Chapter 3

A Representation of British Gendered Imperial Politics in Fiction for Children: Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*

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ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the gendered imperial politics in short fiction for children through analyzing “The Mowgli Stories” and “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi,” selected from nineteenth-century colonialist author Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* (1894). The reason for the selection of the stories is that they have not attracted the interest they deserve as products and perpetuators of the gendered imperial ideology. The chapter asserts that they both reflect the British concerns about the future potential Indian rebellions after the Mutiny of 1857 and applaud the faithful colonizing Indians’ struggle against the rebellious ones through masculinist power of body and language. The stories narrate the masculinized bodily actions of the double outsider animalized characters involved in violence after the rebellion of one of them in colonial India. Thus, the chapter indicates the author’s response to the mutiny through the techniques empowering masculinized imperialism in allegorical fiction for children.

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INTRODUCTION

The chapter suggests that nineteenth-century British children’s literature justifies and imposes the gendered imperialist ideology on child readers. To indicate this, first, the chapter provides background information about British imperial politics, which essentialized fiction to justify and disseminate the power of the British Empire. The chapter suggests that the reason for increasing number of children’s books in the second half of the nineteenth century is the anxiety of the British aroused by the threat of the colonized and external powers, urging the British to appeal especially British boys as the saviour’s of the imperial future. To illustrate it, then, the chapter analyzes Kipling’s selected fables, aimed at children. It asserts that the stories portray the Indian Mutiny (1857) for child readers by empowering them with the masculine power of body and language to overcome any potential rebellion in the future. It indicates the entwined bond between colonialism and patriarchy by examining the role of both colonizing/colonized men and women in the selected works. Thus, the chapter does more than a postcolonial feminist reading, which interrogates the representation of just colonized women in colonial texts. Consequently, a critical reading of each story displays how Kipling uses colonial and patriarchal discourses to convey gendered colonial mission, particularly, to British boys.

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE IN THE VICTORIAN IMPERIAL SERVICE

As Zornado (2002) notes, people “inadvertently reproduce the dominant culture as a result of the lived relations determined by the structure imposed on them (p. 4). In this context, the relationship between the adult and the child seems to be prerequisite for a sustainable ideology in society. As children are regarded as perpetrators of the adult’s ideology, they have always been main concerns of adults throughout centuries. Children’s literature, encompassing books either appealing to child readers or including child characters, has an undeniable role in cultural reproduction between adults and child readers. Children’s books are adult authors’ products through which they convey their attitudes and beliefs, even ideologies to children (Grenby, 2008, p. 199, Rockwell, 1974, p. 4). Ideology is an “inevitable, untameable and largely uncontrollable” factor in children’s books because writers cannot conceal
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