India. The cobras, however, symbolize the toxic, rebellious natives (Kutzer “Kipling” 31). They refuse to live with the family and decide to kill all of them so the garden, in which they live, is again fully theirs. Without the help of the mongoose, the cooperative native, the family would not have survived. In the end, both cobras are killed by Rikki-tikki, as he fights for his family’s honour, and, as a result, some of the power and privilege of the white family is transferred to him as he is now considered to be a loyal servant of the family (Kutzer “Kipling” 32). Similar to the fact that the garden could not have been cultivated without the help of the mongoose, India could not be civilized without the help of cooperative natives.

Postcolonial Interpretations

The Jungle Book ends with a conversation between two soldiers as one exclaims after a battle has been won “Would it were so in Afghanistan! [...] for there we obey only our own wills” (Kipling 137). The other soldier replies to him “And for that reason, [...] your Amir whom you do not obey must come here and take orders from our Viceroy” (Kipling 137). This is the conclusion of all the discussed *Jungle Book* stories combined; Oriental countries should obey the Occidental countries because in that way battles are won, countries are civilized and people will prosper. In the West’s perception, India, and other Oriental countries, need the

help of the 'civilised' Western countries as without their influence, India would only be a country of barbarity and disorder. *The Jungle Book* stories form an allegory for the change India has gone through since the arrival of the British. The separate stories establish the importance of order and rules, the importance of cooperative natives and portrays the Orient as a strange and different place which is in need of help. The British influence saves Mowgli, as he is able to remember the law. Rikki-tikki helps to bring the barbaric and lying natives under control which helps the white colonizers to continue their work. Hierarchy is established as critical in "The White Seal" in order to obtain a better live. And all these aspects together are combined in "Servants of the Queen", where five animals; camels, bullocks and an elephant as native Indian animals and a mule and a horse as native Western animals, discuss the importance of obedience to their superiors in battle. Hierarchy is important because otherwise it would not be clear to whom they should listen. Rules and punishments are a logical consequence of this hierarchy and the help of the native animals is necessary for victory in battle and the good of India. This postcolonial reading of *The Jungle Book* shows that this literary work supports nearly all aspects of the British presence in India and tries to show how India has improved, in the Western perception, after the arrival of the British. Therefore, *The Jungle Book* can be claimed to be a novel in favour of empire.

Conclusion

“What does a child reader take away from such a story? While it is impossible to say what every child takes away from a book, there are certainly ideas and ideologies that a child could and probably does take from this book, especially considering that its ideology was by no means isolated [...]” (Kutzer “Kipling” 22).

It is impossible to claim a child takes away a certain ideology from a book, even though it is certainly a possibility. Every children’s book possesses an ideology, more specifically the ideology of the society in which it was written (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2). In the Victorian era, empire and imperialism were of the utmost importance both to the identity of the Britons themselves and for the prosperity of their country (Brangliger 7; McCord and Purdue 478). It is, therefore, nearly impossible to find a Victorian children’s book without a reference to empire.

The two children’s books which have been discussed in this thesis are simply two examples. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* was written first and has been shown to convey an anti-Orientalist message. Through the use of postcolonial theory, Alice has been shown to represent England and the Orient is represented by Wonderland and its creatures. This resulted in the allegorical reading of Alice as a colonizer and her attempts to ‘colonize’ Wonderland. Alice is punished for her self-centred behaviour and nearly all of her attempts to force her culture onto the other characters fail. She is repeatedly abandoned by the creatures and she is forced out of Wonderland in the end. This possibly symbolizes that the West’s power and their sense of superiority might end too one day. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* breaks with the supportive tradition in order to express critique of empire.

The Jungle Book was written during the later years of the Victorian era and has been shown to support empire and imperialism, which places this book in line with the more conventional imperial novels. Through a postcolonial analysis of the text, the importance of British law and hierarchy, and the need for cooperative natives was established in order to accomplish the West’s idea of a British India (Kutzer, “Introduction” 2). Every story underlines one good aspect of the British Empire and in the last story, “Servants of the Queen”, all aspects are brought together in order to form an allegory for India after the arrival of the British.

The difference in attitude towards empire, expressed in the two children’s books, can be caused through a divide in the Victorian society about empire. Even though imperialism

was supported by many Victorians, there are always people who think differently about a certain subject, which is also true for empire in the Victorian time (Brantlinger 1). *The Jungle Book* expresses the popular Victorian view of the “white man’s burden”, which means that the West thought India needed them in order to develop discipline and a sophisticated culture instead of their original perceived chaos and barbarity (Arnold 420). In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the rejection of empire simply mirrors the views of the others in Britain; the people who did not support empire. It does not agree with the “white man’s burden”, as Alice’s attempts to civilize are shown to be useless. Moreover, it establishes Wonderland’s traditions, games and conversations as a culture on its own that is in no need of Alice, and eventually she is forced to leave.

Moreover, the difference in attitude can be explained through the time-gap between the two children’s books. As was established in the introduction of this thesis, there were different attitudes in general during the years in which *Alice* was written compared to the years in which *The Jungle Book* was written. At the end of the Victorian era, patriotism and pride of empire were the dominant feelings among the British population (Brantlinger 2). *The Jungle Book* fits perfectly with this feeling. All stories are meant to highlight one or more good aspects of the empire. During the middle years of the Victorian era, the time in which *Alice* was written, there was more suspicion about empire and the business of the government in general. This critical attitude has seeped through into the *Alice* book.

Both novels show a different kind of attitude towards empire and are, therefore, in conflict with each other. However, this conflict can thus be explained through the change in attitude towards empire in society and the individual attitude towards empire in general. The fact that these two different views can occur in the same culture, implies that not everyone in Britain was equally enthusiastic and supportive about empire.

Moreover, a comparison between the two main protagonists of the stories, Alice and Mowgli, underline this thesis’ interpretations. Moral guidance and support were considered to be very important in children’s books during the Victorian era and, therefore, main protagonists often functioned as role models (Briggs and Butts 138; Leary 231). Due to their behaviour in the stories, Alice and Mowgli strengthen the attempt to bring across a certain ideology. Alice is perfectly British in manners, behaviour and schooling. She knows her lessons, the rules of British games and how to make conversation, for example. These features underline her cultural background. However, it is established in this thesis that she is simultaneously aggressive, unthoughtful, ignorant and disrespectful in her behaviour towards the other inhabitants of Wonderland. These features were not considered to be preferable by

the Victorian society. Because of this, her British behaviour is not idealised and, instead of functioning as a role model, she can be interpreted as a warning towards children. The story highlights the anti-imperial message, as British behaviour can be offensive behaviour in other cultures.

Mowgli, however, is extremely moral and courteous. For example, even though he is bullied by other children in the village, he knows it is “[...] unsportmanlike to kill little naked cubs [...]” and out of respect and gratitude for his adoptive mother he does not take revenge on the village people after they have cast him out (Kipling 53; 64). He is an example of a ‘good’ native, who portrays British morals, ideals and behaviour. Therefore, Mowgli is a good role model both to Western children and to Colonial children. Through his correct behaviour in comparison to Western standards, the story’s support of empire is strengthened.

This thesis has tried to answer the research question: in what ways do children’s books like *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Jungle Book* represent Victorian ideas about and attitudes towards imperialism? It has become apparent that there were different views on empire since the two children’s books discussed in this thesis both show a different attitude towards imperialism, which means that the initial hypothesis was correct. Further research could strengthen this claim. In this research, only two children’s books have been discussed and, for more complete results, research on multiple other Victorian children’s books could be conducted. Books like *The Secret Garden* and *The Daisy Chain* are two examples. Moreover, different perspectives and theories could offer new insights in the power differences between cultures. For this purpose, a Marxist perspective can be used, for example. Hierarchy was very important in the British Empire, which results into class differences. Marxism focuses on class differences and investigates the results and implications of these power relationships (Kutzer, “Kipling” 73). Marxists conclusions compared to postcolonial conclusions can result into more detailed information. Moreover, research on the portrayal of children in adult’s literature can contribute to more specific insights in the way in which Victorian children were expected to behave, and how this expected behaviour is connected to empire. For this purpose the Charles Dickens novels could be used.

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Appendices 1

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

This story is about a girl named Alice who arrives in Wonderland after she falls down a rabbit-hole. During her adventures, she meets many 'creatures', who are the inhabitants of Wonderland. For example, she drinks tea with the Mad Hatter, she talks to the Cheshire Cat, she meets a duchess and her baby and ultimately, plays croquet with the Queen. At the end of the novel, she insults the Queen and, consequently, wakes up from her strange dream.

Appendices 2

1. “Mowgli’s Brothers”.

This story is about how Mowgli’s is accepted in the wolf pack and why he is exiled when he is older.

2. “Kaa’s Hunting”.

This story goes back in time to the years where Mowgli lived with the wolf pack. It focuses on Mowgli’s education in the jungle until he is captured by the apes, which forces Bagheera and Baloo to ask Kaa for help in order to rescue Mowgli.

3. “Tiger-Tiger!”

This story is about Mowgli’s time in the village and his feud with Shere-Khan, the tiger. At the end he kills the tiger but is banished from the village.

4. “The White Seal”.

This story is about a white seal who tries to find an island where men cannot find them. The other seals say he is a fool but in the end he succeeds and is able to protect all the other seals.

5. “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi”.

This story is about a mongoose who is adopted by a British family in India. The family is threatened by two cobras. Rikki-tikki eventually kills the two cobra’s and the family is safe again.

6. “Toomai of the Elephants”.

This story is about a servant boy who wishes to become a hunter. His white superiors tell him he can only become a hunter if he has seen the elephants dance, which means never. One day the boy’s elephant is restless and escapes. Toomai begs the elephant to not leave him behind and the elephant takes him with him. Toomai sees the elephants dance that evening and his dreams are fulfilled.

7. “Servants of the Queen”.

After the camels have caused chaos in a military camp, a horse, a mule, an elephant, two camels and bullocks discuss why they are going to fight in the morning. One soldier of the camp has hidden himself close to the animals and is able to hear the conversation.