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Between Generations:
Imagination, Collaboration, and the Nineteenth-Century Child

by

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Abstract

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Shifting ideas about the qualities of children’s imaginations transformed relationships between adults and children in nineteenth-century Britain. This dissertation contends that these new paradigms of children’s fancy led authors of children’s literature to partner with the young as creative collaborators, which accounts for frequent representations of children as an adult author’s auditor, coauthor, illustrator, or guiding genius. These intergenerational collaborations were new models of authorship and evidence of a growing cultural imperative to recognize the young as active agents shaping their own social worlds. Alert to the fact that depictions of children are historically variable, I situate children’s literature with and against discourses from psychology to education reform, demonstrating how the perceived powers of fancy granted children agency in a variety of cultural arenas. My project, then, offers an alternative to critical accounts that represent children as ciphers fulfilling adults’ psychological and sexual desires.

My introduction examines children’s literature of the early nineteenth century, which I contend was a collaboration between adults. Debates about the child’s imagination, however, indicate a shift in expectations regarding adults’ relationships to children. The remaining chapters detail the consequences of this shift, exploring four ways children were acknowledged as creative collaborators. Chapter one explores how many authors for children, inspired by fairy tale collections and cultural associations
between children and preliterate cultures, structured their fictions according to models of oral narration. These authors defined children not as silent listeners but as participants in the narrative. Chapter two investigates coauthorship in the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, who understood composition as a collaboration between multiple familial, literary, and psychological personas. Partnering with his stepson, Stevenson developed a vocabulary of images that resurface throughout his works and express a social model of authorship. My third chapter explores the unruly child, examining children’s literature that depicts collaborations between disobedient children and dim-witted adults in the context of education reforms that privileged imagination over adult authority. The figure of the disorderly child suggests anxieties about the imaginative power of those considered socially vulnerable. I conclude with a chapter on illustration, situating images by Edward Lear and Rudyard Kipling against ideas about children and art, arguing that these author-illustrators fuse childlike spontaneity and adult order, representing collaboration through playful images.
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My life with books began when my mother, Susan Sornson Ford, read me *Mouseskin’s Golden House*. My mom taught me how to write, how to teach, how to laugh at myself, and how to make small differences in the lives of the people around me through love. I try to follow her example, and I dedicate this dissertation to her.
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INTRODUCTION:
BETWEEN GROWN UPS: EARLY VICTORIAN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE
AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, the Oxford mathematician better known as Lewis Carroll, is often described as a man with a collection of toys, puzzles, and games meant to delight and amuse young girls. “There was the ‘orguinette’ . . . which was played by turning a handle,” remembers Evelyn M. Hatch, a child who once modeled for Dodgson’s photographs, “and, best of all, some fourteen or more musical-boxes . . . As time went on, and the children grew older, games such as Lanrick, which was played on a chess-board, or word-puzzles, such as Syzgies, Misch Masch, and Doublets, took the place of toys” (Hatch 4–5). The game Misch Masch took its name from a manuscript magazine Dodgson compiled in his twenties, a hodgepodge of previous Dodgson family domestic publications, and the word game surfaces now and then throughout Dodgson’s history.¹ For example, he included directions for Misch Masch in an 1884 letter to his young friends, the Lowrie children, writing, “I’m very fond of inventing games, and I enclose you the rules of one, ‘Misch-Masch’: see how you like it. One advantage is that it needs no counters or anything: so you can play it out walking, or up in a balloon, or down in a diving-bell, or anywhere!” (Letters 243–4). Misch Masch is a game of two players, in which the first proposes a set of two or more letters, called a “nucleus,” and the second player is tasked with finding a word that contains it. “Thus, ‘magpie,’ ‘lemon,’ ‘himself,’ are lawful words containing the nuclei ‘gp,’ ‘emo,’ ‘imse,” Dodgson explains (MM 142).

¹The manuscript magazine Mischmasch includes the first instance of the poem “Jabberwocky.” In 1932, Mischmasch was reprinted, bound in one volume with another Dodgson manuscript magazine, The Rectory Umbrella. For an extended discussion on Dodgson’s juvenilia, see Susina.
The game was published in June 1881, in *The Monthly Packet*, then republished with revisions a year later in the same periodical and as an anonymous pamphlet.

*Misch Masch* is game born from the interests of a professor of mathematics that recalls, through its name, Dodgson’s own youth, and it is also an entertainment designed to delight children and young women. The game can be interpreted either as a schoolboy amusement of a man who was, at heart, still a boy or as merely another strategy Dodgson employed to lure in child-friends, like the safety-pins it is said he brought with him to Eastbourne beach to pin up the skirts of little girls playing in the surf.

While there is scholarship on the pseudonymous Lewis Carroll that does not take into account the influence of biography, when literary critics and historians refer to the life of Dodgson, these master narratives of innocence and perversion often obscure finer distinctions. Katherine Leach, using a wealth of primary evidence on Dodgson’s life that became available in the twentieth century, demonstrates that the “hundred years of biography surrounding the author of *Alice* . . . has been devoted primarily to a potent mythology surrounding the name ‘Lewis Carroll,’ rather than the reality of the man, Charles Dodgson” (Leach 9). This mythology is organized largely around two opposing interpretations of Carroll’s investment in childhood. “The Victorians had saints; the twentieth century has psychological disorders,” continues Leach. “Things that spoke to the Victorians of naïveté and sweetness speak to the twentieth century of hypocrisy and deviant, dangerous, repressed sexuality. The question of which of these images is the more ‘real’ is irrelevant. What is going on here has very little to do with reality” (Leach 34–5). The tendency to idealize or demonize an author for children is particularly acute in but not unique to Carroll scholarship. Similar troubles inflect work on J. M. Barrie, for
example, whose adoption of the five Llewelyn Davies brothers has generated
c speculations about his personal psychology, and Edward Lear’s nonsense is interpreted as
evidence of his easy friendships with young friends and his anxious interactions with the
adult social world. It seems at times that authors for children writing in the mid- to late-
nineteenth century, during the cult of childhood and the rise of children’s literature, are
all susceptible to the “potent mythology” Leach identifies in studies of Carroll.

The game of Misch Masch, however, suggests not only the relationships Dodgson
sought to build with young girls but also, and more interestingly, how those relationships
are inflected by his understanding of language. The rules of Misch Masch require two
players—two children, judging by Dodgson’s intended audience—to work together to
build words, one providing the heart of a word and the next completing it. Dodgson has
designed a game in which children form creative partnerships to construct the very
building blocks of language. Such collaboration capitalizes on the possibilities of
language and collaboration—the ability of two separate individuals to create one,
cohesive meaning. Scored according to a points system, Misch Masch is indeed
competitive, but the rules accommodate and even encourage teamwork. The act of
piecing together letters undoubtedly leads to moments of delighted surprise as one player
recommends a solution unforeseen by her partner. “A player may set a nucleus without
knowing any word containing it,” suggests Dodgson, and the word suggested by the
second player “need not be the word thought of by the player who set it” (MM 142–3).

The flexibility of language and the possibilities of collaboration are also central to
the children’s literature Dodgson wrote as Lewis Carroll: nonsense that does not adhere
to the formal usage of language and caters instead to the adaptable imaginations of
children. Martin Gardner writes that Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland “swarms with word play” and that linguistic games “pervade the second Alice book even more than the first” (Gardner 2, 5). For example, a variation on the dynamic of Misch Masch appears in Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There, when Humpty Dumpty, responding to Alice’s recitation of the “Jabberwocky,” explains the concept of portmanteau words. “Well, ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe and slimy’ . . . You see it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed into one word” (Carroll Looking-Glass 215). Words, as Humpty’s analysis of the “Jabberwocky” demonstrates, are capacious. They accommodate multiple meanings and can be dissected and examined in parts. A joint effort of interpretation generates multiple definitions. Dodgson understands not only language but also literature as a social construct between two or more individuals. While Humpty avers, “When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less,” Dodgson, in his letter to the Lowrie children, acknowledges that this is not so (Carroll Looking-Glass 213). Responding to their inquiries about the meaning of his nonsense epic The Hunting of the Snark, Dodgson reminds his friends that “words mean more than we mean to express when we use them, so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant” (Dodgson Letters 243, emphasis added). This is not a resignation to multiple and sometimes improbable readers’ responses but a celebration of them. Dodgson both recognizes that a “whole book” generates a spectrum of interpretations and mandates that it “ought to mean a great deal more than a writer meant.” Unpredictability is the natural state of language.

This is a brief reading of one of Dodgson’s word games and its echoes in his children’s fiction. However, it demonstrates the importance of considering not only what
the adult-child relationships so important to children’s literature communicate about individuals’ psychological and sexual biographies but also how these partnerships materially influence the work of these authors. These relationships can reveal the structure of dominant models of authorship for children and suggest the ability of children to transform their own literature. The biography of an author like Carroll—who, as Leach argues, has become pure myth, immune to the claims of reality—is a difficult obstacle to negotiate. For example, most considerations of Carroll’s relationship to Alice Liddell and that young girl’s impact on the Alice books are entangled in master narratives of innocence or pedophilia or limited to a brief mention of the ride Alice took with her sisters and Dodgson to Godstow—the “golden afternoon” of storytelling mentioned in the prefatory poem to Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll Wonderland 7). These relationships, however, were significant to Dodgson’s creative life and more complex than the critical tradition acknowledges. Dodgson certainly felt ambivalent about his writing for children and, perhaps, uneasy claiming authorship of the Alice books. This is evidenced most explicitly in his adoption of a pseudonym but also reveals itself in other, subtler ways. In the letter to the Lowrie children, for example, Dodgson asks the children to “please never again praise me at all as if any powers I may have, in writing books for children, were my own doing. I just feel myself a trustee, that is all—you would not take much credit to yourselves, I suppose, if a sum of money had been put into your hands and you had been told ‘spend all this for the good of the little ones’?” (Dodgson Letters 242). Dodgson does not indicate who should take responsibility for his “books for children,” but the figure of the trustee is interesting, suggesting that Dodgson, as Carroll, felt he was managing something valuable that did not belong to him.
Fortunately, recent scholarship has taken a more nuanced approach to the composition and publication of Dodgson’s work. For example, Marah Gubar’s discussion of the *Alice* books in her study of adult-child collaboration, *Artful Dodgers*, acknowledges “the allure innocence held for Carroll” but instead traces “how an opposing impulse also emerges in his art: a willingness to jettison the solitary Child of Nature paradigm and explore instead the complex, fraught relationship that links children to adults.” She claims he characterizes the child “not as an untouched Other but as a collaborator enmeshed in a complicated relationship with the adults who surround her” (Gubar 95). Gubar and other writers on adult-child relationships—such as U. C. Knoepflmacher, who discusses the partnership between Rudyard Kipling and his daughter and between William Thackeray and his young friends—represent a growing interest in the figure of the collaborating child. This figure is related to but discrete from the desirable child, the object of adults’ imaginations and desires, so prevalent in children’s literature scholarship.

It is this collaborating child, inside and outside of literature, that is the focus of this project. The creative, intergenerational partnerships I discuss throughout this project emerged from a culture that largely considered children as passive, manageable through education and discipline. This introduction, therefore, contextualizes what I find to be a growing regard in the 1850s and 1860s for children as figures who could materially transform their literature. Children’s literature published in the early nineteenth century, I argue, was considered a collaboration between adults, often among authors, parents, and educators. Mid-century debates about children’s imaginations, however, indicate a shift
in expectations regarding authors’ relationships to child audiences and, more generally, adults’ relationships to children.

In what follows, I begin with a review of children’s literature from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, discussing in particular the work of John Newbery, Maria Edgeworth, Thomas Day, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld. I pay attention to the constructions of childhood and theories of education that inflect their fictions and to the relationships among adults and between adults and children that inform these authors during composition, shape their work, and, in turn, are represented in their stories. I then describe new ideas about children’s imaginations, informed by but departing from Romantic ideals of childhood, that signaled a shift in the genre in the mid-nineteenth century. These new paradigms of children’s imaginations significantly transformed the types of relationships that shaped and were represented in children’s literature and sparked the rise of creative, collaborative partnerships between adults and children, real and imagined, inside the genre of children’s literature and in other institutions that address and manage the young. In order to set parameters for discussing these partnerships, I construct a working definition of collaboration in section three and briefly explore the models of multiple partnership that will be the focus of this project. I end by situating my own research with respect to current scholarship that similarly explores the limits and possibilities of child agency.

I. PARENTS, GUARDIANS, AND NURSES

By the mid eighteenth century, young readers were entertained, edified, and educated by a variety of texts. They read chapbooks of familiar fairy tales, folktales, and
national legends, such as "The Children in the Wood" and "The History of Sir Richard Whittington and His Cat," as well as books originally published for adults but enjoyed by younger audiences, such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Aggressively pious works such as James Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1671) and Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715) were joined by gentler collections of verse, fiction, and instructional material published by authors who advertised their intention to amuse as well as instruct. For example, between 1740 and 1743 Thomas Boreman published his *Gigantick Histories*—tiny, four-penny volumes that describe the sights and legends of London. Samuel F. Pickering, Jr. describes the volumes as "generally dull," but Boreman's stated project of "fixing the attention of the mind . . . by amusing it" suggests that his histories are an attempt to temper the educational responsibilities of children's literature with entertainment—an impulse that would become familiar by the nineteenth century (qtd. in Pickering 216). A year later, Mary Cooper published *Tommy Thumb's Song Book*, the oldest known collection of nursery rhymes, and John Newbery published *The Little Pretty Pocket-Book, Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy, and Pretty Miss Polly*. The frontispiece of this miscellany of letters, verse, and stories features the motto "Delectando monemus: Instruction with Delight" (Little 129). Texts such as Boreman's, Cooper's, and Newbery's are cited frequently in histories of children's literature as early examples of an author's or publisher's intent not

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2 Janeway's text is a collection of "exemplary lives and joyful Deaths" of pious children, and Watts's text is a collection of illustrated verses with religious themes and morals. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Carroll parodies Watt's poem "Against Idleness and Mischief," which begins "How doth the little busy bee," when Alice, attempting to recite the well-known verse, begins instead, "How doth the little crocodile" (Watts 65, Carroll *Wonderland* 23).

3 The author of the *Little Pretty Pocket-Book* and indeed of many of Newbery's titles is unknown. Newbery very likely wrote some of these texts. Oliver Goldsmith is also frequently noted as a possible contributor. For more on the relationship between Newbery and Goldsmith, see Mounsey.
only to address a young audience but also to take into account their taste for entertaining reading material. Newbery’s *Pocket-Book* in particular is exalted as one of the first texts to cater to children’s entertainment.⁴ F. J. Harvey Darton, for example, argues that the most significant contribution of Newbery to the genre of children’s literature, what makes his *Pocket-Book* and subsequent publications notable, is that he “deliberately set out to provide amusement, and was not afraid to say so” (Darton 2).

The shifting project of children’s literature signified changing understandings of children’s needs and the best ways to achieve their religious, moral, social, and practical education, and texts such as Newbery’s indeed evidence a new direction in literature for the young. However, the adult-child relationships that inform these authors and publishers were not immediately and radically transformed. Newbery and his contemporaries may have attempted to shake off the stigma of relentlessly pious and didactic texts, but the literature they wrote and published, like that of Janeway and Watts before them, was often surrounded by a paratextual apparatus that, by directly addressing the purchasing adult, framed their work as an exploration of how adults, through children’s literature, could manage and mold the young. The concerns addressed in the titles, prefaces, and introductory letters of early children’s literature also pervade the stories, fables, verses, and dialogues included in these texts, creating a body of children’s literature that undertakes the complicated task of educating and amusing young audiences.

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⁴ Scholars disagree regarding the importance and innovation of *The Little Pretty Pocket-Book*—some dubbing it the first example of true children’s literature and others claiming that the project and format of Newbery’s collection was nothing new. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* notes that Newbery was the first publisher “to create a separate list of works for children and regularly employ or commission illustrators and authors” (Maxted). However, Percy Muir notes “the tendency to exaggerate Newbery’s importance in the history of children’s books,” arguing that archival research reveals that Newbery “was not the originator, either of the idea, or the general format or contents, of the familiar children’s books of the eighteenth century” (Muir 67). Peter Hunt also objects to the critical attention paid to Newbery at the expense of his contemporaries, arguing that this narrative of the history of children’s books “does not make clear . . . that women have dominated children’s books from the beginning” (32).
while encouraging and facilitating conversations among adults on early education. In this
section, I will review a number of early texts for children to demonstrate that the primary
relationship informing much of this literature was not that between adult authors and
child audiences but instead a partnership between adults. In other words, the changing
relationship between adults and children that is the subject of many studies of the history
of children’s literature is eclipsed by a dialogue between adults that shaped the
composition and publication of texts for the young. Some social historians and literary
critics have discussed individual writers for children during this time period in the
context of collaboration; however, they have overlooked the prevalence of collaboration
among adults across the genre. The frequency of such partnerships between adults in the
late eighteenth and early nineteenth century suggests that individual instances of
collaboration reflect and contribute to a particular set of assumptions about children, their
books, and the art of writing for the young.

Newbery’s *Pocket-Book*, as a landmark in the genre, is a good place to begin to
demonstrate the primacy of collaborative adult relationships in early children’s literature.
An advertisement for the *Pocket-Book* in the *Penny Morning Post* notes that the
collection of verses and stories is prefixed by “a letter on education humbly addressed to
all Parents, Guardians, Governesses, &c., wherein rules are laid down for making their
children strong, healthy, virtuous, wise, and happy” (qtd. in Muir 65). Darton, who
describes Newbery’s text at length, dismisses this letter in one sentence, calling the
prefatory essay “some preliminary remarks meant for parents” that are overshadowed by
the rest of the book (Darton 3). However, this letter is in fact a rather extensive essay on
the responsibilities of adults toward their children’s physical and mental well-being, a
significant paratextual frame in which the “you” refers not to the “Little Master Tommy” or “Pretty Miss Polly” of the title but instead to their parents, nurses, governesses, and guardians. Later content in the Pocket-Book addresses and engages an audience of children, but the first pages suggest that Newbery is forwarding his miscellany to an audience of adults as an example of appropriate children’s reading material and proper methods of education and entertainment. These initial remarks for parents and educators recall similar devices in earlier literature for children, such as Janeway’s prefatory address “To all Parents, Schoolmasters and Schoolmistresses, or any who have any hand in the Education of Youth” (Janeway 3) and Watts’s preface “To all that are concerned in the education of children” (Watts 7). While most of the content of Newbery’s miscellany is, indeed, directed toward children, the first and most forceful address is to parents. As Pickering notes, this introductory essay expresses recommendations borrowed almost entirely from John Locke’s Some Thoughts Concerning Education (Pickering 14). By drawing on texts and methodologies that were, at the time of the Pocket-Book’s publication, part of a larger public dialogue on education, Newbery privileges his collection first as a contribution to an ongoing discourse among adults and secondly as a contribution to the growing number of options in children’s libraries.

Even those elements of the book intended for children suggest an acknowledgment of reading parents and educators and a preoccupation with enforcing adult-child relationships founded on discipline and moral and spiritual education. The “Letters from Jack the Giant-Killer” advertised in the title, for example, begin with an invocation of the power structures of the nursery and adults’ responsibilities to monitor and record the behavior of the young. The fictional Jack informs his child readers that he
is writing because the children’s “Nurse called upon [him] To-day, and told [him] that you was good” (Little 133). Jack, whose narrating voice recalls not a fairy tale hero but instead a Sunday school instructor, lists particular examples of his readers’ good behavior, such as obedience to and respect for parents and nurses, as well as possible moral pitfalls, such as pride and obstinacy in the face of good advice (Little 132–3). This letter is not meant to entertain, in fact, but to explain to children the purpose of the toys that accompany the text, a small red-and-black ball for Tommy and a pincushion for Polly. These toys, through the strategic placement of pins, record children’s good or bad behavior. The verses that follow Jack’s letter and comprise the bulk of the Pocket-Book describe an array of childhood games, such as hopscotch and chuck farthing, but each verse ends with a moral that Tommy and Polly must obey, lest their nurses stick a pin on the black side of their rubber ball or pincushion, which Jack will discover and compensate not with a coveted penny but instead with a rod or switch, a sign of adult authority over misbehaving children (Little 132–3).

While the critical tradition of Newbery’s first work for children—by scholars such as Darton, Peter Hunt, and Percy Muir—often focuses on the text’s place in a genre beginning to address children as readers, I contend that the Pocket-Book in fact still employs rhetorical devices that mark it as a text addressed to adults. Muir contends that notices for Newbery’s Pocket-Book advertising those elements of the text directed at parents and educators, such as that printed in the Penny Morning Post, suggest that Newbery was “not quite sure of his voice yet . . . The evident desire to cozen the parents and governesses shows a little uncertainty in the method of address” (Muir 65). Yet these advertisements express not Newbery’s doubts about his project but instead a deliberate
collaboration with parents in literature meant for children—a position that was not uncommon in texts for the young in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In fact, collaboration between adults is evident in the two dominant approaches to children’s literature at the time, movements spearheaded by authors that literary critics Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles call the “rational moralists” and the “Sunday school moralists.” According to Demers and Moyles, the “rational moralists” sought to cultivate children’s judgment along rational and moral lines in keeping with the theories of Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, while the “Sunday school moralists” wrote tales that expressed the claims of religion on a child’s soul, privileging eternal happiness over secular pleasures (Demers 121, 186–7). These writers established their authority not through their playful imaginations but instead through their experiences as parents or educators. While Demers and Moyles do not characterize the relationships between adults that frequently appear in and around these texts as collaborations, their useful categories of analysis do emphasize how these authors demonstrated their fluency in the debates surrounding early education. They often published treatises, essays, or full-length studies expanding upon their Lockean or Evangelical educational theories, and subsequently composed literature for children meant to demonstrate and implement their favored methodologies.

Maria Edgeworth, a rational moralist, is one author critics have approached through discussions of collaboration, largely because she published the popular three-volume treatise *Practical Education* (1798) in collaboration with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, and followed that joint effort with a number of volumes of collected stories for children demonstrating the common-sense principles of that treatise. *Early
Lessons in 1801 was followed by Moral Tales for Young People in 1805 and more Early Lessons in 1822. Critics disagree about the nature of Maria Edgeworth’s collaboration with her father. Kathleen B. Grathwol acknowledges that “it has been widely argued that Edgeworth’s political ideology was formed almost exclusively by an adoption of her father’s and her fathers’ friends’ ideas” but counters that “more recent readings have focused on Edgeworth’s own subtly transgressive rewritings of femininity within her work” (75). Catherine Gallagher points out Maria Edgeworth’s own ambivalent language regarding the dynamic of this father-daughter partnership, arguing that, at times, Maria Edgeworth claims the “originary” ideas of educational philosophy in both Practical Education and her fiction and, at other times, deems her stories as mere “illustrative signifiers” to her father’s ideas (274). Certainly, however, Maria Edgeworth understood her writing on education and for children as not only intimately connected but also as part of an ongoing conversation with her father and other contemporaries—perhaps including, according to scholars such as Mona Narain, other adults in the Edgeworth household, notably Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s wives Honora and Elizabeth. Her work could be considered a conversation across multiple genres about the proper method of childhood education.

While such studies are important, critics rarely turn to Edgeworth’s earlier work for similar evidence of dialogue with fellow educators, despite the fact that she entered the debate about early education two years before the publication of Practical Education, in The Parent’s Assistant (1796). This volume, as its title indicates, is meant to demonstrate for those caring for the young proper methods of education and to provide literature to facilitate those methods. Edgeworth goes into some detail about this project
in her preface, which is “Addressed to Parents,” both explaining her goals as an author and interpreting for her adult readers the purpose of individual stories. In regard to the included story “Lazy Lawrence,” for example, Edgeworth writes that “[i]t is not easy to give rewards to children which shall not indirectly do them harm by fostering some hurtful taste or passion. In the story of ‘Lazy Lawrence,’ where the object was to incite a spirit of industry, care has been taken to proportion the reward to the exertion, and to demonstrate that people feel cheerful and happy whilst they are employed” (Edgeworth 3). She writes of “the story of ‘Tarlton and Loveit’” that there “are represented the danger and the folly of that weakness of mind, and that easiness to be led, which too often pass for good nature; and in the tale of the ‘False Key’ are pointed out some of the evils to which a well-educated boy, on first going to service, is exposed from the profligacy of his fellow-servants” (Edgeworth 3). Read together with Edgeworth’s preface, the stories included in *The Parent’s Assistant* can be interpreted both as an educational manual, alerting concerned mothers and fathers to the moral pitfalls that await their children, and as a storehouse of useful texts parents can employ to avoid such dangers. Mitzi Myers is, perhaps, one scholar who acknowledges the collaborative impulse in Edgeworth’s work apart from the influence of the author’s father. While Myers does not use the term collaboration, she does argue that much children’s literature written by female writers addresses simultaneously “the maternal and the child reader,” and that “it makes sense to think of educational advice and the stories that embody it as one continuous text” (Myers “Taste” 119). For example, Myers, describing stories in Maria Edgeworth’s *Early Lessons*, writes that the author “speaks through the tale’s adult educators to constitute the story as a parable for the parents who buy the book and may
also read it to their children. The tale packs manifest and latent lessons into small space” (Myers “Reading” 63).

Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s close friend, Thomas Day, wrote literature for children similarly inflected by his investment in formulating and debating proper methods of education and by his desire to continue those conversations with other parents and educators. Between 1783 and 1789 Day published, in three volumes, *The History of Sandford and Merton*, a long narrative that recounts the education of virtuous farm boy Harry Sandford and spoiled young master Tommy Merton under the guidance of their tutor, Mr. Barlow. Day intended to publish a text that appealed to children. In his preface, he notes that “the book is intended to form and interest the minds of children: it is to them that I have written; it is from their applause alone I shall estimate my success” (Day 8). However, he also recognizes that this collection of stories may not seem to be intended entirely for a child audience. “I hope nobody will consider this work as a treatise on education,” he confesses. “I have unavoidably expressed some ideas upon this subject, and introduced a conversation, not one word of which any child will understand” (Day 8). And yet a treatise on education is an apt descriptor for *Sandford and Merton*. The conversation Day references in this passage occurs at the beginning of the narrative and continues for over twenty-five pages, a dialogue between Mr. Merton and Barlow. During this conversation, Mr. Merton successfully persuades Barlow to take on the education of his spoiled son, but only after acknowledging the tutor’s reluctance to educate an upper-class child. “It is out of the power of any individual, however strenuous

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5 Also, it is notable that Day chose to include in *Sandford and Merton* tales not explicitly intended for the young as inset stories, told by characters to demonstrate particular lessons. The three volumes are not a sustained narrative but instead a series of stories narrated by the title characters and Barlow, and many of these inset stories are drawn from literature for adults, in particular Henry Brooke’s novel *The Fool of Quality*. See Scheuermann.
may be his endeavours, to prevent the mass of mankind from acquiring prejudices and corruptions,” lectures Barlow. “The instant [a child] makes his entrance [into the world], he will find a universal relaxation and indifference to everything that is serious; everything will conspire to represent pleasure and sensuality as the only business of human beings, and to throw a ridicule upon every pretence to principle or restraint” (Day 32–3).

According to Barlow, Tommy requires the isolation from civilization epitomized in Rousseau’s Émile, a course of education that will restore him to an innocent child of nature and lover of animals, desirous of wholesome work and repulsed by luxuries such as extravagant meals and fine clothes.⁶ This conversation colors all that follows. The import of Tommy’s education is legible only when prefaced by the joint efforts of adults Mr. Merton and Barlow, who collaborate to devise an acceptable plan for the boy’s upbringing in a conversation that, as Day concedes, children will not understand.

I contend that the manner in which Day chooses to introduce educational theory into Sandford and Merton—the protracted and rational debate between two educated and opinionated adults—suggests that he is not looking to represent an unquestionable mode of pedagogy but instead to engage his readers in a conversation regarding the best way to educate the young. In fact, at the end of his preface, Day admits, albeit in a slightly defensive tone, that he decided to publish the story of Sandford and Merton to invite such a dialogue. “I am well aware of the innumerable pleasantries and sneers to which an attempt like this may be exposed,” Day writes, “but considerations of a higher nature . . . should this work meet with any degree of popularity, have finally determined me [to publish it] . . . I cannot stoop either to deprecate censure, or to invite applause, but I

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⁶ Barlow further refuses to accept payment, insisting that he educate the boy as a friend and not a schoolmaster. This is yet another reference to Rousseau, who dictates that a child’s tutor should not be a paid servant.
would invite those alone to criticize who have had some experience in the education of a child” (Day 8). This call for criticism, while ambivalent, suggests that Day imagined himself as embarking upon an ongoing dialogue, and yet recent criticism of *Sandford and Merton* reads the overtones of educational philosophy in Day’s text as an issue of influence rather than collaboration. Writers on children’s literature interpret this narrative and Day’s other novel for the young, *The History of Little Jack*, as fictional representations of a particular educational philosophy—just as *Émile* is a fictionalization of Rousseau’s methods—revealing Day as, in the words of Demers and Moyles, a “fervent promoter of Rousseau and a disciple of his primitivism” (Day 8, Demers 129). 7 Harvey Darton writes that *Sandford and Merton* was Day’s “vicarious attempt to present *Émile* in the guise of fiction for English boys” (Darton 145). However, while Day was representing ideas that originate in Rousseau’s work, he does not unproblematically represent the curriculum from *Émile* in his text, recognizing through his call for dialogue that such theories must always be open to discussion and collaboration.

The work of these rational moralists demonstrates a degree of adult collaboration on the part of a child’s education, but some of the most interesting examples of such collaboration are found in the work of the authors Demers and Moyles call the Sunday school moralists. I suspect that these authors’ investment in the hierarchies of organized religion privileges the models of authority that rely on partnerships between adults. The Sunday school moralists emphasize, after all, children’s submission to parents, who are responsible for the souls of the young, and the subsequent and parallel investment in a

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7 Day witnessed and supported Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s attempts to raise his son, Dick, according to the scheme of education proposed by Rousseau in *Émile*. Day also adopted two young girls from a foundling hospital with the intention of raising one of them, according to Rousseau’s method, into a proper wife for himself. This experiment was notoriously unsuccessful. See Rowland.
paternal God who cares for all individuals, young and old (Demers 186–7). Upon close
examination, the works of these authors often exhibit the same call for collaboration
perceptible in Day and Edgeworth. For example, collaboration between adults is
important in the work of Sunday school moralist Sarah Trimmer, whom M. O. Grenby
calls “perhaps the most important individual influence on late eighteenth- and early
nineteenth-century British children’s literature” (Grenby 137), a position she earned both
through her conservative, Evangelical texts for children such as *An Easy Introduction to
the Knowledge of Nature* (1780) and *Fabulous Histories; or, The Robins* (1786) and
through her periodical *The Guardian of Education* (1802–6). Many histories of
children’s literature frame Trimmer as a powerful and solitary evaluative force in
children’s literature—a characterization undoubtedly reinforced by the singular and
definitive title of her periodical, *The Guardian*—and critics seem invested in constructing
her as a one-woman juggernaut of censorship and didacticism. Hunt, for example, calls
Trimmer “redoubtable” and “formidable” (44).

Yet Trimmer was interested in participating in dialogues about children’s reading.
Through the *Guardian*—a periodical review of children’s literature that also included
articles on educational theories and correspondence with her readers—Trimmer was most
obviously a collaborator with parents and educators, but she took this position in her
fiction, as well. The preface to *An Easy Introduction*, for example, begins by paying
homage to Watts’s *Treatise on Education* and frames what follows, as Newbery would
frame his *Pocket-Book*, first within the debates and discourses circulating regarding
children’s development and education. She quotes Watts at length as the inspiration for
her text, and subsequently insinuates her own work into the classroom by advising
educators reading the preface as to how to employ this book and others she has published among students. “When the scholars have read these books through,” she advises, “I would recommend that they should not only read them again, but hear a portion of them read and explained in the school every day, and be questioned in classes to see whether they really understand them or not” (Trimmer Easy vii). The introduction to the later *Fabulous Histories* is directed toward the reading child, but it nevertheless suggests to parents and educators a positive example of education and childhood reading. In this introduction, Trimmer presents *Fabulous Histories* as a text written by the mother of child characters Henry and Charlotte, who, to “amuse them, composed the following Fabulous Histories; in which the sentiments and affections of a good father and mother, and a family of children, are supposed to be possessed by a nest of Redbreasts; and others of the feathered race are, by the force of imagination, endued with the same faculties” (Trimmer Fabulous 2). While didactic literature certainly provided models for children—entrusting them, for example, to follow the pious examples of Newbery’s Goody Two-Shoes or, perhaps, the more fallible and therefore more achievable example of Edgeworth’s Rosamund—Trimmer, and many other authors for children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, provide models for parents, as well.

A less strident and perhaps more palatable Sunday school moralist, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, was more overtly invested in the advantages and dynamics of collaboration and, as scholarship on her methods of composition and publication has demonstrated, many of her publications for both adults and children were products of multiple authorship. It was Barbauld’s brother, John Aikin, who encouraged Barbauld to publish her poetry, and the siblings, as adults, actively collaborated on at least two projects: John
Aikin’s 1772 Essays on Song-Writing, which included six songs by his sister, and a shared volume of essays entitled Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose in 1773. Two years later, in 1775, Barbauld wrote to her brother of the small pieces of fiction and drama both had composed, suggesting that they “must some day sew all [their] fragments together, and make a Joineriana of them” (Barbauld Works 9). Daniel E. White notes that “[a]lthough this particular project never materialized, [Barbauld] continued to conceive of literary production according to a model of familial collaboration” (White 511)—confident that the work of two or more authors could be stitched together into one, cohesive text—and Michelle Levy argues that Barbauld and Aikin “wrote and published extensively with and for their family to such a degree that collaboration with family lay at the root of their literary practices and ideals” (Levy 22).

Between 1792 and 1796, Barbauld and Aikin employed their established methods of creative, familial collaboration to produce Evenings at Home, or, The Juvenile Budget Opened, a six-volume collection of didactic dialogues, short tales, tables, and other texts. Critics disagree regarding which stories Barbauld contributed to these volumes and which should be attributed to her brother. Lucy Aikin, Barbauld’s niece, edited The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, with a Memoir in 1825, and claimed there that her aunt wrote only fourteen of the ninety-nine pieces included in Evenings at Home. Without concrete

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8 The word “budget” is often used in the titles of children’s periodicals and books and, according to its simplest definition, implies a “collection” or “stock.” However, it is interesting to note how the multiple definitions of the term reflect ideas about collaboration and literature for children. The financial overtones of the word, for example—its definition as a document that dictates how certain assets will be spent in the future—implies that the stories in a “budget” for children dictate the proper behavior of the young, acting as a guide, of sorts, on how children should use their creative resources. The phrase “to open one’s budget,” obscure today but in circulation at the writing of Evenings, means “to speak one’s mind.” This could suggest that the authors of such collections were communicating their ideas on early education and literacy, often spoken, or read aloud. But possibly—when modified by the adjective “juvenile,” as in Juvenile Budget Opened—the word “budget” communicates the possibility that children, the juveniles in question, can speak their own minds, answering adult authority. See “Budget.”
evidence to the contrary, the assumption that John Aikin composed the lion’s share of *Evenings at Home* has persisted throughout Barbauld scholarship. However, as Levy points out, Aikin’s account may be biased by an attempt to make her aunt appear “more feminine and respectable,” which “may have led her to deny Barbauld’s authorship of the strident anti-war and anti-imperialist sentiments found throughout *Evenings*, views that were even less popular in 1825 than they had been when first published” (Levy 26). The contested attribution of the tales has produced a body of scholarship dissecting the authorship of *Evenings*, and, while interesting, such scholarship is necessarily inconclusive. However, the six volumes were certainly published and probably received as a relatively equal collaboration between sister and brother, as both Barbauld’s and Aikin’s name appear on the title page.9

The dynamic of domestic collaboration so important to the Aikin family is expressed in forceful albeit fictional terms in the frame narrative to *Evenings at Home*, which describes the mansion-house of the Fairborne family, a warm domestic space peopled by a master, mistress, and “a numerous progeny of children of both sexes” who are entertained by a steady stream of visitors (Aikin 7). These guests “were ready to concur with Mr. and Mrs. Fairborne in any little domestic plan” for amusing the children, “and particularly for promoting the instruction and entertainment of the younger part of the household” (Aikin 7). The adults’ entertainments for the benefit of the younger Fairbornes are described in detail:

As some of them were accustomed to writing, they would frequently produce a fable, a story, or dialogue, adapted to the age and understanding of the young

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9 As Lucy Aikin’s attributions and Levy’s analysis implies, the different ways the tales included in *Evenings at Home* have been framed are inflected by ideas of the feminine and masculine imagination. I will discuss how the imagination was gendered in the nineteenth century later in this chapter.
people. It was always considered as a high favour when they would so employ themselves; and after the pieces were once read over, they were carefully deposited by Mrs. Fairborne in a box, of which she kept the key. None of these were allowed to be taken out again till all the children were assembled in the holidays. It was then made one of the evening amusements of the family to *rummage the budget*, as their phrase was. One of the least children was sent to the box, who putting in its little hand, drew out the paper that came next, and brought it into the parlour. This was then read distinctly by one of the older ones; and after it had undergone sufficient consideration, another little messenger was despatched for a fresh supply; and so on, till as much time had been spent in this manner as the parents thought proper.

(Aikin 7)

White argues that this narrative frame presents a fictional counterpart to the Aikin family Joineriana, calling it a “patchwork product of familial literary collaboration” and suggesting that the “communal compositions on morality, conduct, economics, and history” that comprise the collection “were jointly sewn together in the Fairborne home and colored by the sympathies of its domestic space” (White 516–7). Levy offers a similar interpretation, reading the frame narrative as “a productive model of the family for emulation by other domestic circles,” a “sociable” model of “textual production, circulation and performance” (Levy 24). Reading *Evenings* through a biographical lens and eager to draw correspondences between the authors’ family and the family depicted in the frame story, Levy and White represent the Aikin and Fairborne homes as mirror images, operating according to nearly identical ideas of authorship.

However, these biographical readings perhaps warp the true character of the Fairborne family’s exercises in authorship. It is important to note that the collaboration represented in this frame story is not democratically familial and does not, in fact, accommodate active participation from all members of the family, young and old. It is instead a partnership among adults. The children read the stories of the budget aloud, but they are not responsible for any of its contents. The stories are, in fact, inaccessible to
them, kept locked by Mrs. Fairborne. The time, place, and duration of storytelling are decided by their parents. It is the adults who assemble the children, who only speak for “as much time . . . as the parents thought proper.” Children are messengers and orators, giving voice to a dialogue between writing visitors and watchful parents about what is best for their education. The roles the young are allowed to fulfill are ranked by age and experience; younger siblings—the “least” of the children—are messengers, while the “older ones” are readers, a function that perhaps signals their approach to adulthood and the accompanying privileges of composition. *Evenings at Home*, then, is in fact represented as a venue for adults to communicate their concerns about how to help the young navigate their moral and religious duties as well as their new literacy.

This agenda also permeates the series of fables, dialogues, and short dramas included in the volumes of *Evenings at Home*. In other words, Aikin and Barbauld fictionalize and, in doing so, reframe their methods of familial composition in the characters of the Fairborne family, and the fictional Fairbornes and their visitors in turn reproduce, in the adult characters in the stories they contribute to the budget, their own roles as parents and educators, interlocutors on early childhood morality and education. For example, the dialogue “A Lesson in the Art of Distinguishing” recounts a conversation between a young boy, Charles, and his father, who introduces a conversation on the importance of accurate definition. Children reading or listening to the dialogue may recognize and relate to Charles, who voices the perspective of the young student, but the dialogue frequently casts a sideways glance at the adult reading the volume—presumably a parent or teacher who could learn from Charles’s father not only the proper way to introduce this lesson but also its probable pitfalls and outcomes.
While Charles, with the assistance of his father, parses out the definition of a horse—a moment that anticipates Bitzer’s lecture on the topic in Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*—his responses demonstrate an obstacle that could arise during the lesson: a child’s propensity to favor description over definition. Charles’s father therefore has the opportunity to address and confront the problem. At the end of the dialogue, Charles’s father roundly sums up the object of their exercise in a statement that, in its tone and emphasis, could be drawn from an educational treatise by Watts or Locke. “Remember . . . that nothing is more useful than to learn to form ideas with precision, and to express them with accuracy,” he remarks. “I have not given you the definition to teach you what a horse is, but to teach you to think” (Aikin 2.136).

The “Lesson on the Art of Distinguishing” could be read as evidence in *Evenings* of cross-writing, a simultaneous address to child and adult audiences—what Myers would call a simultaneous address to “the maternal and the child reader”—but other stories included in the volumes speak almost unequivocally to parents. “Nature and Education: A Fable,” for example, uses the allegorical figures of the title to dramatize the advantages and consequences of two conflicting pedagogical philosophies. Each figure in the fable cultivates a young tree; Nature applies Rousseauan educational methods, leaving the sapling to thrive without the intervention of artificial methods, and Education takes a more active role, keeping the tree’s growth in check with careful pruning and guiding its branches with strong ropes. Education wins the day, transforming a cramped crab tree into a fruit-bearing, “sightly plant.” The story concludes that while it is difficult to curtail the force of nature, “something may be done by taking pains enough” (Aikin 3.128). Certainly this fable is meant for parents and educators rather than their children and
students. Allegory, which assumes a sophisticated degree of literacy, is not entirely
exceptional in children’s literature, but these two figures represent complex educational
philosophies endemic to the world of adults, not to the lives of children. Choosing to
represent a topic that not only concerns adults but also incites debate and disagreement,
the Aikins engage reading adults to collaborate—to compare their own systems of
education to those represented in the text, to join in the discussion. Another tale, “The
Boy Without a Genius,” similarly presents conflicting theories of education. The story
reproduces the letters between the father of an underachieving student and his
schoolteacher. By the end of the tale, the boy is thriving and the schoolmaster sends a
scathing letter to his father, whose unrealistic expectations of a young boy’s habits of
learning were the true root of the problem. “Your son has already lost much time in the
fruitless expectation of finding out what he would take up of his own accord,” the
schoolmaster writes to the boy’s father. “Believe me, sir, few boys will take up any thing
of their own accord but a top or a marble” (Aikin 3.54). Notably, the moral of this story
is directed not to the child but to his father. This is only a sampling of the educational
miscellany that comprises Evenings at Home, but these few examples demonstrate how
Aikin and Barbauld use the genres and rhetorical strategies common in didactic and pious
children’s literature—the dialogue, fable, and moral tale—and repurpose to address and
challenge the adults responsible for the education and management of the young.

These collaborations among adults regarding practices and theories of education
continued as Barbauld’s texts were reprinted, reformulated, excerpted, and illustrated
throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in both England and America.
Barbauld’s Lessons for Children were particularly popular abroad. While, as Sarah
Robbins notes, “Barbauld herself had refrained from claiming in her Lessons’ advertisement’ to be offering a female teaching model intended for widespread replication in other middle-class homes, her later editors consistently characterized her text and its implied program as such,” and Barbauld’s text “was constantly being appropriated and reshaped throughout the nineteenth century by Anglo-American promoters of the ethos of domestic didacticism” (Robbins “Lessons” 135-6). The editors and authors who reworked Lessons, aided by the absence of international copyright law in the late eighteenth century, found a way to collaborate with Barbauld. They reshaped Barbauld’s text through revisions and new illustrations to fit the particular needs and methods of American maternal pedagogy, what Robbins calls “domestic didactics,” a movement that valued and promoted the education of young mothers as guiding maternal voices for young children and “the guardians of middle-class family values” (Robbins “Remaking” 158). Lessons became extraordinarily popular in the United States, and the series of inscriptions included in archived copies, Robbins notes, evidence that many editions were passed down through multiple generations in the sample family, facilitating an ongoing discussion and revision of the methods and ideas Barbauld first proposed (Robbins “Remaking” 162). The collaboration that began between Barbauld and her brother, then, was reproduced in their literature for children and continued throughout Barbauld’s career, which spanned at least two continents, a transatlantic collaboration.

II. DISPROPORTIONATELY VIVID

The scene of the storytelling family, such as the story that acts as the frame narrative for Evenings at Home, was not uncommon in children’s literature. Margaret
Gatty would employ a similar device seventy years later in her story “The Black Bag,” included in her collection of stories *Aunt Judy’s Letters* (1862). The family represented in this story, like the Fairbornes, collectively contributes to a budget of stories to be read aloud, in this case collected not in a locked box but in a black bag, passed down through generations and, supposedly, made of the same cloth as Lord Nelson’s funeral cloak (Gatty 140). Aunt Judy’s family, however, compiles and reads their stories in a manner more democratic than the Fairbornes. The black bag in *Aunt Judy’s Letters* is a site of intergenerational collaboration. The “matronly Aunt Judy” does not beg submissions of adult visitors but instead “enroll[s] the whole party,” from eldest to youngest, “as contributors, and [writes] out in good print characters a list of their names as *Members of the Black Bag Club*” (Gatty 140–1). The children set about to contribute with an ardor that, in fact, surpasses the adults; “there was among the little ones a fever to set to work their contributions directly,” writes Gatty, “and the demand for pencils, paper, and even pens and ink, was almost overwhelming to the elders” (Gatty 141). Admittedly, the child authors run into numerous obstacles and require the assistance of their elders, but the Black Bag Club remains an intergenerational collaboration, incorporating the ideas of both adult and child.

Certainly Barbauld and Aikin were writing under different conditions than Gatty. However, I contend that the different dynamics in *Evenings at Home* and *Aunt Judy’s Letters* are attributable to more than individual circumstances. Ideas about the character of adults’ and children’s imaginations had shifted between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century, and *Evenings at Home* and *Aunt Judy’s Letters* evidence the ways adult-child relationships were inflected by new ideas about play and make-believe. In
this section, I explore a range of the multiple models of children’s imaginations that circulated simultaneously throughout the Victorian period—the imagination as a creative impulse best left free from adult intervention, as dependent on adults, as vivid or even violent, and as feminine or masculine—and discuss how these ideas about children’s imaginations draw on but depart from Romantic ideas of childhood.

Victorian ideas about the child’s imagination are informed by a larger discourse of the creative faculty that stretches back through the Romantic period and into the early eighteenth century. It is beyond the scope of this project to trace this tradition in detail, but it is important to note here a tension in texts about the imagination that persists throughout the nineteenth century: the conflict between the abstract, creative world and the concrete, rational world.\(^{10}\) The imagination is typically associated with mental activity—the formulation in the mind of images that do not or perhaps cannot exist in the immediate physical world.\(^{11}\) However, the tradition that considers and defines the imagination stresses how this faculty is both indebted to the observable world and able to exceed or reorganize that world. For example, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), negotiates this tension as he draws a distinction between fancy and imagination. Fancy, Coleridge contends, is more attached to the rational world, “has no other counters to play with but fixities and definities,” and “must receive all its materials ready-made from the law of associations” (Coleridge 364). Imagination, however, is less connected to reality, defined as “the living power and prime agent of all human

\(^{10}\) The brief discussion that follows incorporates a number of different figures who discussed the imagination from different perspectives. While, as Mary Warnock notes, it “has often been maintained . . . that the sense of ‘imagination’ in which philosophers are interested when they are analyzing perception or the understanding of general terms is entirely distinct from the sense of the word in which critics or aestheticians are interested,” I agree that “in the case of imagination . . . there is far more that is common to the concept in its various different contexts of use than has sometimes been allowed” (Warnock 35).

\(^{11}\) The emphasis on the visual in discussions of the imagination—of forming *images* in the mind—is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.
perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation” (Coleridge 363). Thomas Carlyle, whom Robert Higbie calls “one of the main Victorian exponents” of the Romantic imagination, concedes a more intimate connection between imagination and the rational world, insisting that the two are useless unless taken together.

“Imagination is, after all, but a poor matter when it has to part company with Understanding,” he writes in his “Essay on Biography,” quoting Gottfried Sauertieg (Higbie 17, Carlyle “Essay” 12–3). Later into the nineteenth century, George MacDonald, in “The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture” (1867), insists that imagination does and must work in collusion with the perceptible world; it is, according to MacDonald, “aroused by facts, is nourished by facts, seeks for higher and yet higher laws in those facts” (MacDonald 2). These writers argue that even the most fanciful acts of imagination use as raw materials a knowable, perceptible, and physical reality.¹²

As Higbie notes, “the problems inherent in the Romantic concept of the imagination became fully apparent” in the Victorian period as a number of cultural factors—such as the Industrial Revolution and the crisis of faith incited by the theories of Charles Darwin and others—generated a growing cultural investment in reason. These events and circumstances “probably made people more aware of imagination as a separate entity,” writes Higbie. “Reason and imagination are thus felt to be in conflict” (Higbie 20). A number of Victorian writers express the tension. Carlyle, while

¹² Some authors insisted on the powers of the imagination independent of reason—William Blake, for example, figures the “imagination as creator . . . not based on reality”—but most concede that the imagination must “always be based on and make use of the perceptual” (Higbie 11, 8–9). Charles Lamb, in his essay “Witches and Other Night-Fears” (1823), suggests that terrifying fancies need not be connected with experiences or perceptions but instead spring independently from children’s minds. He forwards the case of T. H., “who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition—who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition,” but who nevertheless is subject to a “world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded ab extra, in his own ‘thick-coming fancies,’” frightened by “shapes, unborrowed of tradition” (Lamb 130).
recognizing the interconnectedness of reason and imagination, quotes Sauertieg’s contention that “our mind is divided in twain” between imagination and understanding, and he concludes that man’s faculty of “Invention” is constantly dogged by the burden of truth and belief (Carlyle “Essay” 12, 18). Other critics attribute tension definitively to the rise of industry. British historian Henry Thomas Buckle, for example, maintained that “one of the causes of the triumph” of fact over imagination “is the growth of the industrious classes, whose business-like and methodical habits are eminently favorable to empirical observations of the uniformities of sequence” (Jacox 616). MacDonald protests against the necessary triumph of reason over imagination. In his essay, he ventriloquizes those who would insist on an impermeable boundary between the creative and rational faculties. “‘Are there not facts?’ say they. ‘Why forsake them for fancies? Is there not that which may be known? Why forsake it for inventions?’” (MacDonald 7). His impulse to respond to these voices throughout much of his essay speaks to the firm divide his readers would assume between facts and fancies, the known and the invented. His essay in particular and other writings on the imagination are faced with the complex task of demonstrating the closeness of reason and imagination, their necessary and intimate relationship, while assigning the imagination virtues that reason does not possess.\(^\text{13}\)

The problematic relationship between the imagination and the rational, perceptible world was, I contend, particularly relevant in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which also witnessed the growth of imaginative literature for children.

Children’s literature brings discourses about imagination to the fore and suggests

\(^{13}\) For example, MacDonald understood the imagination as a way to understand God: “while the imagination of man has thus the divine function of putting thought into form,” writes MacDonald, “it has a duty altogether human, which is paramount to that function—the duty, namely, which springs from his immediate relation to the Father, that of following and finding out the divine imagination in whose image it was made” (MacDonald 10).
questions about the unique character of the child’s imagination, if and how it should be nurtured, and how it differs from the adult’s imagination. In writings on children’s literature, the tension between rationality and imagination often translates into a tension between adult rationality and child imagination. This holds in contemporary discussions of the genre, as well. For example, Higbie argues that as the uneasy harmony between imagination and rationality became difficult and even impossible in the social climate of Victorian England, it retreated to certain forms of children’s literature, “works in which the writer uses imagination to try to become like a child, to regain a childlike way of seeing” that was expanded upon in seminal Romantic works such as William Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” (Higbie 9). Children’s literature, for authors who sought to maintain the integrity of the imagination, was a “retreat into escapism” (Higbie 41). “They evidently felt that writing for children (and trying to become like a child in doing so) could enable them to escape from adult awareness of reality and return to a childlike state in which they could be closer to the divine, more able to believe in imagination’s vision” (Higbie 34). Fictions and in particular fantasies for children were a convenient place for these authors to exercise and express their commitment to the imagination, Higbie argues, because the imagination is inherently regressive, recalling a world or individual state which allows for a perfect fulfillment of desire (Higbie 9).

Higbie’s theory about imagination’s retreat into children’s literature presupposes that the unique qualities of children’s imagination articulated during the Romantic era remained stable into the Victorian period—that the Romantic notion of childhood and in particular an investment in youth as a space insulated from the demands of the rational
world was uncontested. Certainly, there persisted throughout the nineteenth century a sense that the child's imagination is undeniably separate from the adult world, and sometimes this is manifested in descriptions of childhood make-believe that do, in fact, recall the Romantic ideal of the child's imagination. The anonymous author of an essay entitled “Children's Literature” (1860) in the Quarterly Review, for example, waxes sentimental that the child's “eye and ... heart are open,” that he “is peering a little further into the hitherto invisible mystery of life ... How much of what he sees is substance, and how much shadow; how much matter of fact, and how much mere spectral illusion, he neither knows nor desires to know ... The knowledge of life's realities ... will come soon enough” (“Children's” 309). This description of the imagination abandons any connection between childhood fancy and perceptible fact; the child “neither knows nor desires to know” the difference between imagination and reality. J. Newby Hetherington, in 1897, employs a similar tone, arguing that to a child “everything is new and strange, yet nothing is wonderful and nothing is impossible ... [H]e cannot realize that life and reasoning thought have any limitations” (Hetherington 148). Such praise for the children's powers of imagination—their access to the “invisible mystery of life,” their ability to ignore “life and reasoning thought”—could be drawn directly from the eighteenth century.

However, Victorians both embraced Romantic ideals of childhood and resisted an intact and unproblematic appropriation of those ideals, formulating multiple models of the child's imagination that circulated simultaneously. For example, some authors and literary critics modified the Romantic appreciation of children's imaginations as they adopted it. They appreciated children's habits of fancy, admiring their play as a creative
impulse that should be left at liberty, free from adult intervention; however, this appreciation was not articulated in nostalgic, Wordsworthian language but instead forwarded as a reason to befriend children and forge intergenerational relationships. For example, William Brighty Rands, a prolific writer for children, expressed a sort of laissez-faire appreciation of the child’s imagination in his essay “Children and Children’s Books” (1866). Rands argues that, while relationships between adults and children are full of “contradiction,” adults can in fact find sympathy with the young when they realize that children bring to the adult world “incalculable strength, and light, and courage, and sweetness, and wisdom.” It is the childlike imagination, Rands writes, that can appreciate all the “best things in the universe” (464). Developing sympathy with children requires, for Rands, a shift in perspectives regarding childhood, for he thinks adults “meddle with children a great deal too much, and wait upon them a great deal too little. By waiting upon them . . . I mean, of course, laying ourselves out for them, in willing sympathy, treating them as we do our equals in noble friendship” (Rands 465). Rands transforms a Romantic lamentation for the irreconcilability of adults’ and children’s worlds, based on the unique qualities of the child’s imagination, into an opportunity for collaboration, for “noble friendship.”

The appreciation of children’s imaginations evident in these essays by Hetherington and Rands could be considered variations on a Victorian idea of play that Matthew Kaiser, following play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith, dubs “play as Paideia.” Kaiser describes this idea of play as “the sentimental notion, a truism today, that play is intrinsically productive and normative, that children and young animals in particular learn, adapt, and develop through life-enabling play.” Adopted by nineteenth-century
educational reformers such as Friedrich Froebel, play in this context is an “expression of futurity: a preparatory drive to acquire physical, cognitive, and emotional skills that advanced both the organism and the species” (Kaiser 109, 116). This model of children’s imaginative play, as a necessary impulse to be admired and not monitored, is evident in an 1874 edition of The London Times, in which writer Joseph Payne speculates about how Froebel would react to a scene of children running, playing ball, and shooting marbles. “What exuberant life! What immeasurable enjoyment! What unbounded activity!” Payne’s Froebel exults, finally concluding that the children’s activities are part of “an immense external development and expansion of energy of various kinds.” Their play is “spontaneous activity” generating a happiness “gained by the children’s own efforts, without external interference.” At the heart of this spontaneous and therefore valuable play is the imagination, through which the child learns “to invent, construct, contrive, discover, investigate, to bring . . . the remote near” (Payne 5). I will discuss Froebel in more detail in Chapter Four.

To demonstrate the impact of this model of children’s imaginations as a valuable, creative impulse that should remain unchecked, we can turn to a debate in the 1850s and 1860s between George Cruikshank, Dickens, and John Ruskin about the impact of fairy tales—both traditional and bowdlerized versions—on children’s imaginations. Cruikshank edited a series of fairy tales throughout the 1850s, inserting moral messages; he wrote versions of Hansel and Gretel and Cinderella, for example, that moralized against the evils of alcoholism. In response, Dickens wrote the essay “Frauds on the Fairies” (1853). Dickens defended the ability of children’s imaginations to negotiate unedited fairy tales. “In an utilitarian age, of all other times, it is a matter of grave
importance that Fairy tales should be respected,” Dickens writes, adding that “everyone
who has considered the subject knows full well that a nation without fancy, without some
romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun.” Children are
the keepers of this fancy in Dickens’s essay, and he defends their ability to choose,
without supervision, what is good and appropriate. Therefore, “the little books
themselves, nurseries of fancy as they are, should be preserved . . . Whosoever alters
them to suit his own opinions, whatever they are . . . appropriates to himself what does
not belong to him” (Dickens “Frauds” 111–2). John Ruskin, in an introduction to an
1868 edition of Edgar Taylor’s translation of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s German
Popular Stories, forwards a similar argument. Children, he argues, “have no need of
moral fairy tales,” and editing the stories “directly destroys the child’s power of rendering
any such belief as it would otherwise have been in his nature to give to an imaginative
vision” (Ruskin 129–30). Dickens and Ruskin, like Rands, suggest that adults meddle
with children’s play too much, and that leaving the young to the influence of their
imaginative faculties will indeed lead to stronger relationships between generations.

Dickens, for example, writes that fairy tales can keep adults, “in some sense, ever young,
by preserving through our worldly ways one slender track not overgrown with weeds,
where we may walk with children, sharing their delights” (Dickens “Frauds” 111).

Other models of children’s imaginations represent a more definitive break from
Romantic traditions. For example, at times the child’s imagination is figured as

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14 Such faith in the child’s imagination to benefit from unsupervised reading and play continued through the end of the century. Andrew Lang, in prefatory remarks in his color fairy books, objects to parents wary of violent fairy tales. “There are grown-up people now who say that the stories are not good for children . . . because there are no witches, nor talking beasts, and because people are killed in them,” writes Lang in the preface to the Green Fairy Book (1892). “But probably you who read the tales know very well how much is true and how much is only make-believe . . . I am not afraid that you will be afraid of the magicians and dragons; besides, you see that a really brave boy or girl was always their master, even in the height of their power” (Lang x–xi).
inescapably indebted to the rational world—a world governed by adults, who cannot re-inhabit the vibrant fantasies of childhood—just as imagination is indebted to reason in earlier writings on the creative faculty. For example, William Caldwell Roscoe, in “Fictions for Children” (1855), maintains that the child’s imagination relies on adults to provide it with materials from the rational world. According to Roscoe, the child imagination “is narrow, because his knowledge is limited; it is dependent rather than creative; it requires to have an object brought before it” (Roscoe 25). Alexander Hay Japp, in “Children and Children’s Books” (1869), argues that the child’s imagination cannot cut ties with the familiar, rational world, noting that children “do not properly realize any picture till they have localized it or, at all events, brought some especial trait in it en rapport with their own familiar world” (Japp 197). According to this paradigm, adults take an active role in the child’s imagination, guiding and providing material for the fancies of the child, whose “mental eye is uncouched” (Japp 197).

This model of children’s imaginations as dependent continued into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Robert Louis Stevenson, in his 1881 essay “Child’s Play,” argues for the interplay between the fanciful and rational when he argues that there is a “defect in the child’s imagination.” The child “does not yet know enough of the world and men,” writes Stevenson. “His experience is incomplete . . . He is at the experimental stage; he is not sure how one would feel in certain circumstances” (Stevenson 175). The relationship between children’s imaginations and the rational world was also a central concern of the child study movement, which signaled the beginnings of cognitive and educational psychology. James Sully, one of the primary thinkers in the field of child study, pauses during his consideration of children’s

\[15\] For an extended discussion of Stevenson’s ideas about imagination and childhood, see Chapter Two.
imaginations to write that “phantasy follows and is the offspring of sense,” that “we live over again in waking and sleeping imagination the sights and sounds of the real world” (Sully 29). Children’s imaginations, like the more general imagination discussed by Coleridge and Carlyle, relies on the physical world for its material and resources; however, because children have such limited experience in this world, they depend on adults to mediate between their imaginations and that physical world, to introduce objects, experiences, and information they have not encountered on their own.

In the essays cited above, children’s imagination is not the Romantic ideal, free from reality and close to the divine, desirable due to its isolation from the adult world. Instead, it is a condition of the young mind that provides opportunities for and in fact requires adults’ intervention. This paradigm of the child’s imagination as dependent grants adults a degree of control over the mental life of the children and, in turn, grants the rational world authority over the imagination. The adult can shape, nurture, distort, or arrest the child’s imagination, and therefore it is not surprising that this model appears in many discussions of proper reading material for children. Roscoe’s essay is only one example of this perspective. For example, the anonymous author of “Children’s Literature” (1860) in the Quarterly Review notes that “imagination comes . . . before judgment”—that “at first [children] do not reason, they only seem to dream”—and that therefore adults are responsible for selecting literature that will develop a healthy child fancy (“Children’s” 309). MacDonald devotes the entire latter half of his essay on the culture of imagination to the proper cultivation of the child’s creative faculty, arguing, for example, that “the mind of the teacher must mediate between the work of art and the mind of the pupil” (MacDonald 38). Consequently, when he describes the “apparently
lawless tossing of the spirit, called the youthful imagination”—which is a “young monster” threatening the “real in the world”—he also emphasizes the ability, and responsibility, of parents and teachers to guide this reckless force toward “true visions” and “noble dreams” (MacDonald 26, 30). Later, in 1897, J. Newby Hetherington similarly emphasized the importance of the “cultivation of the imagination,” noting that it is necessary “early to secure [the] habit of . . . ‘constructive imagination,’” or contemplation based upon fairy tales and fantasies that, if trained properly, leads to “wider and nobler ideals as time goes by” (Hetherington 473). In a sense, these authors were reappropriating not a Romantic but an Evangelical view of childhood in which adults were tasked with guiding the spiritual lives of children, who were considered weaker, more susceptible to temptation, and naturally sinful—and reframing this impulse around concerns about the child’s imagination.16

Victorians’ reformulation and rejection of Romantic ideals in some models of the child’s imagination also generated a paradigm of the child’s fancy as able to surpass adult control or understanding, incorporating the perceptible, rational world only to exceed it—the inverse of the dependent imagination. MacDonald articulates this model of the vivid and uncontrollable child’s imagination by describing the young’s powers of fancy as monstrous, a characterization that resonates even after his attempts to tame it with promises of “noble dreams.” While Roscoe depicts the child’s imagination as “narrow” and “dependent,” he also notes that it is “disproportionately vivid, it confounds the boundaries of reality and fiction, it triumphs over reason and the senses” (Roscoe 25). While he had characterized the young’s powers of make-believe as containable and

16 MacDonald’s theories of the child’s imagination were largely expressions of the fancy’s ability to understand and reach for the divine. See Moss.
controllable, as “narrow,” here is it limitless, confounding boundaries. Children according to this construction of the imagination experience the world around them in a profoundly different manner than adults and are able to transform illusions and fancies into seeming realities. For example, Roscoe argues that while adults delight in and even require detail and subtlety, the child “abhors fine distinctions,” and “is happier when his imagination has much to do than when all details of likeness are supplied” (Roscoe 25). Stevenson is similarly enamored with the child’s ability to overcome the limitations of the physical world, noting how the young mind can substitute one object for another—transforming, for example, a bed into a boat, and committing completely to the substitution. “The child can make abstraction of whatever does not fit into his fable,” Stevenson writes, “and he puts his eyes into his pocket, just as we hold our noses in an unsavoury lane” (Stevenson 174). The parallel Stevenson draws here between the adult’s ability to ignore inconvenient realities and the child’s rampant imagination is disingenuous, because he does not think adults can achieve the same isolation from the rational world that a child enjoys; adult imagination is mediated in a way the child’s is not, because for adults “all things are transformed and seen through theories and associations as through coloured windows,” filtered through “history, and gossip, and economical speculations, and God knows what” (Stevenson 170–1).

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17 According to Roscoe, the power of children’s imaginations sometimes threatens the very children who possess it. When a playful adult pretends to be a bear, for example, the child begins to suspect a true threat. His “imagination is too strong for him” and “he has recourse to tears to save him from being devoured” (Roscoe 25).

18 See “My Bed is a Boat” in A Child’s Garden of Verses, p. 1189.

19 Thomas E. Jordan argues that, for a child, formal education changes play in a manner similar to the organizing force of adult experience that Stevenson explains here. Education introduces a structure of language into thought and provides “raw materials” of content, stories, and facts. The child and his or her play become “less manipulable” (Jordan 196).
The “disproportionately vivid” imagination of the child certainly is *influenced* by Romantic models of childhood and can inspire a “simultaneous idealization of the child and lament over the loss of their own childlike innocence” on the part of adults, a conflicted state that James Holt McGavran argues both “engendered and relentlessly shadowed the efflorescence of imaginative children’s literature in the Victorian period” (McGavran 2). However, I argue that the child’s vivid imagination is represented not only as inaccessible to adults but also potentially malevolent and dangerous, inspiring vague anxieties among those who write for and about the young. It perhaps participates in another function of play in Victorian society identified by Kaiser—an investment in play as subversion: “the desire to make mischief” and the “potentially frightening yet decidedly seductive urge to undermine” (Kaiser 114). If the model of the dependent child’s imagination assumed adults’ ability to direct and shape the creative faculties of the young, this model of the unbridled child’s imagination raises fears that such control may prove difficult or even impossible. For example, in the 1846 volume of the London-based *Sunday School Magazine*, an author identified as S. S. J. writes of the vivid imagination as innate in children of every age, “though they have never heard of Arabian princesses or European fairies” (S. S. J. 187). The author both praises this faculty and suggests that it can transform into something threatening. “[O]ught we to treat it as our friend or our foe?” she asks. “I am not for taking violent measures to suppress it . . . But I do believe, that out of these youthful freaks grow up the habits of castle-building in after years; and that this habit is unfavourable to steady attention, to converse with a world of real sorrows, and what is more serious still, to humility. Did you ever know a castlebuilder who was not the centre of his own creations?” (S. J. J. 188). S. S. J.’s
comments certainly employ language and rhetorical strategies common to the Sunday school moralists, suggesting a concern for the spiritual well-being of the young and the responsibility to train their natural impulses toward the good and humble. However, the possibility that the child’s imagination can be considered a “foe” that at times merits “violent measures”—and even the author’s use of the word “freaks”—suggests a degree of alarm. The mature consequences of a vivid imagination, such as interrupted focus and egoism, are familiar, but the final image—the godlike castlebuilder at the center of his creation, controlling it—could be interpreted darkly.

Writing two years earlier in 1844, Robert Cassie Waterston, like MacDonald, expostulates on the need to properly train the child’s imagination, but suggests that improper training is not only undesirable but also dangerous. “Every power of the soul . . . may be debased, and rendered ministers of evil,” argues Waterston. “So the imagination may become morbid . . . It may become the creature of caprice and passion . . . The evils flowing from an ill-regulated imagination are too numerous to be mentioned and too terrible to be conceived” (Waterston 215–6). In Waterston we find hyperbolic language similar to S. S. J.’s—the possibility that the imagination generates unimaginable evils, too “terrible” to be articulated or even conceived. Perhaps the treatises and essays generated throughout the nineteenth century on the topic of training and educating the child’s imagination are born, in fact, out of an anxiety not only that the consequences of not doing so are unexpectedly dire but also a fear that such training is a feeble attempt to reign in a force that is deceptively powerful. I will expand upon this idea of the child’s

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20 Waterston, a Boston clergyman, published his thoughts on the child’s imagination in the United States. However, including him here is, I think, justifiable. His text was advertised in British publications, and he was certainly influenced by British formulations of the imagination, as he cites many of the same sources as his interlocutors across the Atlantic, such as Coleridge.
imagination as dangerous and playfully subversive throughout this project and in particular in my discussions of Dickens's *A Holiday Romance*, Barrie's *Peter Pan*, and Edward Lear’s nonsense.

Theories about how children’s powers of make-believe worked exhibited varying commitments to Romantic ideals, then, but the ways children’s imaginations were gendered seem to borrow more consistently from Romantic ideas about boyhood and girlhood. The passionate, powerful, and perhaps dangerous child’s imagination described above, for example, was often deployed in descriptions of boys’ imaginations and, in turn, transformed subgenres of children’s literature meant for audiences of young men, such as historical fiction and adventure stories. While, as Catherine Robson and Claudia Nelson have persuasively argued, the figure of the child in Victorian England, in literature for adults and children and in the larger social world, was often feminized, ideas of boyhood from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century surely influenced ideas of boys’ imaginations as vivid, active, passionate, and even violent, enabling and encouraging young men to explore the world outside the home and even outside England. Like many nineteenth-century ideas about childhood, this paradigm of boyhood can be found in the poetry of Wordsworth. Robson notes that the child Wordsworth describes in his “Ode” is androgynous, “[c]loser to an abstract essence,” but the child figure in *The Prelude*, a more autobiographical poem, is a picture of vigorous and even roguish play. Wordsworth’s account of his early years, Robson argues, is full of “naughty activities . . . more or less on the windy side of the law,” such as “[s]naring woodcocks, plundering birds’ nests, stealing the odd boat from some unwitting shepherd, lying to the ‘good old
innkeeper' and running his poor horses into the ground” (19).21 Wordsworth describes young William and his friends as engaged in the very physical and impassioned exertions of boyhood:

A race of real children, not too wise,  
Too learned, or too good, but wanton, fresh,  
And bandied up and down by love and hate;  
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy,  
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds.

(Wordsworth *Prelude* 5.436–44)

The children pictured here by Wordsworth may be “modest” and “shy,” but they are active, alive in their bodies, “[m]ad at their sports like withered leaves in winds.” They are not “too good” but instead “wanton” and “fierce.”

This Romantic construction of an active boyhood informed models of the boys’ imaginations, which were assumed to feed on scenes and situations that matched their raucous and physical being-in-the-world. Ideas about boys’ imaginations are represented frequently in essays on historical fiction and adventure stories as these genres grew in popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century. For example, Edward Salmon, in “Books for Boys” (1888), considers the unique appeal of the adventure tale to boys, writing that “[q]uickly-changing scenes of the most stirring character are what boys desire” (Salmon “Books” 372). He praises authors such as Thomas Mayne Reid, whose tales of adventure and “general excitement” can lure boys away from active, outdoor pursuits (Salmon “Books” 372). Reid, Salmon notes, writes books that “rival in their affections the top, the ball, and the kite” (qtd. in Salmon “Books” 373). Maltus Questell Holyoake, in his 1891 essay in praise of Reid published in *The Strand*, exalts Reid’s

21 Robson argues that it is not only the child characterized in this way in the *Prelude* but also the adult; “neither childhood nor adulthood has the monopoly on guilt, hope, or liberty,” writes Robson, and therefore “it is clear that Wordsworth has no desire to set up the two states as polar opposites” (20).
books for boys because they “captivatingly recounted deeds of bravery and perilous exploration, such as boys love,” creating tales “calculated to inspire a desire for travel, and ambition for honourable adventure in the youthful breast” (Holyoake 408).

Literature that appeals to boys’ imaginations, these essays assume, are full of not only adventure, incident, and bravery, but also scenes and characters outside the largely domestic sphere of childhood that inspire travel-lust and “ambition.” In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as Nelson notes, a growing number of historical and adventurous stories for boys present a new, secular mode of masculinity that “suggest that worldly success, not heavenly rest, is true happiness, and they stress such values as physical strength and courage, industry, common sense, and even good luck” (Nelson 106). This new tradition in boys’ literature, Nelson argues, turns the imaginations of young men toward material rather than spiritual gain. I explore this uniquely adventurous, ambitious, and even commercial boyish imagination throughout the following chapters, in particular in my discussion of Dickens’s *A Holiday Romance* in Chapter One, my account of the small press printing ventures and adventure stories of Stevenson and his stepson Lloyd Osbourne in Chapter Two, and my analysis of J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* in Chapter Three.

Adventure tales certainly fired the imaginations of young girls as well as their brothers. In fact, in his survey of children’s reading habits, Salmon lists among girls’ favorite authors Walter Scott and Charles Kingsley and, among their favorite books, *Westward Ho!* and *Ivanhoe* (Salmon *Juvenile* 21–2). And certainly there are elements of the female imagination that were considered equally as insubordinate and passionate as the raucous habits of boys, albeit these dangers were represented in different ways. Conduct manuals for girls and approved reading lists suggest that girls’ imaginations
required strict policing, that they were excitable and unpredictable. Even Sophie, Rousseau’s ideal partner for his fictional pupil Émile, “is very warm-hearted, and this warmth of heart sometimes makes her imagination run away with her” (Rousseau 426).

The ideal girl’s imagination, however, was constructed as homebound, arrested in the domestic sphere, more passive than active. Robson notes how “the vital boyish self of The Prelude” is matched by Wordsworth’s depictions of “the otherworldly girl,” the daughter of the Angel of the House (Robson 12). The Victorian adoption of this model of girlhood is evident in both fiction and nonfiction of the Victorian period—in, for example, the character of Little Nell in Dickens’s The Old Curiosity Shop (1840–1) and in the ideal daughters in Sarah Stickney Ellis’s Daughters of England (1843). Robson notes that “the girl cannot be imagined as a self-willed, vital, energetic being”—a description that would fit, instead, nineteenth-century understandings of boyhood—but rather she is “constructed as essentially passive, existing in blissful stasis” (Robson 52).

While books for boys, then, appealed to children’s imaginations through tales of action, bravery, and ambition, girls’ stories assume a domestic imagination and represent scenes of home life or boarding school culture (without, of course, the athletic plots that dominated boys’ school tales). For example, the Peacock Library’s list of “Books for Girls,” included in the advertisements of many Victorian texts, suggest the domestic fiction of Mary Molesworth or the school stories of L. T. Meade (“Peacock” 42).

Ideas of girls’ imaginations seem to offer less opportunity for child agency. However, the domestic sphere includes the hearth, the center of narrative. While, in the work of writers such as Ellis, the home signifies a woman’s or girl’s self-abnegation, the home also is a space occupied by potentially powerful storytellers. These figures possess
what Karen E. Rowe, in her examination of the female voice in folklore and fairy tales, has identified as “procreative and imaginative generativity” (Rowe 60, emphasis added). Rowe contends that these female storytellers—often mothers, aunts, governesses, or nursemaids—are heirs to a matriarchal storytelling tradition, and this “female art” is no less powerful for being appropriated by male collectors of folklore of the nineteenth century. “To have the antiquarian Grimm brothers regarded as the fathers of modern folklore,” Rowe writes, “is perhaps to forget the maternal lineage, the ‘mothers’ who in the French veillées and English nurseries, in court salons and the German Spinnstrube, in Paris and on the Yorkshire moors, passed on their wisdom” (Rowe 68–71). A cultural recognition of the female, domestic imagination is evident in the way storyteller figures are converted into literary convention, most notably as frame narrators, often depicted in the frontispieces of collected stories. The persistence of women storytellers such as Scheherazade, Mother Goose, and Mother Bunch, Rowe argues, “and of their pictorial representations, suggests how deeply embedded in our cultural consciousness are the intricately woven threads which bind together the concept of wisdom presiding over the hearth, the art of spinning literally and figuratively, and the imaginative telling of cultural truths through fairy tales as powers vested in the hands, voices, and domestic province of women” (Rowe 68).

Of course, this model of the domestic imagination belongs to adult women and often even elderly and childless women. However, the storytelling nursemaid or maiden aunt is inextricable from childhood and appears frequently in the reminiscences of many

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22 While Rowe offers, perhaps, one of the more comprehensive examinations of the voice of the female storyteller, she is part of a larger movement in feminist folklore studies. For a review of this body of work, which includes contributions by Heinz Röllke, Renate Steinchen, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, Marina Warner, and U. C. Knoepflmacher, among others, see Haase.
Victorian writers, who give tribute to the storytellers of their youth sometimes with a warm fondness, sometimes with a still-lucid sense of fear. Charles Lamb, in “Witches and Other Night-Fears” (1821), remembers that his “maid, and more legendary aunt” supplied him with “good store” of the witch stories he loved (Lamb 129). Similarly, Dickens, in his essay “Nurse’s Stories” (1860), remembers a nursemaid—whose “name was Mercy, though she had none on me,” he remarks—who in his childhood told Bluebeard-inspired tales. “Hundreds of times did I hear [the] legend of Captain Murderer,” he recalls, and Mercy “had a fiendish enjoyment in my terrors.” Dickens characterizes these scenes of narration as frightening ordeals; he writes, “sometimes [I] used to plead I thought I was hardly strong enough and old enough to hear the story again just yet.” However, he betrays a certain respect for Mercy, whom he titles a “female bard,” and just seven years earlier, in “Frauds on the Fairies,” he had equated fairy tales, even gruesome stories such as Mercy’s, with the energy and vibrancy of the child’s imagination (Dickens “Nurse’s” 204). Stevenson remembers his nursemaid, Cummy, in fonder terms, dedicating to her the opening poem of A Child’s Garden of Verses. There, he remembers “all the story-books” she read (Stevenson Garden 1181). Rudyard Kipling memorializes his Indian ayah in his autobiographical Something of Myself as a storytelling, maternal figure. He also notes that the young female storytellers in Margaret Gatty’s story Six to Sixteen—published in Aunt Judy’s Magazine, a periodical bearing the name of yet another female narrator—were one of the most powerful and positive influences on his young life. “I owe more in circuitous ways to that tale than I can tell,” he writes. “I knew it, as I know it still, almost by heart” (Kipling 6). In

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23 See Hillard, who examines how Dickens valued folklore by tracing his use of Little Red Riding Hood.
24 See Knoepflmacher, “Female Power and Male Self-Assertion: Kipling and the Maternal.”
Chapter One, I demonstrate how authors of children's literature such as Gatty capitalize upon the creative potential of the domestic, female imagination in texts framed by storytelling nurse and aunt figures who build collaborative relationships with children listeners.

Ideas about the child's imagination, then, were multiple and sometimes contradictory, and adults were therefore understood to occupy various roles and take on varying degrees of responsibility regarding their young charges. Adults were imagined as both the masters of the child’s imagination — able to direct its development — and baffled by it — unable to share in its vivid and dramatic transformations. This paradox is a central concern of authors attempting to produce literature for children that is fanciful and appealing to the child's imagination, as the market demanded. While many authors for children earned reputations as childlike, able to befriend children easily and participate in their play, able to re-access their youth and translate those early experiences into fiction for children, this childlike nature is troubled by that element of the child's imagination that resists containment and apprehension. For example, Mary Louisa Molesworth, a respected author for children in the late nineteenth century, advises:

Remembrances of one's own childhood, not merely of surroundings and events, but of one's own inner childish life, one's ways of looking at things, one's queer perplexities and little suspected intensities of feeling, it is well to recall and dwell much upon . . . but because these memories revive and quicken the sympathy, which as time goes on, and we grow away from our child selves, cannot but to some extent be lost; such reminiscences put us "in touch" again with the child-world.

(Molesworth 345–6)

Molesworth begins her advice confident in the ability (and desirability) of authors for children to re-acquaint themselves with their childhoods; however, by the end of this passage, she is compelled to concede that “we grow away from our child selves.” Here,
Molesworth registers a certain distance between adult authors and creative children that Higbie notes: "An adult writing for children . . . is not so much regaining a childlike state as self-consciously imitating it. Such a writer deliberately sets reason aside, and because the act is deliberate, reason remains conscious of its exclusion" (Higbie 35). However, Molesworth, in turning to the power of memory as a force that can make the distant experiences of childhood present to the adult writer, is deploying a rhetorical move important to many reflections on the craft of writing for children—a strategy used, for example, by J. M. Barrie, discussed in Chapter Three.

III. CHILD VOICES

Rands and Dickens, in their characterizations of children’s imaginations, begin to suggest how these new and multiple models of fancy and make-believe encourage partnerships, friendships, and collaborations between adults and children. My project is an attempt to categorize and understand these relationships, and in doing so I consider how children’s voices can and cannot be recognized in literary and cultural representations of the young. The intergenerational collaborations I will discuss throughout this project are not recognized by traditional definitions of collaboration due to assumptions about what authorship means and about who is capable of acting as a creative collaborator. In recognizing children as collaborators, this project necessitates

25 An interesting current of scholarship on collaboration takes a similar perspective, forwarding models of creative partnership that bring to light the contributions of previously suppressed or marginalized collaborators. For example, Bette London examines literary partnerships between women that, she argues, were obscured during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for a number of factors, such as the problematic position of professional women writers, and continue unrecognized due to scholarship, initiated by Sarah Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s Madwoman in the Attic, that reads women’s writing as metaphorically but not literally double.
a departure from a well-established body of children’s literature scholarship that reads all representations of childhood as projections of adults’ psychological and sexual desires. This body of work was initiated by Jacqueline Rose’s 1984 study *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children’s Literature*. Rose understands children’s literature as evidence of “what it is that adults . . . want or demand of the child” and concludes that “[i]t is no child behind the category of ‘children’s fiction,’ other than the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes” (Rose 137, 10). The child figure that adult authors of children’s literature represent, argues Rose, is the Romantic ideal of linguistic and sexual innocence drawn from the ideas of Locke and Rousseau. Rose contends that this child figure is not only an adult fantasy of pure origins—a child who “represents an ultimate beginning where everything is perfect or can at least be made good”—but also part of an extra-textual project by nineteenth-century adults to manage their anxieties about real children, “to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp” (Rose 138, 2). Despite her fraught analysis of the function of children’s literature, Rose concludes that the genre ultimately is impossible because it is built upon an adult-child relationship that is unsteady and finally untenable. It is an unequal power relationship, in which what is of significance and value to the adult overpowers the wants and realities of childhood. As Gubar notes, Rose’s text has “taken on a sort of totemic power,” and its underlying assumptions are frequently cited within and even form the foundation of much of recent children’s literature scholarship (Gubar 30). Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, for example, argues that both children’s literature and children’s literature scholarship rely on the adult constructions of childhood Rose outlines in *The Case of Peter Pan*. The “reality” of childhood, Lesnik-Oberstein argues,
“is a text, which is continually (re)constructed” in scholarship based on a “need to believe that knowledge [of the ‘real’ child] is present.” Her logic leads to a conclusion that parallels Rose’s: “if children’s literature criticism depends on, and is defined by, its claim to the existence of the ‘real child’ . . . then it is indeed dead” (Lesnik-Oberstein 163).

Rose and Lesnik-Obserstein address one of the persistent difficulties in analyses of literature about and for children: “the uniquely difficult accessibility of children’s consciousness to the adult imagination, let alone its articulation, and the attendant complexities entailed in speaking for children, or in their names” (Goodenough 2).

Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff argue that adults have recognized the problem of accessing children’s voices for centuries, noting that Coleridge acknowledges it in his *Biographia Literaria* when he writes that “Children at [six] give us no . . . information of themselves: and at what time were we dipped in the Lethe, which has produced such utter oblivion of a state so godlike?” (Coleridge 482). As Goodenough, Heberle, and Sokoloff argue, representations of children’s voices are particularly resonant for adults, perhaps because they offer the possibility of a unified experience despite differences of race, class, and gender. Childhood “is one [state] that we have all shared, male or female, whatever our age, or ethnic and social identity” (Goodenough 4), and all adults also share the movement from childhood to adulthood. However, unlike other “relatively suppressed or unacknowledged voices,” such as “those of women, minorities, non-Western authors, noncanonical or non-‘literary’ writers,” children cannot offer their own modes of expression in response to outsider representations (Goodenough 4). Rose and the many influential children’s literature scholars who have followed her lead address, and sometimes evacuate, the complexity of
this problem by claiming that adults not only try to but nearly always speak for children, that adults both cannot and will not access children’s consciousness, representing instead their own ideals of child life.

Rose’s work has been an energizing contribution to children’s literature studies, and her still-salient recognition of the complicated role of adults in children’s literature merits the recognition it has received. However, recent work rethinking and challenging Rose’s work takes into account the ways the Romantic ideal of childhood Rose locates at the center of all writing for and about children is in fact fractured throughout the nineteenth century—just as Romantic ideas about children’s imaginations were complicated in the Victorian period—and how adult authors register an awareness of the fantasies that warp their perceptions and representations of children. Perry Nodelman’s response to Rose, for example, praises Rose’s skepticism of “the ‘children’ in the phrase ‘children’s literature,’” agreeing that these children “are not real human beings at all, but merely artificial constructs of writers” (Nodelman 98). Nevertheless, Nodelman argues that Rose is mistaken to level her criticism at the content of children’s literature and, anticipating Lesnik-Obserstein’s argument, suggests instead that she should question “the misleading and dangerous rhetoric that we find too often in discussions of children’s literature” that reifies the mistaken assumption that children’s literature is all idealism and no nuance (Nodelman 99–100, emphasis added). Such rhetoric is dangerous because it distracts scholars from the richness of children’s literature and, more importantly, “the richly complicated lives of real children” (Nodelman 100). Myers also challenges the necessity of placing the construction of the Romantic child at the center of children’s literature studies. She recognizes that the Romantic child is children’s literature scholars’
“foundational fiction,” their “originary myth,” and asks what happens when we push against this dominant narrative of childhood and literary history (Myers “Reading” 45).

Gubar has provided the most recent and salient contribution to scholarship challenging the sweeping assumptions forwarded in Rose’s work. Her study demonstrates that Victorian writers for children did, in fact, represent a degree of skepticism and ambivalence about a dominant Romantic ideal of childhood that obscures or precludes more nuanced portraits of the young. “[C]lassic Victorian and Edwardian children’s books do not represent young people as untouched Others, magically free from adult influence,” Rose writes. “On the contrary, they generally conceive of child characters and child readers as socially saturated beings, profoundly shaped by the culture, manners, and morals of their time, precisely in order to explore the vexed issue of the child’s agency” (Gubar 5). For Gubar, the authors associated with the Golden Age attempt to articulate a nuanced understanding of children as active and passive, idealized and situated in the circumstances of the real world. Her work suggests an alternative model of adult-child relationships that usefully accommodates authors’ recognition of more agency and creativity on the part of the child than can be acknowledged by Rose. She suggests that “Golden Age authors . . . carefully acknowledge the tremendous power that adults and their texts have over young people, while still allowing for the possibility that children—immersed from birth in a sea of discourse—can nevertheless navigate through this arena of competing currents in diverse and unexpected ways” (Gubar 32–3). She is careful to note that “such a stance does not deny that children’s fiction (like all literature) is ideological or that actual children are culturally inscribed by adult discourse” but insists that interrogating portraits of children as active agents is a project “worth
attempting, not only because it avoids essentializing child readers as passive victims but also because it opens up new vistas in the study of children’s literature and culture . . . [I]t is not productive, now, to continue to insist that we limit ourselves entirely to the discussion of adult ideas, practices, and discourse” (Gubar 33).

Gubar’s work attempts to achieve a balance between the substantial and insightful work exploring adults’ investment in certain constructions of childhood and a critical position that recognizes the complexity of that investment. Throughout her study, Gubar considers how the children Golden Age authors created and, to a more limited extent, children existing in social reality are active agents that can resist the adult-authored texts and the cultural discourses that construct their identities. She argues that authors made a conscious decision to represent children as collaborators, as “coproducers of texts,” in order to articulate “their (sometimes quite tenuous) hope that the undeniable primacy and power of adults does not doom the young to the unfulfilling role of puppet, parrot, or pawn” (Gubar 8). This study addresses primarily canonical children’s literature—namely the work of Stevenson, Carroll, E. Nesbit, Barrie, and Burnett—and identifies traces of intergenerational collaboration in fantasy, adventure stories, theater for children, and child-narrated tales. Throughout she insists that Golden Age authors’ “interest in the idea that children could function as precocious actors, authors, editors, and collaborators reflects their hope that the authority of adults does not obviate the possibility that the child can enjoy a measure of agency and creativity: though not entirely autonomous, they can take a hand in their own self-fashioning. To this end, their texts often promote a kind of active literacy aimed at enabling children to become more artful dodgers of adult influence” (Gubar 209). In the chapters that follow, I join scholars, such as Gubar, who
complicate Rose’s legacy. I am attentive to both the cultural constructedness of children inside and outside of children’s literature and the possibility—on the part of the adults who managed, educated, wrote for, and parented children in the nineteenth century—of a recognition of children as active agents shaping their own social worlds.

My own analysis, however, takes into account a number of cultural factors that Gubar does not address in her study. In particular, I consider how adult-child collaborations—both those that existed outside the text, in the processes of composition and publication and in the larger social worlds of children, and inside the text, in authors’ representations of adult-child relationships within their fictions—are informed debates about the qualities of children’s imaginations. Mid-century ideas about the unique imaginative resources of the young, I argue, reframed and reinterpreted Romantic ideas of childhood and made possible a variety of adult-child collaborations based on the creative energy of the young. I also investigate how children act as collaborators in a number of cultural arenas untouched by Gubar’s work, in particular educational theories and policies but also toy culture, the child study movement, and nineteenth-century attitudes about children’s artwork. I investigate how these social contexts can be read productively against intergenerational relationships in fiction, poetry, and drama for children. In other words, I agree with Gubar that the largely unexplored figure of the collaborating child is more prevalent in Victorian and Edwardian children’s literature than is acknowledged in current scholarship, which often cleaves to the notion, articulated so powerfully in Rose’s text, that Victorians rendered childhood as a state of naïve simplicity. However, I offer a different perspective on the circumstances that incited these partnerships, arguing that authors for children turned to collaborative
models of authorship in response to shifting ideas about the role and character of the child’s imagination. I also offer an expanded account of how these relationships were reflected in or influenced by intergenerational relationships in the social world outside of children’s literature.²⁶

My work as well as Gubar’s joins a growing body of scholarship that, while recognizing that childhood is a cultural construction, attempts to explore in as nuanced a way as possible the possibilities and limits of child agency. A number of recent studies on childhood similarly question the seemingly impenetrable notion of the purely constructed child in nineteenth-century literature and culture. For example, Anne Varty, in her 2008 book-length study of children on the Victorian stage, takes into account not only nineteenth-century constructions of childhood innocence but also how those constructions contradict the training and careers of Victorian children on stage, suggesting the gulf between the imagined and lived realities of child actors. Earlier, in 1998, Margarida Morgado discusses in an article-length study of nineteenth-century childhood as informed by but exceeding the “ideological, political, and/or linguistic adult structures of meaning and of feeling” (Morgado 206–7). She suggests that “the child as symbol, dream or the product of the wishful thinking and erotic desires of adults” coexists with “representational attempts to capture the intrinsic qualities of a child, its point of view, its voice, its language, its rhythms” (Morgado 207).

²⁶ My work is then in direct opposition to Rose’s assertion that children’s literature is “not a reflection of . . . institutions and practices” such as “education, theatrical history, and legislative and social reform.” Rose claims that “there is no straightforward relationship of determination between them and children’s literature, nor can they be understood as providing the ‘context’ or ‘background’ to children’s books” and that instead children’s literature “is one such institution in itself with its own force and its own history (its own regulations and laws), equally active and determinant in its way. Its status as a social entity does not have to be guaranteed with reference to values which are constructed somewhere else—in the space of what is seen as a somehow more social reality” (Rose 142–3).
While interested in the textual nuances of Victorian children’s literature, then, my research can also be understood as an attempt to apply to the field of children’s literature scholarship a practice that is more common and indeed more tenable in the larger interdisciplinary field of childhood studies. Peter B. Pufall and Richard P. Unsworth, for example, have published a volume calling on scholars from across disciplines, from philosophy and theology to law and education, to “rethink” childhood, a project that “requires a thorough examination of the validity of both sides of this apparent ambivalence in society’s estimation of its children—patronizing on the one hand and idealizing on the other. It is a challenge to understand children as they are and where they are by listening to them and understanding the ways in which they act to create their own futures” (Pufall 2). They encourage future work that will “take more seriously the challenge of how children understand themselves, their social reality, and the larger world within which their immediate lives are nested,” contending that “children are much more self-determining actors than we generally think” (Pufall 7, 8–9). In her contribution to the Pufall and Unsworth volume, Allison James argues that, because new scholarship in childhood studies holds that “childhood does not take on a universal form and is not a common social experience determined by biology,” we are called to interrogate “the part children themselves play in shaping their own social world and that of others” (James 28–9). Anthropologist Virginia Caputo, in her consideration of the methods and assumptions behind studies of youth culture, makes a similar move, defining children as “active agents engaged in the production of meaning in their own social lives” (Caputo 20).

Nineteenth-century scholarship, obviously, cannot use methodologies available to scholars studying contemporary children, such as interviewing and observation, to paint a
truer picture of child life and the possibilities of child agency. However, the impulse behind this work is central to my project, which is born out of a sense that it is irresponsible to reduce the child figure in its entirety to a collection of adults’ sexual and psychological needs, especially in a genre so influenced by child audiences and individual children outside the text. Lewis Carroll’s child-friend Alice Liddell, J. M. Barrie’s adopted sons, the Llewlyn Davies brothers, and Rudyard Kipling’s Best Beloved daughter Josephine have won reputations almost as mammoth as the authors they inspired; and while these children are certainly mythologized and idealized, they did, in fact, exist outside the world of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Peter Pan, and the Just So Stories. I acknowledge, as Gubar does, that such a project, when dealing with the nineteenth century, “raises thorny epistemological problems about what counts as evidence,” but agree with her assertion that “the fact that we cannot speak in certitudes about this topic does not mean that we should throw up our hands” (Gubar 33).

IV. BETWEEN GENERATIONS

The complexity of discussing the social realities of real children in the nineteenth century is matched by the difficulty of locating evidence on authors’ individual motivations for collaboration. Authorial decisions are unknowable apart from the often incomplete information writers leave in letters, essays, and in the content of their fictions. However, I argue that multiple ideas about children’s imaginations, together with mid-century demands for imaginative children’s literature, created a set of cultural circumstances that made adult-child collaboration a particularly appealing and accommodating authorial model. As Robert Murray Davis argues, “writers collaborate
because they wish to make something which individually they could not make, or, having made, could not successfully push through the rest of the publishing process to market. In other words, a writer collaborates when he or she has been driven to it by inefficiency, insecurity, or inability” (Davis 128). I contend that the rise of creative, collaborative partnerships between adults and children signals a response such as that described by Davis. Many authors for children, culturally and personally estranged from the child’s imagination, registered a sense of “inefficiency, insecurity, or inability” when confronted with the task of composing and claiming authorship of imaginative children’s literature—or recognized that they were writing at a time and for a literary market that projected these anxieties onto them as adult writers—and responded by partnering with children, who possessed the very imaginative qualities that adults were assumed to be wanting. Moreover, the merits and powers of children’s imaginations were also recognized in other spheres of children’s social lives—education, toy culture, studies of oral culture and folklore, and art, for example—and generated similar patterns of intergenerational collaboration.

This study of adult-child creative partnerships joins a body of scholarship that fractures or even dismantles what Jack Stillinger calls the “myth of solitary genius.” What Stillinger identifies as the “romantic notion of singular authorship” has preoccupied teachers, scholars, and critics from at least the late eighteenth century and continues to shape literary studies (Stillinger 183).27 This idealized model of authorship was certainly prevalent in the Victorian period, exemplified, for example, in Thomas Carlyle’s 1840 lecture “The Hero as Man of Letters.” Carlyle describes the author as the “figure of a

27 M. Thomas Inge writes that “when the myth of the solitary genius began is not clear, but it has been connected with the concept of the poet as prophet and possessor of transcendent knowledge . . . Whatever the origin of the myth, English and American Romanticism helped firmly establish it” (Inge 624).
Great Soul living apart in that anomalous manner; endeavoring to speak-forth the
inspiration that was in him by Printed Books, and find place and subsistence by what the
world would please to give him for doing that” (Carlyle “Hero” 127). The figure of the
solitary genius in children’s literature scholarship exhibits its own peculiar nuances, for
critics and historians append to notions of an inspired figure working in solitude a set of
assumptions regarding the childlike and playful imagination of these authors. As Gubar
argues, the idea that “Golden Age children’s authors such as Carroll, Stevenson, and
Barrie were frozen in eternal childhood” was rampant in nineteenth- and early twentieth-
century views of authors for children, evident, for example, in Max Beerbohm’s 1905
review of Peter Pan entitled “The Child Barrie” and in Virginia Woolf’s claim that
Carroll possessed “in the centre of his being . . . [a] hard block of pure childhood” (Gubar
125). An investment in the idea of a perpetually youthful genius of children’s literature
persists, Gubar notes, in children’s literature scholarship today. Jackie Wullschlager, in
her 1995 book Inventing Wonderland, characterizes authors such as Carroll and Kenneth
Grahame as “writers who could not grow up . . . who transformed their longing for
childhood into a literary revolution,” and in her study she tries to define the creative
qualities that the “great fantasy writers” of the Golden Age of children’s literature shared
that made them such masters of the genre (Wullschlager 3). The imagined sole author
of children’s literature, in other words, was a solitary genius with unique access to the
child’s imagination, possessing the ability to transform childhood memories and adult
nostalgia into literature. These authors did not need collaborators, such scholarship

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28 There are exceptions to this pattern in children’s literature scholarship, including not only Gubar but also,
for example, Leach’s reconsideration of Charles Dodgson’s biography.
implies, because they had unique access to the child within and existed in a state of arrested development that enabled their originality and creativity.

The methodologies scholars across literary periods and genres use to contest models of sole authorship are useful in interrogating the assumptions that inform the idea of the solitary genius in children's literature. Studies exploring the social nature of authorship or the flaws in the paradigm of the single author, introduced in memorable terms in Roland Barthes's essay "The Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's essay "What is an Author?" take up a number of critical frameworks to demonstrate, as Stillinger writes, that "for many works, when the circumstances of composition are investigated in detail, the identifiable authorship turns out to be a plurality of authors" (Stillinger 22). Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson, in their study on collaborative partnerships from the early modern period to the twentieth century, provide a useful survey of the tools and theories scholars have employed to represent the complexities of multiple authorship, including "poststructuralist theories of textuality and subjectivity proclaiming the 'death of the author'; new paradigms of scholarly editing and textual production; interdisciplinary research on the history of copyright and changing constructions of authorship; feminist, postcolonial, and queer reframings of literary histories; studies of contemporary compositional practices in business, science, and education; and the proliferation of collaborative electronic hypertexts" (Stone 9). In the chapters that follow, I incorporate a number of these frameworks to make clear the dynamics of collaboration and multiple authorship in children's literature and culture. I not only pay particular attention to individual narratives of composition that detail particular authors' ideas of authorship and the larger culture of literary production for
children in the nineteenth century but also, and more importantly, reframe the literary history of children's literature to provide a more nuanced portrait of the genre informed by the interdisciplinary field of childhood studies. This latter approach, as I have explained, accounts for voices and perspectives often suppressed or unacknowledged, expanding the roster of forces and figures who are imagined to influence and create texts, in a manner that parallels feminist, postcolonial, or queer readings.

In “Active Listeners: Child Auditors as Creative Collaborators,” I redefine the scenes of storytelling so prevalent in literature for children as collaborations between narrator and auditor. I situate popular fairy tale collections against discourses that associated children with pre-literate cultures, from Rousseau’s *Émile* to research on language acquisition by the end-of-the-century child-study scholar, James Sully. Influenced by these texts and contexts and inspired by their own experiences with child listeners, authors such as William Thackeray and Margaret Gatty structured their fiction for children according to patterns of interactive, oral storytelling. They transformed narration from a unidirectional transmission of story into an act of collective meaning-making between adult tellers and child auditors, representing a rapport between adults and children that transforms pace, character, and plot. Scholars of the fairy tale have framed the Victorian association between children and oral culture as part of adults’ idealization of childhood. This chapter, however, both explores representations of listening children who exploit that connection by intervening in the stories narrated to them and situates the relationship between childhood and oral culture against theories of education and cognitive development.
While my second chapter is a broad survey of storyteller-auditor relationships, my third is a case study of one particularly complex collaboration. "Family Dynamics: The Strange Case of Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne" examines the texts Stevenson and his stepson, Osbourne, coauthored over the course of a fourteen-year partnership and how their collaboration shaped those works Stevenson wrote alone. Stevenson’s relationship with Osbourne was forged over technologies and genres that I contend are predisposed to intergenerational amity, namely toy printing presses and adventure stories. During early literary collaborations with Osbourne, Stevenson explored the character of his own imagination and the social processes that communicate it as well as the relationships that informed his role as a writer: between adult and child, between creative author and practical businessman, and among multiple contributors to a text. With Osbourne, Stevenson devised a vocabulary of images, such as overlapping handwriting and intersecting footprints, that portray authorship as a collaboration between multiple generations and personas—familial, literary, and psychological—in which two or more authors integrate their words or even their bodies to produce a text none could create alone. In much of Stevenson’s earlier work, especially *Treasure Island*, he used these images to communicate the narrative possibilities generated by adult-child coauthorship. However, these images resurface elsewhere to suggest the breakdown of collaboration. In *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, for example, handwriting is the center of a struggle between doctor and fiend in which coauthorship deteriorates into a fight for narrative authority. Tracking these motifs illustrates that collaboration is a framework that accounts for the diversity of Stevenson’s work—his fiction and essays, his literature for children and adults—in an unprecedented way.
Stevenson’s Hyde is threatening because he signifies the possibility of the unruly or violent child who can escape adult control. “Vice Versa: Adults Who Write and Children Who Author,” explores the cultural currency of the child as a misbehaving or subversive figure. Representations of disobedient children, in particular in *A Holiday Romance* by Dickens and *Peter Pan* by Barrie, figure children as the source of true imaginative power and the adult author as an amanuensis, attempting to record with accuracy the speech and behaviors of the young. These texts, when put in conversation with educational reforms that privileged students’ imaginations over adult authority, illustrate how such ill-behaved characters are a symptom of a mounting anxiety that the young could overthrow familiar models of adult power and child submission. This chapter both challenges critical accounts of children’s literature as a simple tool of enculturation and offers a model to understand vulnerable characters in literature for adults who use imaginative strategies to access a unique, playful agency.

My concluding chapter, “Picturing Partnership: Illustrations as Invitations for Collaboration,” offers a new perspective on one of the most familiar collaborative models examined in Victorian studies: partnerships between authors and illustrators. I interpret illustrations in children’s literature through nineteenth-century ideas about children’s relationship to art, articulated in dialogues about art education and in the invention of the coloring book. Particularly at the fin-de-siècle, educators and critics express respect for the imaginative and spontaneous elements of children’s drawings and dismiss drawing exercises, popular in the eighteenth century, that require precise imitation of adults’ art. While most critics locate an admiration for children’s art in the twentieth century, I locate the beginnings of this movement in the mid-Victorian period. As early as the 1840s,
author-illustrators devised styles that suggest intergenerational collaboration, even if a child did not participate in a text’s composition or illustration. Edward Lear, for example, united adult and child aesthetics in his “nonsense botany,” producing drawings that incorporated the real and the imaginary to challenge rational modes of observing and organizing the natural and social world. Rudyard Kipling, in his illustrations to *Just So Stories*, extended the possibility of collaboration beyond the point of publication, including visual clues and captions that invite child readers to reinterpret or materially transform text, image, or both. These author-illustrators fuse childlike artistic spontaneity and adult authority, representing intergenerational collaboration through purposefully naïve or playful images.

Each chapter includes one or more distinct creative partnerships, beginning with a relatively narrow definition of collaboration: the joint production of a creative text based on face-to-face interaction between two or more individuals, each contributing significantly to the final product. By grounding each study in a face-to-face partnership, I hope to differentiate my research from studies of creative partnerships that rely on overly capacious understandings of collaboration. Expansive definitions of collaboration, as Stone and Thompson caution, “may serve important rhetorical ends” but “sacrifice important distinctions” that make the study of multiple authorship relevant and cohesive.

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29 Jewel Spears Brookner, for example, uses a definition of collaboration articulated by T. S. Eliot, which includes collaboration between author and reader; among artists and philosophers; and, most notably, across time, among readers and writers in the past, present, and future (Brookner 67–9). Inge employs an extremely broad definition of collaboration as well, naming the invention of the printing press as a salient moment that complicated sole authorship, as the printer—“who in the beginning fulfilled the triple role of editor, typesetter, and publisher or promoter of a book”—could, Inge argues, claim co-ownership of a text (Inge 624). James A. Reithner argues that all writing is collaborative, that “writing and what writers do during writing cannot be artificially separated from the social-rhetorical situations in which the writing gets done” (Reithner 621). Reithner’s discussion focuses on composition in the college classroom. While much recent work on collaboration is historical readings of multiple authorship in the context of literary studies, there is a parallel and useful body of work on collaboration rooted in undergraduate pedagogy and academic writing and publication.
However, the face-to-face collaborations I document throughout my project often lead to and suggest a network of other partnerships, some which require more accommodating definitions of collaboration. For example, the collaborative dynamics I explore take place during various phases of the processes of composition and publication; like Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, I understand collaborative writing to include "any of the activities that lead to a completed written document" (Ede 14). They also take place in environments outside of literary production, especially the classroom. And, unfailingly, the adult-child partnerships I discuss are at the heart of a web of collaborations, some of which rely on broader understandings of the term. Stevenson’s collaboration with his stepson, for example, is informed by the way he imagines a more loosely defined collaboration with his literary predecessors, and Robert Browning’s poem “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” while composed to accompany the illustrations of the young Willie Macready, was also composed in conversation with his father’s poem “Hamelin” and the generations-long transmission of an oral tale of a seductive musician and a mass kidnapping. These ancillary collaborations, partnerships that require a more capacious understanding of how collaboration works, are not unexpected. They occur because the authors I discuss understand writing as a social process, explore the model of collaboration in concrete and specific ways in their own modes of composition, and investigate other, broader models of authorship in their work.

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30 Stone and Thompson oppose a survey of broad definitions of collaboration to legal definitions, which tend to be quite narrow (21).
In the winter of 1854, the young Edith Story fell ill while staying in Rome with her family. The long weeks of her convalescence were brightened by visits from William Thackeray. “He used to sit on the edge of the bed or draw his chair close up to it,” remembered Story years later, “and, joy of joys, he brought, chapter by chapter, to read to me ‘The Rose and the Ring’” (Story 179). The tale Thackeray told to entertain Story would later be published as a generously illustrated Christmas book: *The Rose and the Ring; or, The History of Prince Giglio and Prince Bulbo, A Fire-Side Pantomime for Great and Small Children* (1855). In her account of Thackeray’s visits, published in *Cornhill Magazine* in 1911, Story represents herself as the “exclusive recipient” of the tale; however, as U. C. Knoepflmacher points out, this is a sentimental myth (Knoepflmacher 85). While family letters confirm that Thackeray visited Story during her illness, she was only one of many child auditors who heard early versions of *The Rose and the Ring*. Thackeray wrote his pantomime at the request of his daughters, Anny and Minny, and a group of their young friends, who begged him to compose a story to accompany a series of humorous sketches of Twelfth Night characters he had drawn for their amusement. These circumstances are recounted and partially fictionalized in the preface to the published story, in which Thackeray’s pseudonymous narrator, M. A. Titmarsh, responds to the demands of a large family of “young people” and their
governess, “Miss Bunch,” to compose a “history” for a set of humorous sketches (Thackeray iii–iv).  

The origin of *The Rose and the Ring*, then, is imagined in numerous ways, but at the center of each is the dynamic between young listeners and an adult storyteller, whether that teller be Thackeray himself, a man whom Story calls a “benevolent giant,” or Titmarsh, assisted by the “lady of great fancy and droll imagination,” Miss Bunch. The close relationship between performance and published story found in *The Rose and the Ring* is not unusual in the works of Thackeray, who imagined much of his fiction in terms of drama and theatrics. The “Fire-Side Pantomime” of *The Rose and the Ring* is perhaps just the next performance after the puppet show of *Vanity Fair* (1847–8) and the melodrama of *Pendennis* (1848–50). However, the performed narrative of *The Rose and the Ring* is not only foregrounded in accounts of the text’s composition but also privileged over the final, printed product. The tale loses something during transformation from holiday entertainment to ink-and-paper commodity. For example, while Thackeray promised Story “the first copy” of the tale as well as a handwritten manuscript, she finds that these cannot compete with the pantomime as it was performed bedside. Thackeray’s readings were followed by a discussion with his listener of “the people in the story” who, Story notes, “were real people to me and to him.” Even the manuscript, written in Thackeray’s small “fairy writing,” could not reproduce the moments after the author’s narration, when “he would say, ‘Now you must tell me a little story to amuse me’”—moments when Story “tried her best to recall something he would like, that [she] had heard, or invent a little tale” that Thackeray would illustrate as she spoke (Story 178–9).

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31 As Knoepflmacher notes, the name Miss Bunch closely resembles “the traditional Dame Bunch,” teller of tales (Knoepflmacher 88).
The difficult translation from fireside story to printed text is perhaps most evident within the nineteen chapters and accompanying illustrations of the text itself. While the delighted response of Thackeray’s daughters and their friends inspired him to publish the tale so “others [could] be amused also” (Thackeray iv), the printed Christmas book strains to reproduce between the author of the story and its wider readership the same dynamic relationship between storyteller and auditor enjoyed by those first, intimate audiences. Joan Stevens identifies several moments in which the text and illustrations “involve collaboration between teller and audience,” encouraging young listeners to engage in a conversation with both the adult author’s text and, assumedly, with the adult reading the tale aloud. She notes, for example, a moment in which Thackeray provides explicit instructions, directed at the individual narrating, to solicit the participation of listening children. The tale’s characters are sitting down for a feast when Thackeray notes, “You may be sure they had a very good dinner—let every boy or girl think of what he or she likes best, and fancy it on the table.” A footnote after this sentence suggests that asking children which foods the characters should eat would be “a very pretty game” (Thackeray 47). The delicacies that will appear at the feast rely on what those listening to the tale “fancy” on the table; Thackeray, who possibly included this activity both to add to the delight of the story and to guide young listeners in an exercise meant to develop their imaginations, does not provide a menu. This collaboration, however, is fragile and depends on the careful juxtaposition of certain images at precise moments in the text—what one contemporary reviewer called a “complete . . . duet between the eye and the mind, between word and figure” (Brown 255). The original published text suggests, through the inclusion of a woodcut, that the action of the story ceases—“the
actors hold their tableau"—while the children make up their minds as to the nature of the feast (Stevens 14). Unfortunately, editions of *The Rose and the Ring* published after Thackeray’s death, which often dramatically changed the number and placement of illustrations, undermine Thackeray’s carefully crafted interplay both between text and image and between adult reader and child audience.

The struggle of *The Rose and the Ring* to operate as both spoken and read—its protean status as dramatic production, narrated tale, and printed text—was not only underscored by Thackeray but also recognized by those who read and appreciated his text. For example, in a memorial to the relationship between Thackeray and Story—the poem “The Rose and the Ring, Christmas, 1854, and Christmas, 1863”—writer Frederick Locker-Lampson shifts uneasily from references to the oral storytelling moment to the printed tale. During most of the poem, Locker-Lampson refers to the printed text, which was penned then printed and sent as a gift to Story. However, at the end of the second stanza, at the very center of the poem, Locker-Lampson describes a meeting between Thackeray and Story, in which Thackeray “begs (with a spine vastly supple) / She will study *The Rose and the Ring*” (Locker-Lampson 146). The spine mentioned here would logically belong to the treasured copy of *The Rose and the Ring*, but in these lines it also belongs to Thackeray, an ambiguity that underscores the story as it originated in the physical body of the storyteller. As part of Thackeray, the Christmas tale was

32 Frederick Locker-Lampson’s volume of *London Lyrics*, which contains this poem, went into numerous editions, British and American, and the volume or selections from it were illustrated by such illustrators as George Cruikshank, Richard Doyle, and Randolph Caldecott. Especially after his marriage to Lady Charlotte Christian Bruce in July 1850, the poet moved in elite social circles that included literary and political notables, including William Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Lord Houghton, Lord Lytton, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Alexander William Kinglake, Cruikshank, Alphonse de Lamartine, Franz Liszt, George Du Maurier, the royal family, and the shah of Persia. After Lady Charlotte’s death, Locker-Lampson married the children’s writer Hannah James Lampson, taking her surname in order to succeed to her family’s estate (Dobson).
“vastly supple,” but the copy the now-grown Edith Story holds has lost its narrative flexibility. Thackeray, at the time of Locker-Lampson’s writing, had died, and the tale was therefore stable and finite in its materiality. The poet not only calls it the “last and best of his Toys,” but also characterizes it as granite and even immovable, a “shrine of his glory” (Locker-Lampson 147).

I argue that what Locker-Lampson implies and what Stevens identifies more conspicuously is, in fact, the erosion of the collaboration enabled by the oral or spoken element of the tale. The moments of intergenerational collaboration throughout The Rose and the Ring depend on the ability of the printed text to recreate an oral performance, in which the narrative is unfixed and infinitely variable, receptive to revisions according to perhaps widely dissimilar configurations of audience. While Thackeray’s Christmas story may be largely successful in recreating the conditions of oral narrative in its first editions, it is undeniable that performed stories necessarily undergo fundamental transformations when translated into first a written manuscript and, subsequently, a printed text. As Walter Ong argues, the movement from oral to print culture is a “reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist” (Ong 82). Even the careful arrangement of Thackeray’s texts cannot conceal the tension between the finality of the printed, published text and what Ong calls the “context of give-and-take between real persons” that characterizes spoken language (Ong 79). Thus, while the Morning Chronicle claims that Thackeray “makes his book speak like a man” (qtd. Ray 98), that speech is necessarily mediated, the transmission of story from teller to listener subject to a series of interferences. It is first purposefully filtered through the personality of
Thackeray's pseudonym, M. A. Titmarsh—in a sense a child of the author's imagination, one of many dramatic voices he employs in his writings, whose voice in the introduction reinforces Thackeray's hope that the pantomime can be reproduced, its adaptability kept alive, by other tellers, in other circumstances.\footnote{By the time of the publication of \textit{The Rose and the Ring}, M. A. Titmarsh, sometimes appearing as Michael Angelo Titmarsh, had a personality of his own. Thackeray used this pseudonym in a number of other works. It first appeared in 1840 in Thackeray's \textit{Paris Sketchbook of Mr. M. A. Titmarsh.}} But it is also mediated by ink and paper and by publisher and bookseller, obstacles that made the tale less flexible, its collaborative element more tenuous.

In what follows, I will explore how authors for children attempted to overcome the disadvantages of ink and paper and embrace the spontaneous nature of the spoken word, both by partnering with children in storyteller-auditor collaborations and by representing those partnerships in their fiction. My first section maps shifting understandings of the relationship between children and language in the late eighteenth and early twentieth century. I begin with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's \textit{Émile} (1762), a text that contributed to the association between told tales and children's literature in the Victorian period, and move forward to the fin-de-siècle and the establishment of the field of child study. Scholars involved in this movement reiterate, in a scientific discourse, both cultural assumptions about children and oral culture and explain patterns of adult-child collaboration, in which children transform the linguistic world they share with adults. Associations between children and oral culture are a central concern for fairy tale collectors, such as Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the focus of my second section. I explore not only the Grimms' ideas about childhood and fairy tales as expressed in the materials surrounding their \textit{Kinder- und Hausmärchen} collections but also, and more importantly for my argument, English translations of the tales, in particular Edgar Taylor's \textit{German...
Popular Stories (1823, 1826) and Gammer Grethel (1839). These volumes influenced story collections for children published throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, many of which use a storyteller-auditor format. In the third and final section of this chapter, I examine collections by Mary Molesworth, Mary Cowden Clarke, and Margaret Gatty, paying attention to how storytelling scenes—both those that inspired these authors and fictional moments of narration in their texts—were enriched by and facilitated intergenerational collaboration. Children in these stories are creative collaborators, changing the basic elements of a story through their presence as auditors and through a creative agency based on active listening and critical response.

Writers, illustrators, educators, and scholars throughout the nineteenth century frequently articulated the collaborative potential of storytelling in terms of the visual. Listening to a narrated tale, especially when those listeners are children, is equated with “picturing,” with building images in the mind. James Sully of the child study movement, for example, argues that words “have a powerful suggestive effect on children’s imagination[s], calling up particularly vivid images of the objects named” and that to speak aloud the name of an object or a description of a scene may be to call forth in the mind of a child an image “which is in itself an approach to a complete sensuous realization of the thing” (Sully 55). Throughout this chapter, then, I am attentive to the many ways visual culture informs and structures the way Victorians understand oral culture in children’s literature. I examine the ways storyteller-auditor relationships are represented in illustrations that underscore the flexibility of the told tale, the collaborations enabled by storytelling, and the connection between narration and the child’s imagination. I also consider how descriptions both of children’s relationships to
oral culture and of the art of storytelling deploy tropes of the visual, such as magic lanterns and image-building. These discussions begin to suggest the interconnectedness between the ways Victorians understood children's relationship to language as akin to their relationship to the visual arts, a topic I examine in further detail in Chapter Four.

I. EAR-MINDED CHILDREN

Associations between children and oral culture began as early as the eighteenth century and continued through the Victorian period. One of the earliest texts that transformed ideas about children and the spoken word is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile*, ou de l'éducation (1762). Rousseau argues that parents and educators, if guided by careful observations of their charges, will change the way they teach children to negotiate language, both spoken and printed. For example, Rousseau insists throughout Book I and II of *Émile*, those sections that treat the infancy and early childhood of his imaginary pupil, that reading and the printed word in general have no place in *Émile*'s curriculum, an unorthodox decision Rousseau justifies with his observations on the cognitive development and natural learning habits of pre-adolescent children.34 Like John Locke, Rousseau insists that children learn primarily through sensory experience. Because the child, before he learns to reason, "only attends to what affects his senses," gathering "sense experiences" as "the raw material of thought" (Rousseau 35), tutors should promote sensory learning exclusively and reject educational methods that employ books and abstract, cerebral study. "To substitute books for [feet, hands, and eyes] does not

34 The exception to Rousseau's rejection of all books for his pupil is *Robinson Crusoe*, which, in the words of Rousseau, is the "one book which, to [his] thinking, supplies the best treatise on an education according to nature" (Rousseau 176). For a discussion of how *Robinson Crusoe* operates in *Émile*, see Flanders.
teach us to reason, it teaches us to use the reason of others rather than our own,” notes Rousseau. “To learn to think we must therefore exercise our limbs, our senses, and our bodily organs, which are the tools of the intellect” (Rousseau 107). Reading the world is infinitely more important than reading books, a claim Rousseau formulates in various ways throughout his treatise. Émile’s “whole environment is the book from which he unconsciously enriches his memory” (Rousseau 90). “Let the senses be the only guide for the first workings of reason. No book but the world” (Rousseau 56).

While Rousseau attributes his recommendation to proscribe written texts from Émile’s education to his observations of children and his conclusions about their intellectual needs, his attack on reading is also part of a larger cultural discourse about the relationship between children and language. Rousseau, Jacqueline Rose notes, was part of a persistent cultural movement that “set up childhood as a primitive state where ‘nature’ is still to be found” (Rose 44), and for Rousseau in particular children demonstrate this primitive state, which was associated with both innocence and savagery, through the way they use language. For writers like Rousseau, children can, in the words of Rose, “take language back to its pure and uncontaminated source in the objects of the material world,” bypassing the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, “what is felt as most problematic and unstable about language itself” (Rose 47). This stages the movement from childhood’s oral language to adulthood’s written language as a loss or deterioration. The intrusion of written language signals for Rousseau what Janie Vanpée calls “the passage from nature to culture” (Vanpée 40) and what Rose calls, more pointedly, a movement from the “purity and immediacy” of the spoken word or even gestural
communication to the "obtrusiveness and aridity of written culture" (Rose 49).35

Rousseau articulates this complex set of assumptions early in his treatise:

All our languages are the result of art. It has long been a subject of inquiry whether there ever was a natural language common to all; no doubt there is, and it is the language of children before they begin to speak. This language is inarticulate, but it has tone, stress, and meaning. The use of our own language has led us to neglect it so far as to forget it altogether. Let us study children and we shall soon learn it afresh from them.

(Rousseau 36)

Here, Rousseau conflates the "natural language common to all," the assumed linguistic infancy of the race, with "the language of children before they begin to speak," the infancy of the individual. Because adults, through time and neglect, have forgotten this "inarticulate" language of "tone, stress, and meaning," they must turn to children to "learn it afresh." Rousseau's position, then, is that by observing children adults can reconnect with or at least attempt to understand the pure form of communication, the "natural language common to all" that children speak before educated into linguistic norms, and the expectation that this is possible fits into a larger cultural discourse that associates children with oral culture and innocence and adults with written culture and the deterioration of language.

Rose and Vanpée focus on how Rousseau's educational methodologies construct oppositions between children and adults in terms of oral and written culture, the innocence of spoken language and the disruption and deterioration of that innocence by the printed word. However, another set of oppositions regarding children's relationship

35 As Rose notes, the way Rousseau discusses children’s use of language in Émile indicates that he was "alert to what would now be called the 'arbitrary' nature of the linguistic sign" and recognized "that there is no natural relation between the linguistic sign and the thing to which it refers" (Rose 47). "In any study whatsoever the symbols are of no value without the idea of the things symbolized," argues Rousseau. "Yet the education of the child is confined to those symbols, while no one ever succeeds in making him understand the thing signified" (Rousseau 87).
to language operates in *Émile*: the fluidity of language for children versus its fixity for adults. Throughout the treatise, children’s experience with language is characterized by adaptability and flexibility. The early babblings of infants, which Rousseau describes above in the strange formulation “the language of children before they begin to speak,” fascinate Rousseau not only because they are echoes of a cultural and linguistic infancy but also because the meaning of this early speech is not fixed to particular and reproducible orders of letters, sounds, words, or sentences. Children’s language can simultaneously be “inarticulate” and have “tone, stress, and meaning.” It can signify without written structures and norms of usage; it can express and communicate without using the “art,” or perhaps more pointedly the artifice, of adults’ linguistic codes. The way children experience language, then, is similar to the way writers on the imagination claim children experience the physical, rational world as a whole. Children are thought to transcend the hard and fast rules of reality—and, in this case, the rules of language in a culture of fixed, printed words—and radically transform the world around them to fit their purposes. While Rousseau entertains the possibility that children such as Émile have “a grammar of their own,” he acknowledges that this grammar has “rules and syntax that are more general” than the customs of adults’ language (Rousseau 43). By mandating that children learn, for as long as possible, through the material world and the spoken word, Rousseau attempts to preserve within Émile the fluidity of language before it is compromised by print culture, or at least to restore in Émile that fluidity where it has been lost. Moreover, when Rousseau’s contention that children have an intimate relationship with the spoken word is taken together with his demand that adults study

36 It seems likely that Rousseau is using the word “inarticulate” to denote speech that is, as the OED defines, “not consisting of distinct parts having each a definite meaning” (“inarticulate”).
children to recapture that first, natural language, the result is a sort of partnership—a collaboration in which adults partner with children, the bearers of oral culture, in order to reclaim the merits of face-to-face communication.

The model of childhood that had begun to take shape in the works of Rousseau—a model that associated children with the infancy of the race, and, in particular, with the infancy of language—crystallized in the late nineteenth century in what Tess Cossett identifies as an important shift in ideas about childhood. The “Romantic child,” Coslett notes, was “being reconstituted as the evolutionary child, more primitive and more poetic, literally closer to animals, than adults” (Coslett 480). This model was formalized in a movement called child study, a precursor to developmental and educational psychology that marshaled the methods of a range of scholars, both amateur and professional—psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, biologists, educators, and parents, among others—to build a complete portrait of all aspects of child life, normal and abnormal. There were a number of historical and cultural factors that, as Adrian Wooldridge argues, made England in the 1880s and 1890s a particularly fertile environment for this. Wooldridge suggests “a widespread anxiety among politicians and social commentators about the degeneration of the British population,” an anxiety produced in part by the ill health of new populations of children who appeared in schools as education became increasingly compulsory. He also identifies a “mounting popular interest in the peculiar mental qualities and emotional needs which distinguished children from adults,” characterized by “a heady combination of utilitarian calculation and romantic sentiment” (Wooldridge 19). As I will discuss in Chapter Three, this attention to the needs of children was recognized, for example, by Matthew Arnold who, as a
school inspector, argued that adults pay attention to what children’s perspectives can teach adults about imaginative development. By the fin-de-siècle, ideas of childhood were informed by both Romantic sentiments of innocence, which idolized childhood as a sacred stage of life separated from the experience of adulthood, and an emerging awareness of the ways scientific inquiry into childhood through fields such as biology and psychology could materially change the way adults understand and manage children in day-to-day life.

In England, the child study movement began in two separate organizations. The first, The Childhood Society, was formed in 1896 by the British Medical Association in order to compile a report on “the state of development and brain power of school children” (qtd. in Wooldridge 30). The Society was led by Francis Warner, who, with the help of twenty-three volunteers, examined thousands of schoolchildren, paying particular attention to their physiological traits: their measurements, movements, and behaviors. The Society's work was characterized by the utilitarian tendencies of child study; its members followed what W. B. Drummond, writing in 1901, calls the “Collective or Mass method,” which “consists in the examination of special points in a large number of children for the purpose of gaining knowledge of the typical course of development, and so forming a background as it were against which individual children may be studied” (Drummond 17). The Childhood Society’s methods were often at odds with a second organization, the Child Study Association, founded in 1893 after three British schoolteachers returned to England from the World’s Fair in Chicago, inspired by an address delivered by genetic psychologist G. Stanley Hall.37 Unlike the Childhood

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37 The schoolteachers were Margaret A. Clapperton, Mary E. Crees, and Mary Louch. Louch would later become editor of the Child Study Association’s journal, the Paidologist. In histories of the child study
Association, which was comprised primarily of professional scientists, the Child Study Association included in its membership not only scholars of biology, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics but also a large contingent of educators and parents. The organization is remembered for the work of Sully, whose collection of essays entitled *Studies of Childhood* (1895) was, according to Wooldridge, “one of the most widely quoted handbooks on psychology until the 1910s” (Wooldridge 47). Members of the Association practiced what Drummond calls “the Individual Method,” or “the careful recording of the events in the life of an individual child as they occurred” (Drummond 16). These studies are often more narrative or even literary in tone than the statistics-heavy research of the Childhood Society, but they vary widely in scope and scientific rigor, including, for example, Charles Darwin’s “A Biographical Sketch of an Infant” (1877), a short piece on the first behaviors of his son published in *Mind* magazine, as well as more extensive and formal studies, such as William T. Preyer’s two-volume *The Mind of the Child*, published in German in 1882 and translated into English in 1894, which traces the development of intellectual faculties in children.38

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movement, in particular earlier histories written at the beginning of the twentieth century, Hall is remembered as its originator, and American organizations inquiring into child life are represented as the true beginnings of the movement. D. E. Bradbury, for example, notes that “[o]nly in America” did child study “have a widespread popular appeal,” largely due to the work of Stanley Hall (Bradbury 21). Kate Stevens, secretary of the London branch of the British Child Study Association in 1906, agrees. “The child study movement in Great Britain owes its inception and much of its progress to American psychology,” she writes, “since the inspiration which led to the founding of the British Child Study Association was given by Dr. G. Stanley Hall” (Stevens 245). It is important to note, however, that while Hall’s influence was unmatched by any child study expert in England, the movement was international in nature, exerting a significant influence on perspectives of childhood in Britain and throughout Europe. Hall, in a 1900 short article on child study, notes that he knows of periodicals in various countries with sections devoted to the movement: “three journals in Germany, two in France, one each in England, Italy, Japan, Russia, and Spain” (Hall 688).

38 Sally Shuttleworth argues that Preyer’s text “was to become the definitive work” of child study for two decades, and she notes that Preyer compiled his study self-consciously as “high science,” systematically observing his son three times daily for three years (Shuttleworth 145).
Both organizations had their critics, but the multidisciplinary methodologies of the Child Study Association garnered more public acceptance than the physiological preoccupations of the Childhood Society.\(^{39}\) In 1907, the Childhood Society was absorbed into the London Branch of the Child Study Association to form the Child Study Society. This new organization continued to pursue the multidisciplinary goals of the movement as articulated by Hall, who in 1900 defined child study as

partly psychology, partly anthropology, partly medico-hygiene. It is closely related at every step to the study of instinct in animals, and to the rites and beliefs of primitive people; and it has a distinct ethico-philosophical aspect—partly what a recent writer classed as the higher biology—with a spice of folk-lore and of religious evolution, sometimes with an alloy of gossip and nursery tradition, but possessing a broad, practical side in the pedagogy of all stages.

(Hall 689)

Six years earlier—in his opening comments in the Paidologist, the official journal of the Child Study Association—Hall had mentioned a number of other schools of thought influencing child study, including “embryology of rudimentary organs” and “the psychology of the deaf, blind, idiotic, insane and criminal classes” (qtd. in Shuttleworth 144). As Hall’s meandering list suggests, the disciplinary boundaries of child study were extremely permeable, suggesting that scholars attempted to understand childhood through every available method.

This diversity of disciplines, moreover, speaks to the rather sophisticated understanding of child study scholars regarding the difficulties of accessing and interpreting child life, especially the child mind. Children, the movement suggests, were difficult to understand, and what thinkers from this multiplicity of fields were attempting to piece together was a way to access children’s voices and inner lives with tools that

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\(^{39}\) For a summary of some of the criticisms of child study and the movement’s responses, see Hall.
privileged adult assumptions and conclusions about childhood. “Study of the mind traditionally had employed the method of introspection,” notes Holly Blackford, “a method not possible in the less articulate child . . . Introspection would have to give way to direct observation, but observation required interpretation. And how could those removed from childhood interpret what and how the child sees?” (Blackford 371). Child study scholars articulated this obstacle in interesting ways, anticipating current scholarship on accessing children’s voices and agency outlined in my introduction. Blanche Dismore, for example, in her 1902 study of children’s vocabularies, laments the necessity of employing not only direct observation but also the even more problematic method of writing exercises to assess children’s understanding. “If we could look directly into children’s minds without the intervening medium of writing it would be better, but we cannot,” writes Dismore. “[I]f children were constructed like magic lanterns, it would be most instructive to seat a dozen of them before a large screen and study the widely different pictures they projected” (Dismore 43–4). Dismore wants to understand the child directly—in projected images, recalling the way children themselves might imagine, the way they picture the world in their minds—and she is frustrated by

40 While Blackford here notes a tension between children and the ability to “look within,” there was, at the end of the nineteenth century, a growing association between childhood and interiority. Carolyn Steedman notes that “[l]ong established associations between littleness and interiority and between history and childhood were theorized in emergent psychoanalysis between about 1895 and 1920. In establishing psychoanalysis as a body of theory and as a cognitive form, Sigmund Freud worked with the imaginative legacy of cell theory, that is to say with notions of littleness, of entities composed of smaller parts, and with the idea of the smallest possible entity as the birthplace, or progenitor, of memory and consciousness of time” (Steedman 77).

41 Henry James, five years earlier, employed a similar but inverted simile that draws on the correspondences between imagining, “picturing,” and interpretation in his novel What Maisie Knew to articulate the confusion children experience when attempting to understand adults’ minds. Maisie, subject to the mental manipulations of her divorcing parents, “was taken into the confidence of passions on which she fixed just the stare she might have had for images bounding across the wall in the slide of a magic lantern” (James 17, emphasis added). James was connected to the child study movement through his brother, William James, who encouraged him to write about the implications of child study in a fictional form. For a further account of the influence of the child study movement on James and in particular on Maisie, see Levander.
the indirect methodologies available to her. Ironically, then, by identifying children as subjects of scientific inquiry—by insisting that, in the words of Hall, "children are not little adults, with all the faculties of maturity on a reduced scale, but unique and very different creatures" (Hall 700)—Dismore and her colleagues made the young inaccessible. One of the central paradoxes in child study was, in the words of Blackford, the simultaneous "uncertainty about interpreting the child and... an urgent need to do so" (Blackford 374).

This inability to communicate satisfactorily with children led many child study scholars to begin their research with theories of children’s language acquisition. The moment children learn language is, after all, the moment they acquire a mode of communication adults share. Problems of interpretation may still arise, but when children learn language they are initiated into a system of signs and expressions that can communicate to curious adults more fully the thoughts and impressions of childhood. A perusal of the scholarship produced during child study’s heyday—books, scholarly articles, pamphlets, and conference proceedings—reveals that detailed consideration of patterns of children’s speech was a staple of the movement. An English translation of French scholar Hippolyte Taine’s article “On the Acquisition of Language by Children,” published in Mind magazine in 1877, incited a string of similar studies, including not only the aforementioned biographical sketch by Darwin but also F. Pollock’s 1878 “An Infant’s Progress in Language.” Some of the most influential publications include extensive chapters dedicated to language. Bernard Perez’s The First Three Years of

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42 The volume of literature produced during the child study movement is overwhelming. In 1900, quite a few years before the movement had ended, Hall claims that the movement is “represented by a bibliography of some two thousand titles, including only the books and articles well worth reading, and not comprising the yet larger mass of chaff” (Hall 688)
Childhood, translated from French into English in 1885, includes a three-part chapter “On Expression and Language.” Preyer’s Mind of the Child addresses the topic in its second volume, and Sully approaches language acquisition in Studies of Childhood in the whimsically titled essay “The Little Linguist.” Studying children’s patterns of language acquisition involved complicating adult-child dynamics in a way that was, by the end of the nineteenth century, not altogether unfamiliar; it required redefining child listeners as collaborators, active participants in the creation of the linguistic worlds that surround them. This shift began as early as the late eighteenth century, when Rousseau recommended that tutors, who usually demonstrated their authority over the child through the force of the printed word, should instead learn from the speech and gestures of their pupils. As I will demonstrate in the remainder of this section, child study scholars inverted adult-child, speaker-listener dynamics, acknowledging both how children receive language—how, in learning to speak, they listen to the norms of the mother-tongue as spoken by adults—and how they respond to that language through reiteration and transformation. It is the contributions of children, child study scholars suggest, that maintain the creativity and fluidity of spoken language.

Discussions of language acquisition in child study are often characterized by the “combination of utilitarian calculation and romantic sentiment” Wooldridge detects in the movement as a whole. Experts’ careful analysis of syllables and sentence building is often inflected with a degree of humor or even sentimentality. Sully, for example, notes that the first attempts of “the young learner of our tongue” are “half pathetic, half humorous,” imperfect imitations of speech full of “quaint errors” that “provide ample amusement” to adult listeners (Sully 133, 147). However, Sully and his contemporaries
engaged in extensive discussions and debates on the language habits of young children, and scholars’ exhaustive accounts of the sounds children produce, the stages of physical and cognitive development at which they produce them, and their approximations of or differences from adult speech belie more than a casual or sentimental interest in baby talk. Instead, such scholars are, as Sally Shuttleworth argues, answering Rousseau’s request for “a treatise on the art of child-study” (Rousseau 194, Shuttleworth 143); they are dissecting what Rousseau had dubbed nearly a century earlier “the language of children before they begin to speak” in order to better understand “the language common to all” (Rousseau 36).43

In fact, child study experts cast children’s language in terms startlingly similar to Rousseau’s formulations, contending that, in the case of the spoken word, ontology recapitulates phylogeny—that children reenact the origins of language—and suggesting their speech is pure but fluid, free from the intrusion of the written sign. These associations between children and the “savage” races in theories of childhood speech were an outgrowth of the recapitulation theory, which, as Wooldridge explains, “suggested that the development of the individual reproduces, in a rapid and abbreviated form, the evolution of the race: the child inherits the abilities, memories, and habits of his ancestors and exhibits them in his growth in much the same order as they were first acquired” (Wooldridge 25).44 Alexander Francis Chamberlain, a contemporary and

43 Scholars during the child study movement were very conscious of their debt to Rousseau. Drummond recalls Rousseau at the beginning of his account of the history of child study. “There were great educators before Rousseau,” he writes, “yet to Rousseau, in spite of all his vagaries, exaggerations, and paradoxes, we owe many of the doctrines which in our own day are becoming dogmas of the New Education” (Drummond 14). A. Tolman Smith, while critical of the movement, notes that “the study of children” is largely indebted to Émile (Smith 238).
44 Recapitulation theory, in its first manifestations, dealt primarily with the physical development of the embryo, but sociologists and anthropologists soon applied the assumptions behind the theory to cultural, social, and linguistic development. Wooldridge argues that it was the child study movement’s reliance on
interlocutor of Sully, seems to extrapolate directly from Rousseau’s ideas on language: “The speech of little children has always been a source of wonderment to man,” writes Chamberlain, and many scholars, dating from “Psammetichus, King of Egypt,” have “turned to childhood for the solution of the problem of language origins” (Chamberlain 113–4). Taine also argues that in their habits of language children are “like primitive peoples” and that the “general and wide ideas” they apply to words resemble the habits of expression found in “the most ancient documents” (Taine 259). G. T. W. Patrick, like Rousseau, aligns children with gesture and speech—“like the primitive man,” the child is “ear-minded,” a “talking and hearing animal”—and this leads him to conclude that children should not learn to read or write until they are ten years old, a recommendation that would please Rousseau (Patrick 390). For Chamberlain, Taine, and Patrick, as for Rousseau before them, the child is a fertile site for research, a cultural artifact that, if subjected to careful study, reveals secrets of the race’s linguistic past. If, then, children are at times depicted in child study literature as bumbling speakers whose errors are amusing, they are more often understood as specimens to study for insights into the race’s history.

Arguably, reading children’s linguistic development as a reenactment of the race’s linguistic history robs the “little linguist” of all expressive agency. According to the recapitulation theory that contributed largely to its decline in the early twentieth century. Growing criticism of the aims and methods of the movement in both America and Europe “coincided with a demolition of . . . the recapitulation theory in the technical literature,” writes Wooldridge. “The rise of experimental biology made the theory unfashionable” (Wooldridge 45). Wooldridge also, however, defends the choice experts in child study made to rely on the recapitulation theory, noting that while it lost currency in scientific communities, some of the most important figures in psychology—including Jean Piaget and Sigmund Freud—were recapitulationists.

45 Chamberlain notes that Psammetichus “came to the conclusion that the oldest language on the face of the earth was Phrygian, because two children, isolated by his orders, spoke first the word bekos, which in that language signified ‘bread’” (Chamberlain 114). Figures such as Chamberlain demonstrate how the language of child study scholars is saturated with the motif of origins. Not only do children recapitulate the origins of language but also studies of children’s language recapitulate the origin of language studies, which even in antiquity “turned to childhood.”
the child study movement, children are the unwitting bearers of the history of language, and their early speech is fated simply to repeat the very sounds and syllables of his ancestors. This is also true of ideas about children’s artwork, which was thought to reiterate the aesthetic habits of “primitive races.” I discuss this in detail in Chapter Four. Charles Johnston, in his essay entitled “The World’s Baby-Talk” (1896), represents children as figuratively following in the exact footsteps of their ancestors, taking the same paths; he writes that “in the prattle of every baby we have a repetition, in a minor key, of the voice of the earliest man, and by watching the first movements of speech in a baby we can see once more the steps in articulate language which the whole world of man once took in dim ages long ago” (Johnston 499). Fittingly, studies in children’s speech often begin with the various ways children repeat the development of language through repetition itself, outlining strategies of language acquisition such as onomatopoeia, or the reproduction in speech of sounds from the natural world, and imitation, or the mimicking of the sounds produced by a speaker who has already mastered the language. A meticulous application of these theories could collapse all child speech into scientific evidence, categorizing every sound that escapes children’s lips as echoes of a previous generation’s contribution to the mother tongue.

However, I contend that child study scholars are not uncompromising in this way and, in fact, are particularly interested in moments when children’s expressions are creative and unexpected. Children, they suggest, discover a range of ways—some subtle, others creative and inventive—to negotiate and transform the patterns of listening and repetition that are understood to comprise language acquisition. Frederick Tracy, for example, suggests in his study *The Psychology of Childhood* (1894) that while the child
"builds up his own vocabulary" from "the intonations of those around him," his practice of imitation is perhaps most accurately understood as "active hearing," and "perhaps not wholly involuntary" (Tracy 128, 132). Tracy implies that children exhibit attention and engagement in the act of listening and select those sounds they decide to repeat and add to their vocabularies. Moreover, many child study experts contend that children's sense of hearing is nuanced and finely tuned, much more perceptive than that of adults, and it is this acuity that enables them to learn language through listening and imitation.

Chamberlain writes that "the skill with which children observe and reproduce accent, intonation, cadence, etc., is wonderful, their ears seizing an infinitude of inflections lost to the adult ear" (Chamberlain 140). Taine similarly notes that the senses of children are "much less blunted than our own" and "perceive delicate shades that we no longer distinguish" (Taine 251). It is the unique ability of children to listen, to hear the complexities of the sounds that surround them, that makes them experts in repetition and mimicry. Child study scholars recognize an intimate link between the flexibility of children's language and their listening skills—their affinity for the spoken word and their ability to perceive "delicate shades," to seize "in infinitude of inflections lost to the adult ear." For example, Taine observes a direct correspondence between the heightened sense of hearing he observes in children and their speech, which is characterized by a "flexibility [that] is surprising," expressing "all the shades of emotion, wonder, joy,

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46 There are a few child study scholars who disagree, claiming instead that children's sense of hearing is not fully developed. Tracy, for example, claims that the child's sense of hearing is "imperfect, both in structure and functioning." He therefore understands "the initial babbling of the infant, and . . . its marvelous flexibility, and the enormous variety of its intonations and inflections" not as evidence of the child's acute hearing but instead as proof that "the child has come into the world already possessing a considerable portion of the equipment by which he shall in after years give expression to his feelings and thoughts" (Tracy 120–1). F. H Champneys, in "Notes on an Infant" (1881), also contends that the sense of hearing is "late" in appearance (Champneys 106).
willfulness and sadness” and which “equals or even surpasses a grown up person” (Taine 253).

Still other child study scholars note even more creative ways children respond to the sounds and words they hear. Sully, for example, contends that children’s impulse to imitate the language of their parents and nursemaids “leads the child beyond the servile adoption of our conventional sounds to the invention of new or onomatopoetic sounds”—that “the working of this impulse may, in a certain number of children at least, strike out original lines of its own independently of the direct example of education” (Sully 144, 146). According to Sully, the child “in reproducing transforms,” and while some of these transformations are simplifications or mispronunciations of adult speech, others, he argues, are creative inventions (Sully 148).

The terms Sully uses here to characterize the nature of adults’ language and the habits of children’s imitation and invention are noteworthy. Adults are characterized by a fixity of language; they make “conventional sounds” and provide a “direct action and education” that “a certain number of children”—whom Sully later identifies as “intelligent” children of “precocious originality”—reject for “new” and “original” language of their own (Sully 162). Sully provides pages of examples of this type of creativity, noting, for example, a child who “invented the form ‘dag’ for striking with a dagger,” and “the pretty term ‘tell-wind’ which a boy of four years and eight months hit upon as a name for a weather-vane” (Sully 168–9). These unique word forms are for Sully genius in their own way and, often, more logical than the corresponding terms used by adults. While not appropriated by native speakers, they recall the joyful logic of nonsense, such as the portmanteau

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47 I discuss the tension between children’s impulse to imitate and their impulse to invent in the context of art and children’s book illustration in Chapter Four.
words Humpty Dumpty discusses with Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* or the "scroobious" and "runcible" verses and figures in Edward Lear's nonsense, which I discuss at length in Chapter Four.

Moreover, the originality of child speech is manifested, for Sully, not only in individual words but also in entire strategies of language building. For example, according to Sully, both the child and "primitive man" expand their vocabularies and develop skills of interpretation and classification through processes of generalization and analogy, in which they apply words and phrases they have heard used to signify one object or idea to another object or idea with similar properties. Sully notes that

> [s]uch extension, moving rather along poetic lines than those of our logical classifications, is apt, as we have seen, to wear a quaint metaphorical aspect. A star, for example, looked at, I suppose, as a small bright spot, was called by one child an eye. The child M. called the opal globe of a lamp a "moon" [...] Taine speaks of a child of one year who after first applying the word "fafer" (from "chemin de fer") to railway engines went on to transfer it to a steaming coffee-pot and everything that hissed or smoked or made a noise.

(Sully 163, emphasis added)

Children's language is again more inventive than that of adults. Drawing an unexpected association between a coffee pot and a railway engine, identified by an infantilized version of the term "chemin de fer" provided by the adult world of linguistic signs, is a much more "poetic" move than the "logical classifications" of adults, who are encultured into the norms of the language. Sully demonstrates through accounts of children like "M.," who astutely notes the correspondences between "the opal globe of a lighted lamp" and a moon, that children fulfill active roles as wordsmiths rather than passive roles as mirrors to the language of adults or the linguistic development of their "savage" ancestors.
Children, then, are simultaneously imperfect masters of the mother tongue and linguistic innovators, struggling to produce the sounds easily spoken by adults yet able to invent words of their own. Adults may expect “servile adoption” of the mother tongue, but children delight and surprise by instead striking out more inventive pathways to expression. Child study scholars couch these gestures toward children’s creativity in heavy-handed arguments aligning children’s impulse to imitate with the cycles of repetition and revision that they are certain characterized the first “savage” speakers of the language. Sully, for example, claims that children’s strategies of language acquisition are “analogies” to the “law of phonetic change” that initiated “the development of languages” (Sully 152), and Chamberlain tries to incorporate the child’s creativity into theories of linguistic recapitulation by claiming that a young person’s “invention” is in fact “the prime trait allying him with his kin of long ago,” who similarly transformed language through inexact repetition (Chamberlain 127). However, as the above passages demonstrate, these writers seem unwilling to deny all inventiveness on children’s part, and their careful discussions of imitation become opportunities to record how children do not remain silent and passive in their reenactment of linguistic history. They are active agents in determining the language they use and the language we use around them. These patterns of language acquisition are an intergenerational collaboration—perhaps more accurately a symbiotic relationship between adult scholars who, interested in the origins of language, rely on children to reenact the linguistic past and children who, in the process of learning to speak, listen to and transform the language of their parents and teachers. Hall recognizes the collaborative nature of child study when he writes that one advantage of the movement “is that it helps to break down to some extent the partitions
between grades of work, so that the kindergartner and university professor can cooperate in the same task” (Hall 700).

The creativity children exhibit in transforming the language they hear spoken around them culminates not in these precocious negotiations of the mother-tongue but instead in the abandonment of that language altogether, in the development of what child study scholars call the “secret languages” of children. Horatio Hale introduced early research on the topic in his 1886 address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, entitled *The Origin of Languages, and the Antiquity of Speaking Man*. Hale documents the observations of two lesser-known scholars—Miss E. H. Watson and Dr. E. R. Hun—and uses their data to argue that “when two children who are just beginning to speak are left much together, they sometimes invent a complete language, sufficient for all purposes of mutual intercourse, and yet totally unintelligible to their parents and others about them” (Hale 9). Hun, for example, describes the secret language of a four-and-a-half-year-old girl, who “never employed the words used by others,” using instead “words of her own invention” (Hun 525). He insists that the girl’s invented vocabulary shows little trace of words formed by imitation, and that while a few of her words seem to resemble French, he could not say positively that the child had ever heard that language spoken (Hun 526). What child study scholars find remarkable about these languages is their complete independence from the linguistic world of adults; these languages were, as Sully points out, “not susceptible of explanation by imitation” (Sully 146). In other words, child study experts argue that these languages are not generated through patterns of listening and response but instead are generated spontaneously by particularly creative children, who are able to bypass the listening stage of language.
acquisition and proceed independently to language building. In some cases, these languages were recorded as not only independent from adult language but also aggressively exclusive. Oscar Chrisman, for example, in his article on "The Secret Languages of Children," notes that these languages "are so jealously guarded that only a few [children] know them, and they must be so familiar with them as to speak them so rapidly that no one will get the key" (Chrisman 55).

In their descriptions of children's language acquisition, child study scholars emphasize the adult-speaker and child-listener dynamic, even if they illustrate how children can manipulate that relationship. However, in describing how children invent secret languages, they describe, essentially, partnerships comprised solely of children, who fulfill the roles of both speaker and listener. One of the most striking examples of this dynamic is provided by Chrisman, who describes a secret language called the "Berkshire gabble," invented and spoken by two girls between the ages of ten and fourteen. The "gabble" was devised independently from influences by adult speech, like the other secret languages explored by child study scholars; the women recollect that it was "unintelligible" to others and that it allowed them to articulate sensations and states of mind that could not be accommodated by the language they shared with the adult world. They recorded more than two hundred words in a personal dictionary—terms that described "any appearance, quality, or feeling they could not express by means of the English language" (Chrisman 57). Their method of generating this vocabulary is an example of how children could direct the collaborative energy of the speaker-listener dynamic to the service of language creation. The sisters, accompanied by a child friend,

48 While most of the examples of children's secret languages at the end of the century are created by and perhaps, between parents and children. J. M. Barrie, for example, shared a secret language with his mother.
decided upon a sensation to name and then split amongst themselves the task of inventing
an appropriate term. "One shouted 'I choose the first syllable'; another, 'I choose the
second'; and the remaining child had to take the last one," remembers one of the sisters.
"If the word sounded to them like the sensation, they left it as it was; if it did not, they
changed it" (Chrisman 57). Chrisman provides a glossary of some of the terms invented
by the girls, and the series of definitions reveals that they often used their collaborative
language to describe both sensations unique to childhood and, notably, to speak from the
child's point of view. Some terms are obvious comments on situations that arise in the
schoolroom; fomo, for example, means "nervousness about squeaking slate pencils," and
rewish indicates "feeling numberless eyes on you as you are about to recite something."
Others suggest a child's distaste for the adult world and its manners, such as faxsy, which
means "stuffy-parlorish," and hamalet, or "the indulgent cheeriness of mothers"
(Chrisman 57).

Child study scholars examined these secret languages to better understand both
children and the linguistic past they, in theory, recapitulate. However, recording these
strange vocabularies and sentence structures led them to meditate instead upon adults'
isolation from childhood. The sentiment Rousseau expressed at the beginning of Émile—
the idea that we "know nothing of childhood" (Rousseau 1)—resurfaces as child study
scholars find that they need glossaries and dictionaries in order to understand what appear
to be simple exchanges between children. "We are just beginning to learn," writes
Chrisman, channeling Rousseau after describing the Berkshire gabble, "that we do not
know our children" (Chrisman 55). In fact, Chrisman discovers, adults cannot easily
understand even their own child selves. He notes that some who read his article will "at
once rummage among their treasures, and out will come the faded brown paper with the hieroglyphics . . . and the key will be hunted up, and the messages of childish days will be read again and again” (Chrisman 54). The examples of childhood code do appear, as Chrisman describes them, as hieroglyphics (Fig. 1). His description here recalls an archaeological dig and the discovery of a long-lost civilization. Understanding the languages that came so naturally to children, even to understand those languages that adults invented in their own youth, now requires an act of excavation—a rummaging, a hunting-up.

Fig. 1: A child’s cipher alphabet, from Oscar Chrisman, “The Secret Languages of Children” Century Magazine 56 (1898), p. 54.

II. THE LIPS OF THE STORYTELLER

Despite Chrisman’s nostalgic pleasure in childhood languages, the young are destined to be initiated into the regulated vocabularies and grammars of the mother tongue. Even Émile must leave the world of immediate sensory experience imagined by Rousseau to learn to read and write, and the child M., who could recognize through a series of imaginative associations a moon in the globe of a lamp, will grow up to use the “proper” names of things. However, a cultural investment both in associations between children and oral language and in children’s ability to transcend fixed meanings was also part of the development of children’s literature. A genre bound to print culture,
children’s literature nevertheless was influenced by constructions of childhood that took for granted a tenuous and even troubled relationship between the young and the printed word. When authors and publishers were tasked with determining what forms of fiction could best serve a child audience, many turned to the storytelling scene, relying on narrative approximations of told tales. Sully recognized the way children’s imaginations and their experiences with language could come together in the act of oral storytelling. “The entrance into storyland can only take place when the key of language is put into the child’s hand,” Sully writes. “A story is a verbal representation of a scene or action, and the process of imaginative realisation depends in this case on the stimulating effects of words in their association with ideas” (Sully 54). In this section, I explore how associations between children and the fluidity of spoken language contributed to the absorption of oral tales, in particular fairy tales, into children’s literature in the nineteenth century. As a test case, I will examine the history of the fairy tale collections of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and their English translations.49

The Grimms were interested both in the instability of the spoken word and in how that instability enables collaboration between tellers and listeners across generations, geographies, and cultures—how a single told tale can exist in several variants because speech, unlike print, responds and adapts to particular circumstances of narration. Put differently, the Grimms were attentive to a now commonplace assumption: in the words of Alan Dundes, “context can influence text,” that an oral tale is in fact comprised of the contributions not only of multiple tellers but also of multiple listeners (Dundes 26–7).

49 I have chosen to discuss the Grimms in this chapter and not other fairy tale collectors and writers, such as Charles Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen, because I believe their collections had particularly far-reaching influence in England, especially after Edgar Taylor’s translated German Popular Stories (1823, 1826), illustrated by George Cruikshank. I will discuss this translation later in this section.
Maria Tartar, who writes on the interpretation and history of fairy tales and folklore, articulates this relationship even more forcibly, contending that “the tellers of [oral] tales collaborated with audiences to produce new stories based on old ones” (Tartar 277, emphasis added). For the Grimms, then, the most powerful stories in their collections of fairy tales—their Kinder- und Hausmärchen, which first appeared in two volumes in 1812 and 1815, respectively—were those that both exist across generations and bear the traces of emendation and revision that signify the participation of multiple storytellers and audiences. “These different versions,” writes Wilhelm in the preface to the second volume, “seem more noteworthy to us than they do to those who see in them nothing more than variants or corrupt forms of a once extant archetypal form. For us, they are more likely to be attempts to capture, through numerous approaches, an inexhaustibly rich ideal type” (1.2.410). Each new variant was attached to a new teller and a new circle of listeners, and it was the multiplication of collaborating teller-listener circles that makes these tales “inexhaustibly rich.” This preoccupation with the ancient tale and its multiple variants, how the stories they collect are “refashioned by the lips of the storyteller” (1.1.401), continues into the second edition of 1819, in which Wilhelm attributes the “special nature” of the tales to their longevity; they are not the products of single authors or storytellers but of “traditions” (2.1.415). “No one can dispute the fact that they have been handed down over the centuries,” he writes, “transforming

50 All references to the Grimms’ collections are cited from The Annotated Brothers Grimm. To distinguish editions and volumes, I have cited the Grimms by edition, volume, and page number in the Annotated edition. “Grimm 1.2.410,” then, indicates the first edition, second volume of the KHM, printed on page 410 in the Annotated edition.
themselves continually in their outer manifestations” as those who once listened become
the next generation of tellers (2.1.415).51

While the brothers celebrated the fecundity of oral tales, they were also aware of
the implications of recording such unstable stories; they felt that the richness of oral
culture could not be contained in print. The Grimms, however, acknowledged that
tension, hoping somehow to capture the qualities of narration in the volumes of the KHM.
In a footnote at the end of their first preface, they call for the generation and collection of
new tales beyond the printed versions included in the current collection. “We ask those
who have the opportunity and the desire to help us to improve the details of this book,”
Wilhelm writes, “to complete its fragments, and especially to collect new and unusual
animal fables. We would be most grateful for such information” (Grimm 1.1.407). From
the start of their project, then, recording oral tales for the Grimms was an ongoing
process, a venture requiring an explicit recognition that their collections would always be
incomplete and open to new collaborators, whose deviations from the “essentials” would
prove the vitality and flexibility of spoken language. The brothers understood
themselves, in the words of Sigfried Neumann, “as links in a chain of storytellers, each
having a certain right to retell the tales in his or her own way” (Neumann 32).

51 The critical tradition that surrounds the KHM often focuses on whether or not the Grimms were true
collectors of oral tales or if their claimed position as recorders of the spoken word was a constructed one.
However, whether the Grimms were, in the words of Siegfried Neumann, “intent upon tales issuing
genuinely from the oral folk tradition” or if they were, in the words of Donald Ward, actually collectors of
“a mixture of oral texts with those taken from printed sources,” seems to matter little in the grand scheme
of the Grimms’ project, which was essentially to prove the “genuineness” of tales they collected by
recording their “contamination,” how they were rewritten as they passed from teller to audience and from
teller to teller (Neumann 27, Ward 17). Jack Zipes acknowledges this when he dubs the Grimms “the
greatest contaminators of fairy tales in the nineteenth century,” a claim meant not to challenge the validity
of the Grimms’ work but instead to insist upon the essential relationship between the nature of the oral tale
and the recognition and incorporation of multiple sources and storytellers. “Contamination can be an
enrichment process; it can lead to the birth of something unique and genuine in its own right,” writes Zipes.
“In fact, it is practically impossible to avoid contact with foreign substances” (Zipes 79). Moreover, some
recent fairy tale scholarship, discussing the Grimms in the wider context of fairy tale collection and
publication, argues for a history of the genre based in written rather than oral texts. See Bottigheimer.
This call for contributions is a subtle gesture toward the ever-changing nature of oral tales, but the Grimm acted as “retellers” and collaborators in larger ways. In particular, over the numerous editions of the *KHM*, the Grimm changed the format, presentation, and even content of the tales in response both to a set of cultural assumptions that figured oral culture as childlike and to an audience that was, increasingly, comprised of children. While the brothers did not explicitly turn to child audiences as active collaborators in this process of transmission and revision, narration and emendation, children nevertheless exerted a powerful influence over the history of the *KHM*. First, the figure of the child is important to how the brothers frame their collection and is, in fact, central to how they characterize the oral tale. The Grimms, like Rousseau, understood the relationship between oral and print culture through a framework of youth and age, innocence and deterioration. They suggest that working with stories from the oral tradition requires them to access elements of story and narration they imagine as youthful, innocent, and pure, and the communities where the Grimms claim the tradition of storytelling remains viable are represented by the brothers as childlike. Wilhelm notes that “the custom of telling tales is on the wane,” suggesting that German culture is somehow growing up past the tradition of telling tales, and that “the custom persists only in places where there is a warm openness to poetry or where there are imaginations not yet deformed by the perversities of modern life” (Grimm 1.1.402). In the second volume of the first edition, Wilhelm makes a similar claim: “Devotion to tradition is far stronger among people who always adhere to the same way of life than we (who tend to want to change) can understand” (1.2.409). The character of the storytelling community is the imagined character of the child as outlined by Rose—unpretentious,
genuine, and arrested in a pure space that predates "the perversities of modern life."

Cultures that continue to tell stories are out of time. They need not grow up and instead can redirect the impulse to change onto the stories themselves, which they transform and revise while the tellers remain static. The language the Grimms use here may not explicitly equate oral cultures with childhood, but it is part of a set of cultural associations active throughout the Continent that equates childhood with the purity of the spoken word.

If storytellers were, according to the Grimms’, childlike, then the stories themselves, in a sense, belong to children. The Grimms certainly did not initially intend their tales solely for children; however, in the preface to the first edition, Wilhelm suggests that the tales collected in the KHM were once the property of the young. While they "have almost always been used as the stuff of longer stories," he notes, they were truly the domain of children; "but what belonged to children was always torn out of their hands, and nothing was given back to them in return" (Grimm 1.1.406). This sentiment only intensifies in the preface to the second edition of the KHM; there, they describe the stories they have collected as "children’s stories" that are "also called household tales" because "their simple poetry can bring joy to everyone just as their wisdom can instruct everyone who hears them, and since they remain at home and are passed down from one generation to the next" (Grimm 2.1.412). These stories remain simple, remain in the domestic space, and therefore they are, in a sense, the youth of the more sophisticated narratives German culture will produce in its "civilized" adulthood. Both teller and tale are imagined as childlike.
The Grimms, then, employed the child figure as shorthand for a set of assumptions about storytelling and oral culture. However, as their project progressed, the characterization of oral cultures as childlike was reinforced by real child listeners. Jennifer Schacker, who writes on the changing nature of the Grimms’ tales, explains how the brothers learned firsthand that the stories they presented as artifacts of scholarly interest were, in fact, claimed by child readers instead of scholars. While friends and colleagues “offered criticisms of the *KHM,*” writes Schacker,

there was one audience apparently undaunted by the . . . tomelike appearance of the book: children. Letters from Joseph von Görres indicate that his daughter loved the collection, as apparently did the Savigny children. In fact, the dual appeal of the *KHM* was increasingly to be cast not in terms of scholars and general readers, nor instruction and pleasure, but in terms of adults and children.

(Schacker “Household” 24)

The Grimms responded to their new child audiences by transforming the format, presentation, and content of the tales. The numerous story variants and annotations included throughout the first volume of the first edition in 1812 were, in the second volume of 1819, exiled to an appendix, where they could be easily ignored by readers more interested in the content of the stories than their status as remnants of an earlier oral tradition. Introducing this second volume, Wilhelm concedes that parents’ concerns that the collection “might prove embarrassing and would be unsuitable for children” may be “appropriate in certain cases” (Grimm 1.2.410), an admission suggesting that the Grimms acknowledged children as a target audience for their work, even if that recognition undermined what was initially conceived as a scholarly project. As David Blamires notes, the changes the Grimms made to the second volume “turned the collection increasingly into a work calculated to appeal to a child readership . . . Through the
The removal of morally questionable elements from certain stories and their alignment with the values and feelings of the middle class . . . the Grimms created a work of immense appeal” (Blamires “Workshop” 81).

The Grimms, therefore, struggled with two fundamental shifts in assembling the KHM. The first was a shift from told tale to printed text. They negotiated the difficulty of what Ong calls the “reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space” not only by including multiple variants of each tale in their collections but also by calling for the submission of new stories, suggesting that their project, if it is to respect the nature of oral culture, must remain open-ended. The second shift was a movement from a scholarly project to a publishing venture aimed at implied readers or listeners increasingly assumed to be children. This required, ironically, closing down narrative possibilities and, in a sense, denying the full spectrum of meaning a told tale can achieve. Privileging the Kinder over the Haus, the Grimms removed certain stories, either for ease of reading or in response to the concerns of parents and teachers. The transformation of the Grimms’ collections, then, is both one of the first suggestions of children’s influence over the publication and revision of fairy tales, folklore, or oral narratives and an exercise in negotiating the conflicts inherent in constructions of childhood as akin to oral traditions. For while the Grimms imagined storytelling cultures as childlike, and while they respected and catered to child audiences thought to be particularly delighted by oral tales, the types of narratives oral traditions may generate—violent or sexual, perhaps, or inaccessibly archaic—were not easily absorbed into the genre of children’s literature, which demands tales suitable for the young.
When the Grimms’ collection was first translated and published in England in 1823, it was immediately framed as children’s literature. This first translation was *German Popular Stories, translated from the Kinder and Haus Märchen, collected by M. M. Grimm, from Oral Tradition* and was comprised of thirty-one of the Grimms’ tales translated by Edgar Taylor and illustrated by George Cruikshank. Taylor notes that his translation “makes no literary pretensions; that its immediate design precludes the subjects most attractive to matters of research; and that professedly critical dissertations would therefore be out of place” (Taylor *GPS* xii). He subordinates scholarly aims to the pleasures, especially for children, of reading and listening to the tales. In his preface, he advocates re-admitting these “loveliest dreams of fairy innocence” into “the libraries of childhood” and the nurseries of England—nurseries that he contends are sadly ruled by reason, producing “lisping chemists and leading-string mathematicians” (Taylor *GPS* iv). Fairy tales, according to Taylor, re-educate England’s youth back to their natural state—from “rigid and philosophic” rationalists to the fanciful creatures they are meant to be (Taylor *GPS* iv). Accordingly, Taylor, like the Grimms before him, edits the tales with a child audience in mind, minimizing the scholarly apparatus and practicing a “scrupulous fastidiousness” in selecting only stories appropriate for the young (Taylor *GPS* xi).

The introduction of fairy tales in England as decidedly children’s literature is also registered in Cruikshank’s frontispieces to the volumes (Figs. 2 and 3). These images reiterate on a visual register the redefinition of the tales, their shift from stories meant to entertain entire communities of adults and children to stories meant for the young. In his analysis of Cruikshank’s etchings for Taylor’s volumes, Robert L. Patten contends that the frontispieces “imply that at some level Cruikshank understood the communal and oral
nature of these tales.” He notes a number of elements in these two scenes that construct similar scenes of narration. The leaded windows and the roaring fires, the suggestion of a winter scene without and warmth within, all combine to communicate “a sense of community sheltered from the cold and the dark and bound together by tales of mirth and magic” (Patten 250–1). Yet the audiences, as Patten notes, certainly shift. In the etching for the first volume, Cruikshank depicts “a man sitting before a huge hearth read[ing] to a laughing audience of old and young adults,” while his frontispiece for the second volume features “an old woman” who “holds a circle of children spellbound with her stories” (Patten 248). Cruikshank represents two widely different audiences: the mixed crowd of listeners of the first volume is replaced by a circle of children in the second.

Yet these illustrations indicate other, subtle differences. The expressions on listeners’ faces in the first frontispiece suggest a raucous, humorous tale; a figure in the forefront is collapsed with laughter, a second seated on a stool clutches his side in
paroxysms of mirth, his mouth wide with joy. A few scattered cups on a nearby table and the figure near the fire nursing a drink evoke a kitchen or even a tavern, where the ease of company is aided by spirits. Karen E. Rowe calls this image “a ribald environment of a hearthside scene” (Rowe 68). The central storytelling figure reads from a printed text.

The second frontispiece, however, depicts a quieter moment of storytelling. The children listening crowd closely around their storyteller in an intimate circle, and one child leans an elbow on the old woman’s knee. In this image, Cruikshank suggests the closer, familial relationships played out in the nursery or drawing room, an atmosphere supported by small details: a family of cats warming themselves by the fire, for example, and an ornately carved chair, perhaps an heirloom. Rowe argues that illustrations such as this frontispiece “embedded in the popular consciousness images of grandmothers, mothers, nursemaids, and governesses gathered at homely hearths, attended by an audience frequently of children,” and that “[s]uch illustrations both reflected and fostered an identification of fairy tales with the predominantly female realm of domesticity” (Rowe 65). The woman in the second image, in other words, is an embodiment of the feminine, domestic imagination delineated in my introduction, a mode of narration attuned with childlike ways of imagining. Moreover, the elderly woman narrates from memory, the absence of a printed text suggesting that her stories are the sort the Grimms truly valued—tales that shift over time under the influence of many tellers and audiences.52 These stories are, in a sense, out of time. They find their counterpart in the

52 Rowe also notes the printed text in Cruikshank’s first frontispiece and the absence of text in the second. She, however, draws a different conclusion, interpreting the book as “perhaps an indication of a disparity in literacy, but also a subtle testament to the literary appropriation of the female voice practice by the brothers Grimm and [Charles] Perrault” (Rowe 68). This interpretation, of course, grants Cruikshank a greater regard for the authority of female storytellers than is practiced by other male figures associated with the Grimms’ collections.
spinning wheel on the right side of the image, an object that recalls both the heritage of
told tales in the spinning rooms of working women and the continual working and
reworking of story. They are fluid, like children’s gasp of language, able to
accommodate new meanings and new listeners. The first image contains no spinning
wheel but does include an hourglass; time there is not standing still, and soon the listeners
will have to disperse.

Taylor’s translation, accompanied by Cruikshank’s illustrations, exercised a great
influence on the reception and perception of the Grimms’ tales and fairy tales in general
in England and abroad. “[I]t is Taylor and Cruikshank’s German Popular Stories that
fully transformed the tales into a popular and commercially viable form of reading
material,” writes Schacker, “influencing the publishing history of the Grimms’ tales in
German, their legacy as ‘classics’ of international children’s literature, and the genre of
the popular tale collection” (Schacker “Household” 13). Schacker presents as evidence
literary notables who commented on German Popular Stories throughout the nineteenth
century—authors who seconded the assumption behind Taylor’s emendations: that these
fairy tales belong to children. By the time John Ruskin wrote a preface for an 1868
edition of German Popular Stories, for example, the “association of the genre with
children is taken for granted” and “Ruskin has nearly as much to say about the ideal child
as he does about the ideal fairy tale” (Schacker “Unruly” 389). Charlotte Yonge, in an
1868 series of articles on children’s literature for Macmillan’s Magazine, writes that it
“has become the fashion to speak of children and fairy tales as though they naturally
belonged together, and so they do” (Yonge 306). The popularity of Taylor’s translation
cemented *German Popular Stories* as a collection meant for the young (and the young at heart), and further editions in England and Europe were edited and marketed accordingly.

Schacker provides ample evidence that *German Popular Stories* fundamentally changed the dominant perception of fairy tales as Taylor and subsequent translators and editors of the Grimms took into account the needs and desires of a child audience—or, as Ruskin writes, as they catered to the “majestic independence of the child-public” (Ruskin 60). However, in his own preface, Taylor depicts the creative agency of child audiences as a force surpassing the influence they could exert as a potential readership already catalogued by scholars such as Schacker. According to Taylor, his text owes its existence to an intergenerational collaboration between adult narrators and child auditors, a partnership that grants the children listening—for this is certainly a text meant to be read aloud—considerable influence over the stories’ circumstances of publication. He stages this partnership in the first sentences of the preface:

> The Translators were first induced to compile this little work by the eager relish with which a few of the tales were received by the young friends to whom they were narrated. In this feeling the Translators, however, do not hesitate to avow their own participation. Popular fictions and traditions are somewhat gone out of fashion; yet most will own them to be associated with the brightest recollections of their youth. They are, like the Christmas Pantomime, ostensibly brought forth to tickle the palate of the young, but are often received with as keen an appetite by those of graver years.

(Taylor *GPS* iii–iv)

Taylor frames the fairy tales in his collection as narrated stories that not only charm and entertain across generations but also require the active participation of old and young.

This preface constructs Taylor’s project of translation and publication as a task owing its

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53 Taylor was the primary translator of the tales. As Blamires notes, “Translators” is plural here to indicate “others in [Taylor’s] immediate circle of family and acquaintances” who assisted with the project (Blamires “Reception” 165).
creative impulse to child listeners, the circle of “young friends” who received the told tales with “relish,” and the finished product of *German Popular Stories* is depicted as a product of both the children’s enthusiasm and the necessary intervention of the adult translations, who “do not hesitate to avow their own participation,” an unusual phrase that represents the contributions of the translators as secondary to the contributions of the young friends. The roles of adult teller and child listeners become fluid and interchangeable throughout these sentences; by the end of the passage, listening children are accompanied in their rapt attention by “those of graver years.” Taylor finishes this introductory paragraph by quoting a passage from Richard Johnson’s 1621 chapbook *The History of Tom Thumbe, the Little*—a passage that characterizes oral tales as a decidedly intergenerational genre. Johnson writes that the “old and young” have “chimed mattins” with these stories and that “the old shepheard and the young plow-boy” have “carold out the same” (qtd. in Taylor *GPS* iii–iv). This quotation does not relegate adult and child, young and old into fixed roles as teller and listener but instead stages the pleasure of telling these stories aloud, of caroling and chiming—both words that suggest the auditory nature of the told tale—as a joint effort.

In 1839, a new Taylor translation of the Grimms’ tales was published, entitled *Gammer Grethel; or German Fairy Tales, and Popular Stories, from the Collection of MM Grimm, and Other Sources*. Critics who have discussed *German Popular Stories* have not paid much attention to *Gammer Grethel*, preferring to discuss the initial and very successful 1823 edition, but this text marks a particularly interesting moment in the history of fairy tales in England and a notable text in considering how editors and writers of fairy tales and other narrated texts began to consider child auditors as collaborators. It
is, in the words of Blamires, “quite a new book” compared to the often-reprinted *German Popular Stories* (Blamires “Reception” 171). Some tales were dropped and others, not all drawn from the Grimms’ collections, were added. The tales were divided into groups of three or four under the headings “Evening the First,” “Evening the Second,” and so forth, arranged to be narrated on twelve consecutive nights. Taylor frames this new incarnation of the Grimms’ tales as a further concession to his young friends—his circle of child listeners had grown far larger since his first translation—for whom he has again taken on the task of “re-arranging, revising, and adding to [the] budget” of appropriately entertaining tales (Taylor *GG* iii). *Gammer Grethel* is noteworthy because—through the representation of the narrating old woman, Gammer Grethel, in its title, preface, and frontispiece—it prioritizes the oral nature of the stories and the narrating voice in particular. Many claim Taylor did not pay attention to the particular oral nature of the tales, especially in early editions of *German Popular Stories*; Brian Alderson, for example, argues that the “narrative voice” can be found only “at the margins” of the 1823 edition (Alderson 61). Yet *Gammer Grethel* reinstates the narrator and uses her to structure the entire text.

*Gammer Grethel* asserts a very particular narrative voice: she is a teller who mediates between oral and printed culture, between childhood and adulthood, in a manner that embodies, in a single figure, the type of intergenerational collaboration Taylor first by recalls the living original of his eponymous narrator. “Our Gammer Grethel, the supposed narrator of the stories, in fact lived, though under a different name,” writes Taylor. “She was the Frau Viehmännin, the wife of a peasant in the neighbourhood of Hesse-Cassel, and from her mouth a great portion of the stories were written down by
MM. Grimm" (Taylor GG vii). Evoking Dorothea Viehmann—for this is how her surname is spelled in the Grimms’ descriptions—has unique advantages for Taylor’s project, because she is a teller imagined by the Grimms to occupy a mediatory position between telling a tale and recording it. Viehmann, Wilhelm explains, narrates carefully, confidently, and in an unusually lively manner, taking great pleasure in it. At first she speaks spontaneously, then, if you ask, she will repeat what she has said very slowly so that, with a little practice, it can be transcribed. In this way, much was taken down verbatim and no one will fail to recognize its authenticity. Those who believe that oral narratives are routinely falsified, that they are not carefully preserved, and that long recitations are, as a rule, impossible, should have the chance to hear how precisely she stays with each story and how keen she is to narrate correctly.

(Grimm 1.2.408)

In this passage, Viehmann is the embodiment of all that is attractive about the spoken word. She is “unusually lively,” and she “speaks spontaneously,” able to adapt her narration easily and seamlessly to the circumstances of narration. She relates stories that are unquestionable in their authenticity. However, she also embodies all the advantages of the printed text. She is careful and precise, she can repeat “very slowly” for the benefit of those transcribing her stories, and she is predictable, able to narrate “correctly” so her tales can be recorded “verbatim.” Taylor was perhaps attracted to Viehmann because of her simultaneous representation of both the fluidity of the spoken word, associated with childhood, and the printed word, associated with the adult norms of printed language. She is, in a single figure, adult and child, representing at once both sides of the collaboration central to Taylor’s project.

Yet Taylor chose to fictionalize Viehmann as Gammer Grethel rather than use her true name—a choice he made, I argue, to suggest in a manner even more pronounced
than the Grimms the simultaneous adult and childlike nature of this narrator. By assigning Viehmann the fictional name Gammer Grethel, Taylor expresses his own understanding of the narrator’s dual identity. “Gammer” is a title, an archaic designation meaning “mother,” and this woman therefore joins figures such as Mother Goose or Mother Bunch in the ranks of storytelling women that, empowered by the female, domestic imagination, discussed in my introduction. “Grethel,” on the other hand, a familiar German name that takes on a unique significance in the context of fairy tale culture, for Grethel—sometimes, in English translations, Gretel or Gretel—is the child who, in saving her brother from the appetite of a scheming witch, shoves her into an oven. By invoking the story “Hansel and Gretel,” Taylor recalls a narrative that powerfully demonstrates the child’s ability to hear, understand, and overthrow the adult plot—notably by incinerating the old crone, often the storytelling figure, in the oven, a fire that echoes the hearth. Gammer Grethel, then, is a name that suggests both a tradition of adult and particularly female narrators—what Rowe calls “the maternal lineage” of fairy tale and folklore—and a fictional tradition of children who can overturn the authority of that narrator. If Viehmann is a storyteller who draws upon the advantages of both childlike oral culture and adult written culture, her fictional incarnation as Gammer Grethel intensifies and complicates this dual nature, demonstrating both how children and adults can coexist and collaborate as storytellers and how children can become a threatening, subversive force in the relationship between storyteller and auditor. Gammer Grethel’s name may have recalled for Taylor the almost violent power the fictional Gretel possesses; however, the variant of “Hansel and Gretel”

54 While Taylor frames Gammer Grethel as a character based on Viehmann, it is likely that Viehmann herself is also a fictionalization, although she is presented by the Grimms as an authentic source (Schacker “Household” 41).
that includes Gretel’s triumph over the witch was not included in an English translation of the Grimms’ tales until 1884, in Margaret Hunt’s *Grimms’ Household Tales*.\(^{55}\)

However, Taylor did include stories in his collections that suggest the creative authority of the child—stories featuring child characters who, like Taylor’s “young friends,” can act as collaborators, changing a story through the listening and response. As active listeners, these child characters manipulate the circumstances of narration and plot to achieve surprising influence over the course of a tale. Perhaps the most striking example is “Tom Thumb,” a story whose protagonist appears in a number of storytelling traditions, including French, German, Danish, Scots, and British; this story therefore caught the imaginations of the Grimms, who single him out as a particularly persistent stock character of fairy and folk literature—“a remnant of ancient divine beliefs” who is “full of cunning and skill” (Grimms 2.1.421, 426).\(^{56}\) Like Gretel, who spends much of her story cowering behind her brother, Tom appears at first as an unlikely character to influence in any significant way the story around him. He is an impossibly exaggerated child, born “not much bigger than [a] thumb” and remaining the same size as he ages. However, the narrator contends that “he soon showed himself to be a clever little fellow, who always knew well what he was about” (Grimm “Tom” 58), and Wilhelm notes he “is able to turn every accident for which his small size is responsible into an advantage” (Grimm 2.1.426).

\(^{55}\) Hunt’s translation is based on the final German edition of *KHM*, published in 1857. Early editions of Taylor’s *German Popular Stories* and *Gammer Grethel* include Hansel and Gretel stories but do not include a scene in which Gretel pushes the witch into an oven. The variant in *German Popular Stories* recounts how Hansel shifts shapes from boy to deer and how Gretel protects him during a king’s hunting expedition. The variant in *Gammer Grethel* includes the familiar plotting witch and gingerbread house, but the siblings flee without killing their captor.

\(^{56}\) Tom Thumb also appears in a novel-length work by Charlotte Yonge, *The History of Sir Thomas Thumb* (1855).
Notably, Tom’s cunning is due not simply to his small size but to how his stature allows him to overhear the plots of the adults around him and, by responding to what he hears, transform the outcome to his favor. The definition of an active listener, Tom eavesdrops unobserved and, predicting events to come, literally scrambles into the ear of other characters, contributing his small voice to the plot-in-progress. For example, early in the story, Tom overhears his father talking to two strangers who have seen Tom steering his father’s horse and cart by whispering into the animal’s ear. The men offer to buy Tom, hoping to turn a profit by making him the center of a traveling sideshow. The narrator notes that “Tom, hearing of the bargain they wanted to make, crept up his father’s coat to his shoulder, and whispered in his ear, ‘Take the money, father, and let them have me. I’ll soon come back to you’” (Grimm “Tom” 60). When Tom’s captors fall asleep that evening, Tom escapes and hides, ensuring his own safety and his father’s profit. He is free for only a few moments before he repeats the trick. Just as he is falling asleep, he hears two men passing, and Tom becomes privy to their plan to rob a local parson (Grimm “Tom” 62). Tom responds by offering to help. Startled, the thieves search for the source of the diminutive voice:

“What noise was that?” said the thief, frightened, “I am sure I heard some one speak.” They stood still listening, and Tom said, “Take me with you, and I’ll soon show you how to get the parson’s money.” “But where are you?” said they. “Look about on the ground,” answered he, “and listen where the sound comes from.”

(Grimm “Tom” 62)

Tom offers to crawl through the parson’s window-bars. Once inside, Tom “call[s] out as loud as he could” questions to the robbers, waking the parson’s wife (Grimm “Tom” 62). In both scenarios, Tom manages, by listening to the course of the story and answering
with his own plot, to direct the tale while those usually determining the course of events become, instead, listeners, hunting for the source of his small voice.

III. AUNT JUDY AND THE LITTLE ONES

Perhaps inspired by the success of *German Popular Stories* and similar texts—collected tales such as John Harris’s *Mother Bunch’s Fairy Tales* (1802) as well as literary fairy tales, such as Hans Christian Andersen’s stories, translated into English beginning in the 1830s—a great number of collections for children framed as narrated stories were published in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In these collections, the storyteller-auditor relationships suggested at the margins of the Grimms’ *KHM* or Taylor’s translation in prefaces and frontispieces are often fully incorporated into the text as a frame story. The narrator-listener groups at the center of these collections—fictionalized, as in Taylor’s account of Gammer Grethel—are both an organizing force and, at times, an entirely separate narrative, depicting the relationships between those telling the tales and those listening. The details of these frame narratives vary depending on the style and genre of the collection. Some are in the tradition of literary fairy tales, appropriating familiar characters and plots from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and re-imagining them to create new stories. Frances Browne’s *Granny’s Wonderful Chair and Its Tales of Fairy Times* (1857), for example, situates a series of fairy tales in a frame narrative in which, each evening, the poor but beautiful girl Snowflower invites her grandmother’s chair to relate a story to the opulent court of King Winwealth, simply by lying her head on its cushion and saying “Chair of my
grandmother, tell me a story” (Browne 6). Others include a narrative frame of a domestic setting in which the storytelling figure, usually an aunt or visiting acquaintance, entertains a collection of siblings. Mary Cowden Clarke’s *Kit Bam’s Adventures; Or, The Yarns of an Old Sea Mariner* (1849), for example, couches a series of nautical adventures within the frame story of the Swallow family, describing the two children of the household who are “never . . . too old to enjoy a good story” and who particularly relish the entertainments of their father’s friend, Kit Bam (Clarke 15). Mary Molesworth, under the pseudonym Ennis Graham, uses a similar frame in *Tell Me a Story* (1875). Her collection is related by an “aunty” who is persuaded by a group of young boys and girls to tell the family history in a series of stories. In this section, I examine an array of these collections published from the mid- to late-nineteenth century—especially *Aunt Judy’s Tales* (1859) by Margaret Gatty—paying particular attention to how these authors worked in collaboration with child auditors as they composed their texts, how they represent in their collections ways adult storytellers collaborate with children, and how these negotiations are informed by models of the feminine, domestic imagination.

The narrative frames of fairy tale collections such as Browne’s, which are quite firmly rooted in the fantastic, can depict the sort of intergenerational collaboration enabled by the storyteller-auditor relationship; Snowflower is, in a sense, collaborating with her grandmother, even if their relationship is a mediated one. However, collections of domestic tales are particularly adept at representing, through both paratexts such as frontispieces and introductions and through the content of the tales themselves, how oral tales can create narrative partnerships. As Rowe argues in her discussion of the domestic imagination, female storytellers are often represented as particularly adept at gauging the
needs of their audiences and transforming their tales accordingly; she offers the example of Scheherazade, who "told and remolded [her stories] in such a way as to meet the special needs of the listener"—in her case, the entertainment and appeasement of King Shahryar (Rowe 60). Such storytellers usually inhabit spaces less exotic than the king's bedchamber. Knoepflmacher argues that feminine spaces such as the family home or kitchen can foster collaboration. He points to the Gatty household, which generated numerous, collaborative works for children, and he presents in particular Gatty's story *Six to Sixteen* as an example of domestic collaboration. Characters Margaret and Margery embark on a creative partnership to write their autobiographies, choosing to retreat to what Knoepflmacher calls "an exclusively feminine space" (Knoepflmacher *AJ* 150). Margaret explains, "[i]t is by this well-scrubbed table, in this kitchen, that our biographies are to be written. They cannot be penned under the noses of the boys" (Gatty *SS* 8).57 Victorian collections of stories for children are often introduced by frame stories such as Gatty's—familial scenes that reference a familiar set of props or spaces—the kitchen table, the drawing-room fire, the small stool at the perfect height for a young listener. These cues signal to readers that the relationships represented in the volume will both operate according to models of intimate, maternal relationships and provide the possibility for collaboration.

Molesworth's *Tell Me a Story*, like many collections of oral tales, first represents such circumstances of narration in a frontispiece, in this case an illustration by Walter Crane (Fig. 4). Crane's image both depicts a domestic scene and suggests a degree of

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57 As a foil to the Gatty partnerships, real and imagined, Knoepflmacher mentions the Brontë children. "Neither their juvenile collaborations on romance narratives nor their joint publication of the unsuccessful *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell* . . . allowed the Brontë children to recover a lost maternal space" (Knoepflmacher *AJ* 153).
participation on the child’s part in the storytelling moment, complicating the assumedly passive role of listener. The circle of children is a version, perhaps, of Cruikshank’s frontispiece. The positions of child listeners around a central storytelling figure here—some sitting on the floor, some standing, a younger child clambering onto the storyteller’s lap—recall the close circles of children around Cruikshank’s elderly storyteller. Crane has emphasized the intimacy of this family group by enclosing them within a close border, framing them like a portrait. Viewing this picture before reading the stories, it would seem that the teller, like Cruikshank’s, narrates from memory. She is only different in her youth and dress, both of which suggest that this woman is an example of images of the storytelling aunt, a younger reincarnation of the elderly crone

Fig. 4: Walter Crane, frontispiece to Ennis Graham [Mary Molesworth], Tell Me a Story. London, 1875.

figure that would become increasingly popular throughout the Victorian period. Susan Drain notes that an aunt figure is in a privileged position to mediate between adults and children, initiating familial collaboration. The aunt, notes Drain, “is outside the strict
hierarchy of parent and child, having the authority of an adult, but not that of a parent; she is associated with a relaxation of discipline . . . and she provides an occasion or even a catalyst for family interaction” (Drain 10).

However, Crane has chosen to illustrate a moment when the child, not the storyteller, is the center of attention. This is not a circle of spellbound children but an active group of siblings. Young Ted, in this image, physically accosts his aunt, who claims that she has no tales to tell, threatening to shake a story out of her. The aunt’s expression seems to betray a degree of distress, but the narrative reveals that this is both a playful moment and a scene that reveals just how much the aunt narrator depends on the creative contributions of her young charges. After Ted’s tantrum, the aunt will only agree to an evening of storytelling if one of her listeners, Madge, will partner with her. “[I]f I try to rub up some old stories for you,” inquires the aunt, “don’t you think you might help? You, Madge, dear, for instance . . . couldn’t you tell them something of your own childish life even?” Madge responds with a reciprocal offer of collaboration, agreeing to contribute her own story if her aunt “wouldn’t mind writing it down” (Molesworth 4–5). In this household, the roles of adult narrator and child auditor are not fixed and separate—in fact, for a moment the aunt muses about a future when “it will be the children telling stories to amuse the papas and mammas” (Molesworth 3)—but instead the storytelling moment is characterized as collaboration, a partnership requiring the participation of both narrator and auditor to generate story. Moreover, by presenting to readers a familiar domestic scene, this frontispiece models for readers of Tell Me a Story how they can replicate the dynamic intergenerational relationships represented inside the text.
Clarke's *Kit Bam's Adventures* suggests, through illustration and story, a similarly complicated relationship between storyteller, auditor, and text. The frontispiece to this volume, like the frontispiece to the Taylor volumes, was provided by Cruikshank, and here he subtly refigures the familiar storytelling scenario (Fig. 5). The image includes all of the visual cues indicating that it represents a storytelling scene: a central, seated adult monopolizes the attention of a group of children, who sit on his knees or rest on the floor. But these children are young mermaids. While Clarke's collection indeed includes a frame narrative, in which Kit Bam relates his adventures to the children of the Swallow family, Cruikshank has illustrated not a scene of storytelling—the convention in such fictions—but instead a scene from one of Kit's sea tales, a moment when the adventurer finds himself surrounded by the grateful family of a young mermaid he has rescued. The composition of the frontispiece simultaneously suggests both the moment of Kit’s

Fig. 5: George Cruikshank, frontispiece to Mary Cowden Clarke, *Kit Bam's Adventures; or, The Yarns of an Old Sea Mariner*, London, 1849.
narration to the Swallows and one of the narrated tales. The dual nature of the frontispiece communicates visually the way listening children, as Sully contends, picture a scene as it is narrated; here, the mermaid’s cavern has become so material to the listening group that it has replaced them. This image also implies that the boundaries between teller, listener, and tale are permeable and therefore that, if the teller is part of the tale (in this case quite literally, as Kit Bam is the hero of his stories), then the children are, as well. The characters of the story so resemble the listening Swallow children as to be mistaken for them, and this near interchangeability is significant as part of a collection that relies so completely on those children for its creative energy.

*Kit Bam* is a somewhat unusual collection in that, while written by a female author, it is narrated by a *male* storyteller. Browne wrote a similar collection of stories told by a fictional male adventurer—*Our Uncle the Traveller’s Stories*, published ten years after Clarke’s, in 1859—and in the early twentieth century Rudyard Kipling would publish his *Just-So Stories*, a collection of tales narrated by an autobiographical paternal figure that transport the “Best Beloved” child listener to the landscapes of India and beyond. While perhaps rare, collections such as *Kit Bam* suggest that the imaginative transports made available to child listeners in male-narrated stories function differently from their counterparts featuring female frame narrators. The slippage between the domestic setting and an exotic, fantastic landscape represented in Cruikshank’s frontispiece to *Kit Bam* is perhaps attributable to assumptions about the child’s imagination, which pictures a story as it is narrated, making it alive and material. However, it is also possible that the blurred boundary between home and away is a function of the *boy’s* imagination described in my introduction. Kit’s stories are designed
to appeal to a boysih fancy, which possesses “a desire for travel, and ambition for honourable adventure,” as Maltus Questell Holyoake wrote (408). These tales invite child listeners to leave the “homely hearth,” as Rowe calls it, and explore the world beyond the domestic. Indeed, Kit’s adventures resemble not collections of folklore or fairy tales but instead travel narratives and sea stories.

However, as Knoepflmacher has noted, many literary fairy tales by Victorian men in fact betray an impulse to “recover a lost ‘femininity,’” a desire to reclaim a nostalgic childhood space that is gendered female and suggests a sense of arrested development (Knoepflmacher 11). And, in fact, upon closer examination, the sea tales narrated by Kit Bam are, according to Knoepflmacher’s pattern, reabsorbed into the female tradition of nursery storytelling. The simultaneously domestic and fantastic scene of Kit surrounded by mermaid children depicted in the frontispiece sets the precedent for a narrative that references the adventure story but persistently glances back toward the domestic scenes that dominate the genre of the narrated tale. Kit indeed was once the quintessential hero of an adventure tale; he “has seen a vast deal and passed through a great many adventures in his time,” and in his youth he “had been faithfully employed in a course of active exertion, uncomplaining hardship, many perils, and ceaseless wandering” (Clarke 11). However, in his later years Kit has been invited to stay with the Swallow family, where he lives in a “snug cottage, with [a] cosey sitting-room and comfortable bedroom,” which Kit claims is “as warm a berth as heart could desire” (Clarke 14). While Kit’s language here recalls his years at sea, the proximity of “berth” and “heart” actually suggests “hearth,” and indeed Kit’s storytelling is described in language that incorporates both the
maternal tradition of domestic storytelling and the masculine mode of adventure stories.

Mr. Swallow notes that Kit “will spin you a yarn as long as a ship’s cable” (Clarke 15).

While the collections, and in particular the frontispieces, of both Molesworth and Clarke’s collections represent this interactivity between adult teller, child listener, and narrated story, Gatty is an author who, drawing inspiration from fairy tale traditions, relied on children to inspire her storytelling both outside the text, in her habits of composition, and inside the text, in the narrative frames of her collections. In composing Aunt Judy’s Tales, one of her most popular collections, Gatty was motivated, like Taylor, by the presence of children, claiming that her “power of writing for children” depended on “being surrounded” by them (qtd. in Maxwell 52). For example, Gatty composed The Fairy Godmothers, and Other Tales (1851), a series of literary fairy tales, as an entertainment for her then eight sons and daughters. The first story, which gives the collection its title, obviously draws on fairy tale structures and plots. Christabel Maxwell notes that the tale follows “the well-known device of a godparent being invited to a child’s christening and bestowing a gift which seemed highly incongruous to the other guests, but which later proved to be of inestimable value” (Maxwell 105).

Perhaps it is the nature of this gift in Gatty’s story, “the love of employment,” that leads children’s literature scholar F. J. Harvey Darton to lament Gatty’s first collection as

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58 Margaret Gatty was both an author for children and a naturalist. For a discussion of her interests and discoveries as an algologist, see Sheffield. Her literature for children was often informed by her science, as is most evident in her popular series Parables from Nature (1855–1871). The series was, in a sense, a familial collaboration. As Christabel Maxwell notes, “when the third collection of the Parables appeared in 1861, two out of the four illustrations were done by Madge [Margaret Scott Gatty, the first daughter of the family] and Julie [Juliana Horatia Gatty, the second daughter of the family] respectively. Correction of proofs was undertaken by the third daughter” (116). The focus of my project precludes an in-depth discussion of the Parables, but most scholarship on Gatty as an author for children focuses on this series and largely neglects Aunt Judy’s Tales, which I will discuss here.

59 One of Gatty’s children, Alfred Alexander, was born in 1847 but died in infancy. Her last son, Horatio Nelson, would be born in 1855 but would also die in infancy.

60 Maxwell is Gatty’s granddaughter. She is the daughter of Gatty’s daughter Undine and the biographer of both Gatty and Juliana Horatia Ewing, Gatty’s daughter and later a noted children’s author in her own right.
cloyingly didactic, claiming that the title characters “were not merely like the godmothers of traditional fairy-tales in being the vehicle of definite morals; they invented the morals beforehand, and stressed them, with a good deal of verbiage” (Darton 284). Gatty’s fiction certainly bears some resemblance to earlier edifying literature for children; the dedication to *The Fairy Godmothers* indeed promises to illustrate for Gatty’s children “some favourite and long cherished convictions” (Gatty *FG*). However, it was not the moral possibilities of the fairy tale that appealed to Gatty. Maxwell cites a somewhat scathing letter by Gatty in which, confronted by a schoolroom stocked with the “instructive” books of Jane Marcet, she calls such an author a “great bore” and expresses her preference for more imaginative fare. She “cared for nothing but buying Grimms and Andersens” for her own children, and she would later favorably review Andersen, as well as other imaginative authors such as Lewis Carroll, in the early numbers of her periodical *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (Maxwell 94, 149). It was, in part, the fairy tale’s appeal to the child’s imagination that inspired Gatty.

In particular, Gatty was attracted to the teller-listener dynamics of oral tales, and her collections often reconstruct the scene of storytelling. In her *Domestic Pictures and Tales* (1865), Gatty stages the scene of narration numerous times, illustrating how such gatherings facilitate the transmission of story from one generation to the next. The most striking example, however, is in the second chapter, which recounts “Robin the Conjurer,” a story that the narrator—most likely Gatty herself, as the collection is largely autobiographical—remembers her father telling her when she was a girl. Gatty

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61 Jane Marcet is best known for her *Conversations on Chemistry* (1805). This book was part of a series of *Conversations* books—usually on scientific topics. The format of these books was an educational conversation between a teacher, Mrs. Bryant, and her two students, Caroline and Emily. While Gatty obviously found these books tedious, Marcet is remembered even today for introducing very complex scientific concepts in a simple and lucid way. For more information on Marcet, see Myers.
introduces the story both by describing the circumstances and habits of storytelling in Gatty's household and by suggesting in more abstract terms how the story exists, separate from her individual biography, as an oral tale across time and space and between generations of parents and children. Gatty remembers a “dear darling story” of my own childhood, which I have never seen in print exactly as I heard it, although it is, no doubt, one of those old nursery traditions which have found their way into many countries from some unknown original source.

Owing, I suppose, to frequent repetition, I remember the incidents of the tale quite clearly. . . And so strongly does everything connected with a “dear darling story” fix itself on the childish mind, that I can recall even the when and where of the relation of this favourite tale.

A low-roofed parlour in a parsonage house, in a lonely, flat, agricultural county, near an estuary of the sea. Its walls covered with books to the ceiling, wherever there was space; except where a grand pianoforte stretched along one side to the door. Time—evening. Persons present—a father, almost approaching middle-age, and two very little girls: no one else. And the father telling them, not for the first time, but as a specially-called-for repeated treat, a story,—this story—the story of “Robin the Conjurer,” which I am now, in return, going to tell for the use of kind papas in time of need, as well as for the amusement of listening children . . .

But I must tell it my own way. Everybody has a way of their own in story-telling, and it is only the incidents and a few points of description I profess to remember exactly. This is of no consequence, however. The story can be told in many ways, as grown-up tellers will discover. It can be made very short for very young listeners, as it is easily concentrated; or it can be left at length for those old enough to enjoy details.

This description highlights the unique qualities of told tales, which hold a great fascination for Gatty. This is a story passed down through many generations, nearly untraceable (although Gatty, perhaps inspired by the Grimms’ detailed annotations, provides a footnote explaining that the story can be traced to “Grimm’s ‘Professor Know-All’” as well as to an older German ballad and an Italian variant). The story is stable and predictable, intertwined in the narrator’s mind, though repetition, with particular scenes and circumstances; she can “recall even the when and where of the relation of this
favourite tale.” However, it is simultaneously amenable to infinite variation based on its narrator—for “[e]verybody has a way of their own in story-telling”—and its audience—“very young listeners” or “those old enough to enjoy details.” Although the narrator is committing the story to print, she has faith that the story will maintain this unique status as both fixed and fluid, familiar and changeable, because, like the German Popular Stories, it will continue to be shared between generations. (It seems notable, then, that the room the narrator associates with the story is filled with books, references to the stability of print, except along one wall, which is home to the piano, a stand-in for the flexibility of sound.) In Gatty’s text, as in Taylor’s translation of KHM, it is a circle of children that not only demands the moment of narration, “a specially-called-for repeated treat,” but also ensures the continued life of the narrated story—its ability to nimbly respond to the needs of the audience.

While Domestic Pictures and Tales stages the potential for collaboration in the storytelling moment, the framed tales progress largely uninterrupted; the image of the circle of listeners fades as the plot gains momentum. However, eight years later, Gatty does provide, in Aunt Judy’s Tales, a portrait of how that potential for collaboration suggested by the circle gathered around the fire can be realized in the telling of narrated tales—a genre that, because it is spoken, can be spontaneously transformed in collaboration with the young listeners, who are particularly adept at editing a story-in-progress through interruption and response. The stories in Aunt Judy’s Tales depict a group of children, a crew of brothers and sisters identified as Numbers 1 through 9, who, as Maxwell notes, were “endlessly busy and had within call a number of adults highly talented and willing to co-operate” (Maxwell 112). In Aunt Judy’s Tales, the “highly
talented” adult is Aunt Judy herself, a character based in fact on Gatty’s daughter Juliana, who concocts a series of stories and adventures to keep the children busy. While the playful relationships between adults and children in these stories are certainly sentimentalized, Gatty goes to great lengths to represent how storytelling enables this “co-operation” in big and small ways.

For example, the story of “The Little Victims,” the first included in Aunt Judy’s Tales, represents how an adult storyteller recognizes and interacts with her young audience during narration. Aunt Judy tailors the characters, setting, and events of the story to reflect those of her young listeners. The children gathered to listen are “restive,” having endured “one of those unlucky days which now and then will occur in families, in which everything seemed to be perverse and go askew” (Gatty AJT 3). Trapped indoors by “a dark, cold, rainy day in November,” the children pester their parents and the servants and “had, as they call it, nothing to do” (Gatty AJT 4). Aunt Judy accordingly tells the story of “eight little Victims, who were shut up in a large stone-building, where they were watched night and day by a set of huge grown-up keepers, who made them do whatever they chose” (Gatty AJT 5). This exaggeration of the children’s circumstances immediately suggests that this is a tale meant to teach Nos. 1 through 9 a lesson about patience or useful employment; such a reading supports the critical consensus that Gatty is part of the didactic school of children’s literature and the statement, within the fictive world of the story, that Aunt Judy is always ready with a “curious” tale that tempers “drollery and amusement” with “some off scraps of information, or bits of good advice” (Gatty AJT 1–2).
However, Gatty tempers the didacticism of the tale by documenting the reactions of the “little ones” to Aunt Judy’s narration; the circle of children listening to her story never completely disappears from the story but, instead, is always present, responding to and commenting on the story in a manner that may or may not align with the teller’s intentions. The children transform the story into a narrative sympathetic to their point of view and notably, into a series of scenes they can picture in their minds. They begin this transformation with a seemingly innocent request, on the part of No. 7, for a definition:

“Was the large stone building [where the Little Victims were kept] a prison, Aunt Judy?” inquired No. 7.

“That depends on your idea of a prison,” answered Aunt Judy. “What do you suppose a prison is?”

“Oh, a great big place with walls all around, where people are locked up, and can’t go in and out as they choose.”

“Very well. Then I think you may be allowed to call the place in which the little Victims were kept a prison, for it certainly was a great big place with walls all around, and they were locked up at night, and not allowed to go in and out as they chose.”

“Poor things,” murmured No. 8.

(Gatty AJT 5–6).

Confronted with a potential teaching moment—an opportunity to suggest a more accurate word or to provide her own, “correct” definition of a prison—Aunt Judy instead considers how her story “depends” on the responses of her listeners and, in particular, on the answer to the question she poses to No. 7: “What do you suppose a prison is?” No. 7 not only suggests this very particular word, prison, to describe the circumstances of the characters that so closely resemble himself and his siblings; he also provides his own definition for that term, which is comprised of concrete details about the image of a prison that No. 7 has formed in his mind—“a great big place with walls all around, where people are locked up, and can’t go in and out as they choose.” His definition rejects any suggestion of punishment. Those inside this prison did not behave, and are not behaving,
in any way that calls for discipline; in fact, the inmates are pitiable. They are, in the words of No. 8, “Poor things.” Gatty stages this moment, then, to demonstrate how child listeners can challenge and, eventually, achieve a compromise with the storyteller, even on the level of the individual word. This story recalls the active listeners described by child study scholars such as Sully and Tracy, powerful agents that can transform the language they use and the words adults use around them. If Aunt Judy began her story to teach the children a lesson—to reprimand them, for example, for idleness on a dreary day, or for ingratitude—the listening children exert their own agency as listeners to ensure that their fictional counterparts remain blameless.

No. 7’s brief interruption at the start of the tale is the first of a series of similar moments throughout “The Little Victims”—moments when the listening children disrupt the narrative, in an increasingly bold manner, with questions, comments, and protests that alter both the story and the storyteller’s purpose and strategy. For example, when Aunt Judy has described the Little Victims’ ingratitude for their soft beds and their wholesome meals—and as she prepares to describe their dreadful reluctance to wash their hands—No. 6 forcibly interrupts. “‘Oh, Aunt Judy! ... interposed No. 6, somewhat vehemently, ‘you need not tell any more! I know you mean us by the Little Victims! But you don’t think we really mean to be ungrateful?’” (Gatty AJT 20, emphasis in original). No. 6’s distress reveals that he has discerned Aunt Judy’s strategy, and, consequently, he demands that she reconsider the fundamental premise of her tale. Aunt Judy judiciously considers and responds to No. 6’s urgent protest. First, she mitigates the harsh lesson that had, initially, inspired her story; she insists to No, 6, “you—oh! I beg pardon, I mean the little Victims—were not really ungrateful, but only thoughtless” (Gatty AJT 22). After
yielding to her listeners’ concerns, she reconsiders her storytelling philosophy. No. 6’s intrusion into the narrative reminds her that “it [is] not well to magnify childish faults into too great importance,” and she therefore reassures her listeners that the lesson she is trying to impart in fact “never ends, even for grown-up people” (Gatty AJT 21). As the first story in Aunt Judy’s Tales, “The Little Victims” sets a precedent regarding the nature of storyteller-auditor relationships. In story collections such as Gatty’s, listeners initially appear powerless because they are receivers, rather than crafters, of story; however, Aunt Judy’s reactions to her audience demonstrate how listeners should, in fact, be understood as collaborators, creating a tale in partnership with the narrator. Aunt Judy’s listeners call attention to the individual elements the story—such as setting, word choice, and theme—and, through active listening and interruption, encourage her to reconsider and revise spontaneously, assuring that the story remains flexible and responsive to the needs of this particular audience.

This new collaborative dynamic is particularly significant in the storytelling scenarios represented in children’s literature because it complicates the assumed roles of authority between adult storyteller and child listener. Aunt Judy’s deferral to her listeners transforms the hierarchy of storytelling just as Jean-Jacques’ deferral to his pupil in Rousseau’s Émile transforms the hierarchy of adult tutor and child pupil. In fact, there are many moments in Aunt Judy’s Tales when the children’s influence over the tales has become so great that it can no longer be accommodated by response and interruption, the creative tools available to listeners, and is expressed instead through moments when Nos. 1 through 9 imagine themselves as storytellers, equal or even superior to Aunt Judy herself. At the end of “The Little Victims,” for example, No. 7 expresses his desire to
reverse the roles of storyteller and auditor, telling his mother, “When I am old enough . . .
I think I shall put Aunt Judy in a story. Don’t you think she would make a capital Ogre’s
wife, like the one in ‘Jack and the Bean-Stalk,’ who told Jack how to behave, and gave
him good advice?” (Gatty AJT 25). No. 7, the first to protest Aunt Judy’s decision to
discipline her young charges by fictionalizing them as the Little Victims, ends the tale by
transcribing Aunt Judy into a fairy tale, picturing her as a classic character who assists the
young Jack in defeating the enormous giant. Aunt Judy’s advice is equated with that of a
fairy tale character whose counsel enables the small’s triumph over the great.

A similar reversal is represented, both textually and graphically, in “Cook
Stories,” the third story in Aunt Judy’s Tales, which depicts the children at play in their
nursery, adorned in “bits of rubbishy finery on their heads and round their shoulders, to
imitate caps and scarfs [sic]”—garments that, while meant to imitate snobbish ladies,
could easily be mistaken for the costume of an elderly storyteller (Gatty AJT 47). They
have put on these disguises, in fact, to become storytellers themselves; they are
pretending to be elite women swapping rumors and complaints about their kitchen staff
while Aunt Judy, busy in the nursery wardrobe, eavesdrops, unexpectedly finding herself
to be a listener instead of a narrator.62 The children’s newfound authority as narrators
and Aunt Judy’s subsequent displacement to listener is registered graphically in Clara S.
Lane’s illustration for the story. Lane portrays one of the older girls as narrator; she is
the center of attention, seated in the foreground, while Aunt Judy lurks, listening, in the
background. The exchange of roles becomes even clearer when this image is placed

62 “Cook Stories” is in fact a lesson against the biting condescension of the upper class, although the
moral—“to make allowances, and not expect more from people than what they’ve had opportunity for”—
seems to enact the arrogance it disclaims (Gatty AJT 75).
alongside Lane’s frontispiece for the collection (Figs. 6 and 7). Lane has chosen, for both the frontispiece to *Aunt Judy’s Tales* and for the illustration of “Cook Stories,” to represent the storytelling circle, and the arrangement of the figures is nearly identical in the two images. Both include a group of listening children clustered on the left side of the image; even the listeners’ postures—such as that of the little girl in the foreground, bending her arm—are near identical. The listeners are, in both images, focused on the narrating figure on the right, who sits in a prominent, slope-backed chair. Both illustrations also feature a solitary figure in the background, standing apart from the scene but, as is suggested by the slight tilt of its gaze, listening to the story. The fundamental difference between the images is, in fact, the identity of the storyteller. In the illustration for “Cook Stories,” a child narrates, while in the frontispiece it is Aunt Judy who has
captured the attention of the circle of listeners. These images, in their near perfect correspondence, suggest the interchangeability of adult storyteller and child auditor; both can narrate with authority, and both can, instead, contribute as listeners. Like Cruikshank’s frontispiece for *Kit Bam’s Adventures*—in which the listening children blend subtly into the characters of Kit’s tale, suggesting their contribution to the details of the story being told to them—Lane’s images for *Aunt Judy’s Tales* suggest the intimate relationship between adult and child, storyteller and auditor, that is central to Gatty’s representation of narration.

Storyteller-auditor collaboration has interesting consequences: all present at the moment of narration in Gatty’s works—tellers and listeners, adults and children—are potential contributors. Gatty’s perspective is, perhaps, not unusual in the nineteenth century. As I argue above, Rousseau, in *Émile*, presents a model in which children, whom Rousseau imagined as particularly adept at manipulating the non-textual world, are able collaborators with adults, and the Grimms, in the paratextual materials that introduce the *KHM*, represent a symbiotic relationship between tellers and listeners, mediated by the always-changeable oral tale. However, Gatty, while possibly informed by the earlier ideas of Rousseau and the Grimms, was very likely invested in the idea of intergenerational collaboration for more personal reasons. She was part of a family particularly skilled in collaborating—as storytellers and listeners, as writers and readers, as journalists and editors—to produce literature for both children and adults. For example, as a young woman in 1828, Gatty and her sister, Horatia Scott, initiated the Black Bag Society, a small group of literary and social notables who, throughout the course of the year, composed short works of domestic fiction and contributed them in a
black velvet bag, which was opened over the Christmas holidays for a celebratory reading. While the society accommodated “Honorary members,” who were permitted to listen without contributing—real life equivalents, perhaps, of the eavesdropping figure in Lane’s illustrations to Aunt Judy’s Tales—most of those gathered around the Black Bag during the annual reading were “Efficient Members,” who enjoyed the luxury of a literary entertainment only if they had contributed to its contents (Maxwell 48–9). The methods of collective composition and narration practiced by the Black Bag Society were important to Gatty, who fictionalized the society in the story “The Black Bag” in Aunt Judy’s Letters, the sequel to Aunt Judy’s Tales. The Black Bag Society depicts a community of storytelling in which all listeners are, truly, contributors, and the story notably includes, at the center of that community, an object that represents multiple contributors across generations: the bag itself. The narrator of “The Black Bag” notes that “there was an attraction in the very fact of [the bag’s] having survived to serve, under the same name, and for the same purpose, children’s children . . . [I]t served to make the old bag venerable, and perhaps rather mysterious, in their eyes” (Gatty AJL 140).

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Gatty manages to depict the unique relationship between storyteller and auditor as collaborators and maintain the dynamic nature of the oral tale in Aunt Judy’s Letters—even though, as the title indicates, this is not an account of a series of narrated stories but instead a record of the written correspondence Aunt Judy sends the children while away from home. Gatty constructs a rather complex narrative frame for Aunt Judy’s Letters that attempts, as far as possible, to re-establish the “living present” of the spoken word (Ong 107). Judy gathers, from the notes the children send her, the problems they are facing, and writes stories in response that address their particular circumstances. Although mediated through the post, then, Aunt Judy’s letters contain stories that answer to her audience, as she managed to do spontaneously in Aunt Judy’s Tales. Moreover, each story is sent in a sealed envelope, and the opener is provided with guidelines for narration. The first story that arrives is so sealed and labeled with a note: “For No. 8,” it reads, “But not to be opened till the evening, and then to be read by No. 1” (Gatty AJL 8). The readings that ensue each time a letter from Aunt Judy arrives allow the children to interrupt and debate the story, just as they did when Aunt Judy was present and narrating. Aunt Judy’s letters, then, are not only written stories meant to be enacted orally but also models for how a printed text, when read to children, can re-inhabit the character of a narrated tale: its flexibility, for example, and its affective possibility.

The black bag—both the original in the Gatty household and its fictional counterpart in Aunt Judy’s Letters—is said to be made out of the funeral cloak of Lord Nelson. Gatty’s father was chaplain to Nelson.
The most significant work of intergenerational collaboration in Gatty’s biography, however, is surely *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (1866–1885), which Knoepflmacher dubs “a journal that openly proclaimed its identity as a Gatty family enterprise” (Knoepflmacher *AJ* 152). Drain has written extensively on the familial collaboration that produced this magazine, which included the collective efforts of not only Gatty and her children, in particular Juliana and Horatia, but also, among others, Gatty’s husband, Dr. Alfred Gatty, and Juliana’s eventual spouse, Major Alexander Ewing. In recording the various contributors to the magazine, and in tracing its development through the generations of Gatty’s family, Drain mentions many elements of the publication that draw upon the connection between the Aunt Judy figure and the oral tradition. These regular features attempt to recreate, in the homes of its readers, the intergenerational relationships that can be built through the interactivity of storytelling. Drain writes that the “example of family collaboration, described in *Aunt Judy’s Tales* and *Letters*, was reinforced by the editor in such pieces as ‘Nights at the Round-table,’—an occasional feature which presented stories within a family network of teller and listeners . . . The allusion to King Arthur and the equality accorded his knights at their round table underlines the idea that all children were equally welcome to participate, according to their abilities, in the family activities” (Drain 14). *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* also regularly featured “Nursery Nonsense,” detailed descriptions of fictional scenes meant “to be read to the very little ones . . . and also to give the young artists of a family an opening for the exercise of their talent” (qtd. in Drain 11).65 This feature—as well as the Christmas pantomimes and plays included yearly, which called for actors, set designers, and costumers—continued to build upon the collaborative dyad of storyteller-auditor and encouraged *Aunt Judy’s* readers to

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65 I will discuss “Nursery Nonsense” in detail in Chapter Four.
collaborate as artists and performers. For Gatty, then, the tradition of storytelling and the intergenerational partnerships it engenders was writ large in the figure of Aunt Judy, a name that began as a playful title for her daughter but circulated among wider and wider audiences, through Gatty’s stories and her magazines, eventually representing an “honorary aunt” for all of her readers.

IV. CONCLUSION

The careful calculations of child study scholars, the storytelling impulse of Edgar Taylor, Margaret Gatty’s representations of storytelling scenes: all seek, in different ways, to reconnect with a moment when an intimate and face-to-face discourse between generations—between adults and children, and even between adults and their child selves—was possible. They evoke a nostalgia for a phase of life and history when language was spontaneous, adaptable, and rooted in the intimate relationship between speaker and listener. The desire to create an active, and interactive, conversation between generations, to somehow re-inhabit the “living present” of the spoken word, even if that experience is mediated by the printed text of fairy tales or story collections, or the catalogued vocabularies of children’s secret languages, is at the center of Chrisman’s research and Gatty’s fiction, Rousseau’s treatise and Taylor’s translation.

Ironically, all of these writers struggle to communicate the intergenerational possibilities of the spoken word through the printed text, and it is perhaps for this reason that so many authors for children not only stage scenes of storytelling but also feel compelled to justify the value of narrated tales—a genre that, perhaps, seems quaint or
old-fashioned—in an era that witnessed such as explosion of printed texts for children. The narrating grandmother in Gatty’s “Grandmamma’s Throat,” included in Aunt Judy’s Letters, responds to a group of children clamoring for a story by musing, “I almost wonder why you want me to tell you a story, when you have such a number of nice books to read” (Gatty AJL 115). Molesworth includes a similar moment in her later collection An Enchanted Garden (1892). The two child protagonists in the collection’s frame story, brother and sister Rafe and Alix, find that they “could not get any one to tell them any more stories!” Molesworth’s text tries to articulate why these children are led on a search for a storyteller—in particular “someone old enough to remember the beginnings” of all told tales—despite their extensive library of children’s books. “They had read all their books through,” the narrator explains, “over and over again, and besides, books aren’t quite as nice as ‘told’ stories. At least not when they have to be shared by two.” The separate readers “never managed to keep quite together” (Molesworth “Enchanted” 10, 3). The spoken word, Molesworth suggests, holds the possibility of a partnership, the ability to “keep quite together.”
"Were you never taught your catechism? . . . Don’t you know there’s such a thing as an author?" Captain Alexander Smollett, the brusque commander of the *Hispaniola* in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1881–82), asks this of Long John Silver, the mutinous sea cook, in an 1887 essay titled “The Persons of the Tale.” Included in *Fables* (1896), a collection of short and sometimes moral tales published after the Stevenson’s death, this short essay stages a conversation between two characters from Stevenson’s famous adventure tale “in an open place not far from the story” (183). The two “puppets,” as the Stevenson calls them, “have a pipe” and debate which character Stevenson esteems most, the nature of fiction, and the fate of their characters beyond the pages of the story until Smollett shouts, “there’s the ink-bottle opening. To quarters!” and the two flee into the narrative (187). As the captain’s reference to the catechism suggests, Smollett and Silver suspect that their author is a divine figure. He is a creator—Silver concedes that “the Author made you, he made Long John, and he made Hands, and Pew, and George Merry”—and his favor or disfavor decides the fate of the pirates and sailors of *Treasure Island* (184). However, later in *Fables*, in a tale entitled “The Reader,” Stevenson allegorizes the paltry influence a writer in fact possesses over the meaning of his fiction. The story opens as a disgruntled reader throws a volume on the floor, calling it an “impious book” (Stevenson “Reader” 213). The spurned text, offended, addresses the man, advising him that he “need not buy” the author’s message and telling instead a fable of his own (213). In “The Reader,” the author does not possess
the godlike power Smollett and Silver describe; instead, the meaning of his work is the product of a literal conversation between reader and book.

As “The Persons of the Tale” and “The Reader” demonstrate, Stevenson frequently draws his readers’ attention to the complex nature of authorship. In other essays, he addresses not only the aesthetics of fiction and prose but also the practical side of the literary market: the relationships between authors, publishers, and readers and how those relationships influence the writer’s profession. As Catherine Kerrigan notes, “[n]o one understood better than Stevenson . . . that a literary work does not exist in a cultural vacuum. His comments on copyright, censorship, commercial forces, printing innovations and relations between publishers and authors indicate that he was all too familiar with how such factors could affect the writing and reception of a work” (Kerrigan ix–x). Kerrigan’s comment refers to essays such as “Authors and Publishers” (1890), a meditation on the tangled and often predatory interconnections between the many social actors in the literary marketplace, and “A Chapter on Dreams” (1887) and “My First Book” (1893), narratives about the composition of two of Stevenson’s most important works—*Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Treasure Island*, respectively—that situate those texts amid a number of influences—familial, literary, financial, and creative—that materially affect their content and circumstances of publication. These essays do not always represent the interplay between authors and the

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66 Stevenson’s essays in particular often investigate the definition of an author and his or her role within the literary marketplace. “A Humble Remonstrance” (1884) is Stevenson’s response in *Longman’s* magazine to an earlier piece by Henry James in the same periodical about the purpose of fiction and its relationship to life, and “Letter to a Young Gentleman who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art” (1888) is a treatise on both the joys and challenges of the professional literary world. He also published a number of studies of individual authors, including Robert Burns (1879) and Walt Whitman (1878). Richard Dury argues that this awareness of authorship permeates Stevenson’s works even on the level of the sentence and is revealed in a “‘curious’ style” that “not only raises consciousness in the reader about the creation of meaning but also functions as a conspicuous artistic contribution, a direct trace of the artist’s hand” (Dury 41).
forces of influence, tradition, and marketplace in a positive light; Stevenson spent much of his early career struggling to reconcile his financial needs and the modes of the market with his desires to create high art, and these struggles are reflected in his depictions of authorship. However, they do demonstrate his desire to recognize the many actors who contribute to a single text and to parse out how each role was imagined and fulfilled.

Notably, Stevenson is interested not only in the position of the author in what Robert Darnton would call “the communications circuit”—the interconnections between publishers, printers, suppliers, booksellers, readers, writers, and a number of other economic, literary, and cultural forces—but also the interaction between simultaneous authorial agents, collaborators working on the same text. Collaboration appealed to Stevenson, who early in his career coauthored a series of short stories called *More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter* (1885) with his wife, Fanny Osbourne, and in the 1870s and 1880s composed a series of four plays with his friend W. E. Henley. Stevenson’s most sustained collaboration, however, was with his stepson, Samuel Lloyd Osbourne. Between 1889 and 1894, Stevenson wrote three novels in collaboration with Osbourne: *The Wrong Box* (1889), a dark comedy; *The Wrecker* (1892), a nautical mystery; and *The Ebb Tide* (1894), an adventure tale. In addition to these three novels, which are the only full-length coauthored works that feature the names of both Stevenson and Osbourne on the title page, the pair collaborated in varying degrees on a number of literary projects, including small poetry collections printed on Osbourne’s toy press, articles published in

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67 See Donovan and Norquay.
68 Samuel Lloyd Osbourne is the full name of Fanny’s son. In childhood, he was called Sam, after his father. Stevenson called the boy Sam and Lloyd by turns and eventually Lloyd almost exclusively, most likely because he did not like to be reminded of Sam Osbourne, Sr.’s connection to the boy and his mother. See Hart, p. 4.
the children's magazine *St. Nicholas*, and—in very substantial ways—the novel *Treasure Island*.

What follows is an extended consideration of Stevenson as a collaborative writer, paying particular attention to his creative partnerships with Osbourne and how the methods and strategies of multiple authorship evident in those works emerge even in texts Stevenson wrote alone. As discussed in the previous chapter, authors such as Mary Cowden Clarke and Margaret Gatty responded to constructions of the child’s imagination formulated in studies of oral culture and language acquisition, appropriating the form of narrated tales to represent the influence that children, as auditors, exert on their social worlds. Stevenson was inspired to collaborate with Osbourne by different paradigms of the child’s imagination: both his own theories of child’s play and by larger, cultural ideas of the boy’s imagination as active, ambitious, and even violent. I will demonstrate that Stevenson, with Osbourne and alone, employed printing technologies and genres already conducive to intergenerational collaboration—especially small press printing and the adventure story—and negotiated within them his particular vision of authorship as a social rather than solitary endeavor. Stevenson’s relationship with Osbourne will serve as a starting point to investigate how Stevenson understood the many relationships that informed his role as a professional author—relationships between adult and child, between creative author and businessman, and among two or more contributors to a text—as partnerships of integrative collaboration, of two agents creating a single text neither could produce alone. As in my discussion of storyteller-listener collaborations in the previous chapter, I pay attention throughout my analysis to how Stevenson and Osbourne register their partnership in both visual and textual ways.
I. "THE SMALLNESS OF THE PAGE AND OF THE PRINTER"

The collaboration between Stevenson and Osbourne began over small press printing, a fad among boys in the nineteenth century and particularly in the United States, where Osbourne was born and spent most of his childhood. It is useful, therefore, to look at the history of this toy. Scaled-down models of professional printing presses were produced as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, and amateur printing on small presses was a hobby among the fashionable and wealthy by the mid-1700s. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that these small presses were mass produced and marketed to a wider public (Moran 228). In 1834, the well-known engineering company Holtzappfel & Co. was one of the first firms to release a small press that was portable, affordable, and easy to use, and other firms in both England and the United States soon followed. Samuel Lowe of Philadelphia introduced portable cone presses in the 1850s, and the Boston-based Woods and Company brought out the Novelty, a small press used largely among tradesmen, in the late 1860s. Across the Atlantic, Jabez Francis of Essex produced a press he called the Everybody's, and a scaled-down iron hand press, called the Albion, was displayed at the International Exhibition of 1862 in London (Moran 233–8, Harris 15–6).

These presses were designed for a number of uses, from publishing family periodicals to printing labels for medicine bottles. All of these uses, however, allowed press owners to opt out of the social networks that surround publication. As Will

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69 The size of these presses varied. Elizabeth Harris includes an appendix to her book The Boy and His Press listing a variety of small presses displayed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History's exhibition in the Hall of Graphic Arts. The measurements of the models' chases—the frames that hold type—vary from 1 x 2.5 inches to 11.5 x 13 inches.

70 Holtzapffel was established in 1793 in London by a German immigrant, John Jacob Holtzapffel.
Ransom notes, private presses offer "complete personal freedom in thought and expression and exemption from exterior influence or compulsion" and are used by "craftsmen, authors and artists, prophets and dilettantes," who, liberated from the censorship and demands of the publisher, can determine not only what to print—anything from private poetry to subversive propaganda—but also how it appears on the page (Ransom 175, 177). This artistic freedom was matched by a degree of financial liberty, for small presses—which could fit on a tabletop, reside unobtrusively in a parlor, or rest behind the counter at a small business or workshop—were advertised as a means to avoid the delay and expense of sending small jobs, like labels and advertisements, to the printing office.\(^7^1\) Retailers of small presses capitalized upon the sense of artistic and financial independence fostered by the small press with catchy slogans emphasizing the autonomy of the individual. "Every man his own printer!" exclaims an ad for the Lowe's conical press. "Be your own printer!" mimics the Fulton Speciality Co. (qtd. in Hart 4).

The small size of the machines and their potential for intellectual entertainment during leisure hours was a natural fit for a younger audience, and soon many of the small presses used by adults in offices and for private publication were also marketed to boys.\(^7^2\)

While, throughout the nineteenth century, children were increasingly considered specialized consumers—warranting their own clothes, books, and toys, for example—the small press was one object that united adults and children as a dual clientele, an

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\(^7^1\) The small press produced by the American company J. W. MacDonald in 1867, for example, is described in its patent as "adapted to the wants of the mercantile and manufacturing community in printing cards, circulars, &c., as they may be required, without the delays attendant upon sending to and from a regular printing office, and at much less expense" (qtd. in Harris 10). From the early to mid-nineteenth century American printers “had been taunted, and perhaps bruised, by do-it-yourself office printing systems specifically designed to cut out the printer” (Hart 10).

\(^7^2\) Girls certainly participated in small-scale printing, but the presses were not initially marketed to this audience. Girls, notes Harris, “were not expected to want presses” (Harris 8). However, by 1900, toy presses “were advertised for girls as much as for boys” (Harris 25).
intergenerational customer base often addressed within a single advertisement. For example, the Kelsey company, one of the most successful marketers of small presses in the United States, promised in one advertisement: "Business men save expense and increase business by doing their own printing and advertising. For Boys delightful money-making amusement" (qtd. in Mosley 9, emphasis in original). These presses, then, appealed to a specific model of masculine imaginative play, detailed in my introduction, that capitalized on constructions of boyhood as adventurous and ambitious, ready to explore the world outside the home. Moreover, I contend that claims like Kelsey's illustrate how the press was imagined as a product useful across generations through which both adult and child could pursue financial independence—in their own ways, of course, as "amusement" for boys and "business" for men. The Boston firm Golding & Company represented this synthesis of the interests of adults and children through the press graphically in a small card advertisement published in 1880 (Fig. 8). The card, produced on the press itself, was both an advertisement and a demonstration of how these presses could be used for simple projects such as small-scale advertising. On the left-hand side of the advertisement is an appeal to adults: "EVERY MAN should have one to do his own printing and advertising." On the right-hand side, an appeal to boys: "EVERY BOY should have one for amusement, instruction, and to make money, by doing Society and Business Printing." Printed on the same surface, typographically parallel, the activities and social spheres of men and boys are addressed simultaneously. The small

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73 For more information on the child and consumer culture in the nineteenth century, see Denisoff.
printing press, quite literally in this Golding advertisement and more generally in the culture of small press printing, between two generations.\(^\text{74}\)

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This advertisement features both male and female figures, the latter which may have appealed to young girls interested in small press printing. However, the bicyclists are perhaps allegorical, suggesting the sense of patriotic pride and nation-building that is often associated with boys’ creative play.

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\(^{74}\) This advertisement features both male and female figures, the latter which may have appealed to young girls interested in small press printing. However, the bicyclists are perhaps allegorical, suggesting the sense of patriotic pride and nation-building that is often associated with boys’ creative play.
(Harris 17). An emphasis on the child-appropriate scale of the small printing press became common practice, and children were frequently featured in marketing materials and instruction manuals demonstrating the ease of operating these machines. The lucrative potential of small presses for young boys remained one of their key selling points—Kelsey, for example, assured that a boy “will never want for amusement or pocket money” after securing a printing press and outfit (qtd. in Harris 4)—but the money-making ventures the presses made possible were presented in a new light: as one of many educational benefits of small press printing. For example, A. Neely Hall writes in *The Boy Craftsman* (1905), his handbook of “Practical and Profitable Ideas for a Boy’s Leisure Hours,” that activities such as printing for profit are important for a young man because through such pursuits “the average boy learns to so appreciate the value of hard-earned money that it is pretty certain he will spend it only for something with which he can earn more or which will prove useful to him in his work and play” (Hall iii). The money boys earn printing cards, programs, and other projects commissioned by their friends, family, and neighbors is considered important only in that it teaches boys how to manage their finances and reinvest their earnings in new sets of type, type-cases, and supplies.\(^75\)

Moreover, these lessons in finance and responsible spending were imagined as part of a larger scheme of education in neatness, attention to detail, grammar, spelling, professionalism, and citizenship. For example, the small press prints of C. H. O. Daniel, later the Provost of Worcester College in Oxford, included educational tasks; his first publications were exercises such as “an alphabetical index of the first words of each of

\(^{75}\) Their profits were for the most part insignificant; H. L. Mencken, who owned a small press as a young boy, noted, “So far as I can remember, my father was my only customer” (qtd. in Harris 9).
the twenty-five verses of the General Epistle of Jude," a task Daniel "had been set [to] by [his] parents" (Madan 59). Such publications were submitted to a parent for inspection and approval, a task that was probably difficult for the many boys, including Daniel, who struggled to attain the clean, straight lines of professional prints. Perhaps it was the task of overcoming these difficulties that made the press appear so useful for building the character of the younger generation. A label on the box of the Baltimorean press manufactured by J. F. W. Dorman epitomizes these ambitions: "The moral mental and physical development of the boys, should be the study of all who love this country, and desire to perpetuate its institutions. In no way can this be more effectually aided than by the use of one of our presses" (qtd. in Harris 5). The small press, like some nineteenth-century literature for children, is represented as a learning tool that unites education and entertainment, a fitting choice for a young man because it familiarizes him with the behaviors that will be expected of him when he reaches adulthood.

However, while scholars such as Harris document the growing trend in small press printing among boys, they fail to note how radically the assumptions behind the marketing of small presses change when the customer base is exclusively children. If the small press was marketed to adults as a means to resist the collaborative nature of printing, to sever social relationships and gain artistic or financial independence, it was imagined to do the opposite for children. Small press ventures for boys were thought to acculturate boys by building social relationships, many between adults and children that followed familiar intergenerational models. For example, boys "were usually given the

76 "Please [sic] do not mind my very bad printing," wrote Daniel in a letter to his father, "for when any one looks on any part of it, it is really immensely, terribly, and dreadfully horrible" (qtd. in Madan 69-70). Harris quotes a boy with even more fundamental problems with his venture. "L. H. Gray wrote back to Kelsey for more instructions: ‘I received my press and like it very much the only thing that I do not understand is the setting of type’ (Harris 8).
presses—or the money and blessing for them—by their fathers” (Harris 8), and therefore a boy’s printing press was, from its inception, part of a father-son relationship, an object that could strengthen affective familial bonds or—if the press was used as a tool to train a son in his Latin grammar or father’s profession as a printer—demonstrate a father’s authority over his son. In more general terms, companies selling small presses assume a teacher-pupil or professional-apprentice relationship. Boys learned, under the guidance of an adult mentor, the negotiations and exchanges that comprise a trade, and they were therefore prepared to enter the adult social sphere as a savvy businessman. These adult-child relationships were at times collaborative; some boys, for example, “enjoyed a special relationship with neighborhood job printers, who supplied them with stock” (Harris 9). Such partnerships, however, were perhaps rare—professional printers, as Harris notes, were strangely hostile to boy amateur printers—and more often relationships formed over the press assumed adult authority over the child. Children’s presses were not objects that released young printers from the constraints and expectations of the social world but instead toys through which adults could exert certain powers of influence, discipline, and education.

Boys may have remained junior partners, if partners at all, in the relationships they formed with fathers, professional printers, and other adults through their press ventures, but the partnerships they formed with other children—relationships that the companies selling the presses may not have anticipated—were much more collaborative.

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77 Much of the hostility on the part of professional printers was directed not at children but at advertisements that downplayed the significant expertise required by the printing trade. William H. Bushnell, in “The Curse of Amateurism,” cites an advertisement that guarantees a child can learn to use a small press in a mere three hours. “The statement is unmitigated trash,” Bushnell concludes, “and all parties connected with it ought to be ashamed of themselves; at least all but the boy should. He ought to be sent to school to complete the rudiments of education, and early put to bed, for meddling with matters he could not by any possibility know anything about” (79).
in nature. The portable, low-cost press, as Truman J. Spencer notes, “gave amateur journalism the greatest impulse it has ever received,” and soon the small presses sold by Holtzapffel, Kelsey, and others were being used by communities of boys who wrote, edited, printed, and circulated their own household and schoolroom periodicals (Spencer 14). Amateur journalism among children existed before the small press became popular, but these efforts were usually single, handwritten copies passed hand to hand. Machines like the Novelette and the Albion enabled child journalists to produce multiple copies for circulation among family, friends, and other child printers, and this increased potential for distribution generated, at least in the United States, a collaborative network of child editors. “The exchanging of papers naturally led to correspondence and occasional visits between editors,” writes Spencer. “From this grew an increasing desire for a more concrete medium for cooperation, interchange of ideas, forming friendships, and gaining experience in the conduct of organized bodies” (Spencer 14). American boys organized societies of amateur journalists and editors as early as 1857, and these societies encouraged competition, both friendly and vicious, as well as constructive criticism and a regular flow of ideas; through their collaboration, amateur periodicals grew increasingly sophisticated and well-produced.79

Spencer, in his history of amateur journalism, argues that boys used the world of amateur journalism to forge collaborative relationships with other boys that actively excluded adults altogether and that youth, “unaided, undirected,” is the “essence” of amateur journalism (Spencer 6). These claims—perhaps inspired by the Victorian delight

78 For more information on children’s manuscript magazines, see Bell and Bell.
79 Spencer includes accounts of the political side of amateur journalism among boys in the United States; his history describes the numerous conventions of amateur journalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and chronicles the elections and power struggles that often characterized these meetings.
in spontaneous childhood play, free from adult intervention, described in my introduction—most likely exaggerate the independence of boy journalists. Many amateur periodicals include contributions from adult friends and family as well as school chums and siblings, and Charles Scribner, Jr., advertised, organized, and hosted the first recorded assembly of child journalists in Boston, an adult publisher providing the framework and venue for the boys’ meeting. However, it does seem that the collaborations presses enabled among boys truly changed the landscape of small press printing, encouraging boy printers to revise and expand their press productions in new and imaginative ways. Moreover, amateur journalism was one use of the small press in which boys were encouraged, even by adults, to exercise complete authority. For example, Warren J. Brodie, who was elected Official Editor of the National Amateur Press Association in 1899, published an influential editorial in that organization’s newsletter that called for the reinstatement of youth as the official leaders of the amateur journalism movement. “The place for the old-timer at conventions is ’way up on the back shelf,” writes Brodie. “The young amateurs should take complete control of the National Amateur Press Association at the coming convention . . . It is time that the ‘old guard’ took a back seat and remained in it’” (qtd. in Spencer 59).

Osbourne received a small press when he was living in California and about twelve years old, sometime in late 1879 or early 1880, and it was most likely a gift Stevenson purchased for his soon-to-be stepson to continue the boy’s education while he traveled with his parents on their honeymoon (Hart 4). Osbourne’s press resembled the

80 As Hart notes, “It is not certain who gave [Osbourne] the wonderful present.” While the critical consensus seems to be that the press was a gift from Stevenson, Hart notes that “[p]erhaps it came from the father who was about to lose his son, a boy for whom he cared enormously and to whom . . . he gave other cultural presents” (Hart 4–5).
English-made *Model*, the press of choice among the adolescent boy printers registered in *The California Amateur Directory* at the end of the nineteenth century (Hart 5). In the words of W. Dods Hogg, Osbourne’s press was small enough to be “placed in an old-fashioned band-box and . . . lifted without great effort by one person.” It could print a “sheet or card of only modest dimensions” by pulling a lever that lowered an inking plate (qtd. in Hart 6). Osbourne’s first print productions—composed near Sonoma, California, where he was at the Locust Grove School—were three editions of a periodical called *The Surprise*, by S. L. Osbourne and Co. Osbourne calls *The Surprise* “a great National Newspaper” (Hart 7), but in fact these first prints consist of a few blurry pages of family and classroom news, written with the careless audacity of a schoolboy. *The Surprise* is characteristic of boys’ amateur journalism. Osbourne includes, for example, tidbits about a boy’s social life—“Marble time has come,” he reports authoritatively in his first edition—and a serialized piece of fiction called “A Pirate Story,” a sample of the “stories of wild adventure, Indian fights, and tales of the underworld,” what Spencer calls the “prevailing trend of writings for youth” that boys replicated in their own productions (Osbourne *Surprise*, Spencer 107). However, while *The Surprise* seems typical of amateur journalism, there is little evidence in this early work that Osbourne was collaborating with other young printers in the manner Spencer describes as so prevalent in late-nineteenth-century America. In the first issue of his periodical, Osbourne reprints “a letter that the Editor has received from a little boy,” Harry McGrew—whether with or without McGrew’s permission or participation is unclear—but for the most part it appears

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81 According to Hart, Osbourne clipped an advertisement for the *Model* press for a scrapbook, but apparently the press he used “differed slightly” from this press “and its maker has not been identified by either of two major manufacturers of printing presses whose history goes back beyond 1880” (Hart 5).
that S. L. Osbourne and Company, at this early stage in Osbourne’s ventures, was in fact S. L. Osbourne alone.

Despite this, Osbourne demonstrated an early proclivity for using his press to form collaborative relationships. His isolation from the networks of amateur journalism is not very surprising; organized boys’ journalism did not reach the Pacific coast until 1886, and, moreover, Osbourne spent much of his youth in the company of adults, traveling with his mother and new stepfather to resort areas and exotic locales—primarily Davos-Platz, Switzerland—meant to cure Stevenson’s persistent lung ailments. Therefore, the boy initially tried, with relatively limited success, to form creative partnerships with adults. For example, his first issue of The Surprise proclaims, “We are happy to say that we have secured the services of J. D. Strong as our especial artist and agent in San Francisco,” but it seems that Strong, Osbourne’s brother-in-law, never followed through (Osbourne Surprise). Once established at the Belvedere Hotel in Davos with his family, Osbourne began a new periodical, the Davos News, including on the first page of the first issue, “I sincerely hope when any news has come please send it up to the office” (Osbourne Davos). However, submissions must not have been forthcoming—or else Osbourne was preoccupied with tobogganing and snow-ball fights—because the Davos News published only three issues. While at the Belvedere, Osbourne also took on a number of small printing jobs for pay, mostly programs and tickets for small plays and concerts staged by the guests, the profits of which he hoped would help compensate for the expensive tutors required for his education. His initial patron, a “gentleman with a black beard,” was a “formidable” man, “exact[ing] about spelling” and likely to send Osbourne back to the small, frigid upper room that served as his printing office if the
programs included any mistakes (Osbourne Preface vii–viii). Osbourne’s relationship with this gentleman was far from a collaboration, demonstrating instead the authority an adult could exert over a child. When the black-bearded gentleman passed away, Osbourne worked briefly with his successor, a “frolicsome” lady who “had a disheartening way of saying: ‘Oh, bother,’ when the little boy appeared” (Osbourne Preface xv). This lady had no respect, according to Osbourne, for his printing efforts, and committed the cardinal sin of correcting the freshly printed copies with a pen before handing them out to guests.

While Osbourne formed a number of partnerships through the operations of his small press, then, most were both brief and relatively unsuccessful or not true collaborations but instead relationships following familiar adult-child power dynamics. However, Osbourne found a dedicated adult collaborator in Stevenson. The emerging author followed his stepson’s publishing venture “with absorbing interest,” notes Osbourne in a preface to a later reprint of some of his press productions. “Then [Stevenson’s] own ambitions awakened, and one day, with an affected humility that was most embarrassing, he called at the office, and submitted a manuscript called, ‘Not I, and Other Poems,’ which the firm of Osbourne and Co. gladly accepted on the spot” (Osbourne Preface ix). Stevenson’s contribution to his stepson’s printing venture was accompanied by a letter:

Mr. Sam, Dear Sir, if the enclosed should be found suitable for the pages of your esteemed periodical, you will oblige me by giving it an early insertion. My usual charges are at the rate of the price of half a doughnut per column; but to a gentleman of your singular penetration, and for the pleasure of appearing in a magazine which is, if I may so express myself, the cynosure of literary circles, I am content to offer you an abatement of 68:005 percent upon the terms above stated.

(Stevenson Letters 3.67)
Stevenson’s tone is teasing. His exaggerated humility in addressing his stepson as “Mr. Sam, Dear Sir,” his lighthearted praise for Osbourne’s schoolboy publication as “the cynosure of literary circles,” and his request of pay by doughnuts demonstrate that the collaboration between the author and his stepson was, from its outset, informed by a sense of play. One of the press’s primary functions was to facilitate affective bonding between Osbourne and his new stepfather, and in addition to using the press to publish their literary efforts, Stevenson and Osbourne used it, sometimes in unconventional ways, as a toy. They staged toy theater productions—shows such as *Robin Hood* and *The Miller and His Men* that recalled Stevenson’s own fond memories of afternoons coloring puppets for his Skelt’s toy theater—and Osbourne printed tickets of admission for their performances. They used the m-square pieces from the press as stand-ins for food and munitions in elaborate war games (Hart 23). Henry James notes that Stevenson prized not only the imaginative side of boyhood but also the boy’s “capacity for successful make-believe” (qtd. in Hart 23), and Stevenson’s participation in Osbourne’s ventures illustrates that he understood imaginative play as he understood the act of reading a compelling story: as an activity that requires him to “take an active part in fancy” and to “join in it with all his heart” (Stevenson, “Gossip” 179, 180).

Stevenson’s contribution also suggests the unique nature of the Osbourne-Stevenson collaboration. This partnership does not conform to the typical relationships associated with the small press, such as parent and child or professional and apprentice, and yet it is not entirely a game. Stevenson’s letter demonstrates his willingness to be an

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82 Stevenson wrote about the toy theater often. See his essay “A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured.”
83 See the final installment of Osbourne and Stevenson’s *Letters to Young Friends* in *St. Nicholas Magazine.*
earnest contributor to Osbourne’s efforts, and, notably, the title poem “Not I” suggests Stevenson’s refusal of the singular “I” for the plural “we.” The author possesses both the commitment to play and the experience in the publishing world to collaborate with Osbourne in building a proper press operation, and as a result the pair imagines together a nuanced author-publisher relationship. Stevenson provides copy while Osbourne provides the press, sets the prices for their productions, and coordinates circulation and sales. Their interactions replicate, in miniature, the fraught relationship between the author’s creativity and the printer’s practical and financial interests. At times, their partnership is mutually profitable. Not I, when Osbourne printed it as a separate volume, “was an instantaneous hit, selling out an entire edition of fifty copies,” remembers the adult Osbourne. “The publisher was thrilled, and the author was equally jubilant . . . jingling his three francs of royalties with an air that made the little boy burst out laughing with delighted pride” (Osbourne Preface ix–x). This success emboldened Osbourne, who “got the idea of becoming a publisher of more booklets by Stevenson, for from each new title he might net something like two or three dollars after giving the author just one free copy, and a suitable royalty of, say, seventy-five cents” (Hart 31). Osbourne’s growing confidence underscored the more contentious aspects of the author-printer relationship, which found expression in Stevenson’s letters to friends. To Edmund Gosse, Stevenson writes: “I would send you the book [Not I], but I declare I’m ruined. I got a penny a cut and a halfpenny a set of verses from the flint-hearted publisher, and only one specimen copy, as I’m a sinner” (Stevenson Letters 3.306).

This tongue-in-cheek letter betrays the great fun Stevenson is having with his stepson. However, the mock-serious language he uses—his lament that he is “ruined,” his
reference to Osbourne as “the flint-hearted publisher”—epitomize the significance of Stevenson’s toy press collaborations with Osbourne. The concerns Stevenson voices to Gosse, while trivialized through play, are real obstacles encountered in the literary marketplace. In the early 1880s, Stevenson was both assisting Osbourne in his printing ventures and beginning his career as a writer. He was confronting all the creative and financial obstacles of authorship, including the often strained relationship between his imagination and the social processes that communicate it. Stevenson may have been attracted to the toy press as an apt means to explore these issues lightheartedly. The toy press compresses, both physically and temporally, the otherwise large and lengthy process of publication, creating a model in miniature of the professional book trade. It allowed Stevenson to experiment with varying levels of cooperation and collaboration between author and publisher. His ventures with Osbourne reveal both Stevenson’s conviction that these two agents must act in tandem and his skepticism that an ideal partnership is possible, a complex position articulated in his later essay “Authors and Publishers” (1890). There, Stevenson recognizes the relationship between author and publisher and a number of other social actors as collaborative, necessary, and mutually transformative. “The publishing trade does not stand alone,” writes Stevenson. “It is one of three or four interdependent trades: the author, the publisher, the printer, the bookseller, the paper-maker, all hang together, they are fleas upon each other’s backs” (261). This bitter characterization of the publishing world as parasitic and unsympathetic is part of a cynical tone throughout the essay, which describes how one partner can determine the fate of the other. “[T]he author comes first,” notes Stevenson, but “is kept outside the ring,” and “the bookseller comes last” and “has the heavy end of the stick”
These relationships are not mutually beneficial, writes Stevenson, due to the conflicting interests of those invested in the printing process. "The author will always continue to regard his venture by itself, the publisher must always continue to think of it as one of many; and the two points of view are hard to bring in focus" (263). The ideal relationship between publisher and printer, papermaker and bookseller, can only take place, Stevenson implies, if the interests of all can meet.

In the text of the poems Stevenson wrote for Osbourne, and in particular in the poems included in Not I, the author anticipates his theories about what the relationship between author and printer could be if such integration were possible. Some poems put the printer and author in conversation to demonstrate their seemingly inevitable conflict. In the second poem of Not I, Stevenson writes:

I own in disarray;  
As to the flowers of May  
   The frosts of Winter,  
To my poetic rage,  
The smallness of the page  
   And of the printer.  

(Stevenson Not I 5)

Here, the restrictions of the materials of publication and the printer himself—"the smallness of the page / And of the printer"—are playfully represented as forces substantially inhibiting Stevenson’s creativity. They are naturally at odds, seasonal opposites. The final poem, however, is more optimistic:

The pamphlet here presented  
Was planned and printed by  
A printer unindent-ed,  
A bard whom all decry.  
The author and the printer,

84 The word “unindent-ed” refers both to Osbourne’s struggles to achieve correct spacing and the fact that he is not indentured—that is, working without the aid of professional guidance.
With various kinds of skill,  
Concocted it in Winter  
At Davos on the Hill.  
They burned the nightly ta-  
But now the work is ripe (per  
Observe the costly paper,  
Remark the perfect type!  

(Stevenson *Not I* 7–8)

In this poem, the printer is represented as a co-creator. Those materials of the printer’s trade, which often go unmentioned in the text of a poem—the “costly paper” and the “perfect type”—are noted explicitly as part of the necessary equipment required to transfer the imagination of the author to ink and paper. As Stevenson writes, it required “various kinds of skill”—both the artistic talent of the author and the dexterity of the printer—to produce *Not I*. This poem is one of four published in *Not I*, three of which explore the relationship between author and printer as collaborators and which characterize the two as symbiotic creative forces. Moreover, the ornamentation Osbourne uses to conclude the pamphlet is a pair of clasping hands, illustrating the collaboration described in the preceding verses. These poems are Stevenson’s suggestions for perfecting the act of publication by integrating the interests of the author and the publisher. He makes evident the necessity of both by literally printing them both on the same page.

The two relationships Stevenson and Osbourne formed during the approximately two and a half years of their press ventures, their bond as playfellows and their author-publisher partnership, were not discrete but instead intersected and informed one another. The small books and poetry collections they produced together, due to this dynamic of the playful and the practical, are valuable to Stevenson studies. These ephemera—products of what Stevenson scholars have dubbed “the Davos Press”—are usually
understood as witty but insignificant early work of an author who, just a few years later, would gain renown as the writer of *Treasure Island.* By 1921, Osbourne notes, a product of the Davos Press could “occasionally be picked up at one of Sotheby’s auctions,” as they had “risen to the dignity of ‘DAVOS BOOKLETS; STEVENSONIA; EXCESSIVELY RARE’” (Osbourne Preface ix). Yet their significance exceeds their status as germs of Stevenson’s later work. They illustrate how the author, with the assistance of Osbourne, tries to unite the commercial and creative worlds, a project that would preoccupy him throughout his career, and anticipate how in the future he would portray the negotiations of authorship through a collaborative discourse of youth and age, of childlike imagination and adult professionalism.

Stevenson and Osbourne’s printing ventures continued after *Not I* with two collections of *Moral Emblems*—short poems by Stevenson accompanied by his own woodcut illustrations—as well as a pamphlet for Margaret Stevenson’s birthday, a collection of verses entitled *The Graver and the Pen,* and an unfinished poem entitled *Robin and Ben.* *The Graver and the Pen* was printed in 1882, and Osbourne was by then a young man of fourteen. The poems within the collection suggest the deterioration of the pair’s playful collaboration. The first poem, “The Precarious Mill,” describes a “topsy-turvy, tumble-down” building threatening to collapse into the stream that turns its wheel. The mill is “yet habitable” and its timbers are “trusty,” but the miller inside can hear “the ringing saws advance / To slice the humming deal” (lines 3–4, 12, 5–6). While

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85 Hart notes that “nowhere did it describe itself simply as the Davos Press, although that is a name often given to it by chroniclers of Stevenson. The name seems improper in that it tends to isolate one period too much from another in the continuing career of a boy whose presswork originated in California and was yet to travel on to Scotland, even though the high point of his activities occurred in [his] second winter in Switzerland” (Hart 24).
the miller’s plight is suggestive, however, the poem that speaks most directly to the Stevenson-Osbourne partnership is “The Disputatious Pines”:

The first pine to the second said:
“My leaves are black, my branches red;
I stand upon this moor of mine,
A hoar, unconquerable pine.”

The second sniffed and answered: “Pooh,”
“I am as good a pine as you.”

“Discourteous tree” the first replied,
The tempest in my boughs had cried,
The hunter slumbered in my shade,
A hundred years ere you were made.

The second smiled as he returned:
“I shall be here when you are burned.”

So far dissention ruled the pair,
Each turned on each a frowning air,
When flickering from the bank anigh,
A flight of martens met their eye.
Sometimes their course they watched; and
They nodded off to sleep again.

(lines 1–18)

It seems natural to read these lines as a portrait of the more contentious elements of Stevenson and Osbourne’s partnership. Stevenson appears in the poem as the “hoar, unconquerable pine,” claiming ownership of the moor through age and experience, the seasoned author figured as the weathered tree. Osbourne, the younger specimen, responds with adolescent arrogance and bravado. The childish response of this younger tree—“Pooh, / I am as good a pine as you”—perhaps anticipates the rivalry that Osbourne, a burgeoning author himself, would feel toward the experienced and widely read Stevenson. Its retort to the elder pine’s claim of seniority—the smirking yet threatening remark, “I shall be here when you are burned”—resonates even after the trees’ conflict is interrupted by a flock of birds and, moments later, slumber. If Not I
represents the tensions of collaboration only to resolve them, this poem introduces an enmity between generations that is more fundamental, more difficult to overcome.86

II. MAPPING TREASURE ISLAND

Despite the dreary ending of “The Disputatious Pines,” the Stevenson-Osbourne collaboration was not ending but changing. “New standards were imperceptibly forming,” writes Osbourne, meditating upon the end of his small press venture with Stevenson (Osbourne Preface xvii). The poem illustrates both how Stevenson and Osbourne’s collaboration became increasingly complex and how the pair used their joint productions to communicate those changes. Their partnership remained a negotiation between experience, imagination, business, and play, but their later work reveals an awareness of how intergenerational rivalry and the demands of the professional world could infringe upon the game. In this section, I explore these changes through the first widely published text generated by the Osbourne-Stevenson partnership, Treasure Island. I begin with an account of how the adventure story was constructed as a genre that elides strict categorizations of adult and child. I then turn to the creative partnership between Stevenson and Osbourne, examining how their collaboration continued through Treasure Island’s publication, expanding to include multiple familial and literary generations. Stevenson represents Treasure Island as a narrative both inspired by a collaboration between stepfather and stepson and indebted to new partnerships with immediate family and friends and previous generations of adult authors and child readers. I argue that the

86 Ironically, Osbourne’s press was broken in transit from Davos to Kingussie, Scotland, and could not be repaired, a quite literal breakdown of the press ventures. The Graver and the Pen, then, was printed by Mr. Crerar—whom Hart calls “an able old man”—who had a press in the local general store (42).
novel itself and the documents surrounding its composition—letters, essays, and reviews, for example—reveal new and sometimes difficult dynamics of collaboration.

From its origins in the 1850s and 1860s, the adventure story was implicated in the social spheres of both adults and children, emerging from literary traditions for both audiences. J. S. Bratton notes that writers of boys’ stories turned to “a handful of adult novels which by the 1860s had come to be regarded as good books for boys” as fictional models for their own stories; “the juvenile writers drew their patterns and methods” from adult adventures and romances like Captain Frederick Marryat’s sea stories, Sir Walter Scott’s Waverley novels, James Fenimore Cooper’s Last of the Mohicans (1826), and especially Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe (1719), writes Bratton (104). Crusoe had a particularly strong influence and generated a number of children’s Robinsonnades. This classic deserted island tale, Jack Zipes argues, provides “the core cluster of features most frequently associated with adventures, both fictional and real: an exotic location, perils from forces of nature and enemy threats, as well as endurance and self-reliance” (Zipes 1624). However, while these romances are often cited as the primary tradition shaping the adventure story, the working-class penny dreadful, which “provided sex, violence, sensation, and escapism to an audience that by the 1860s was increasingly youthful,” also exerted a powerful influence on the adventure story, as Claudia Nelson suggests (Nelson 126).87 The success of the adventure story, then, catered to the active and ambitious boys’ imagination—a construction of boyhood inherited from the Romantics and inflected by the romance tradition—and relied on authors capitalizing on the interests and

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87 A number of nineteenth-century critics, writers, and publishers initiated a countermovement of morally upright boys’ literature; the Religious Tract Society, for example, initiated the Boy’s Own Paper specifically to counteract the unsavory influence of such literature. However, the influence of the penny dreadful became entrenched in daredevil characters such as Jack Harkaway (Nelson 126).
desires boys and men shared, such as new and exciting landscapes, daring characters, and plots that required plucky heroes to exert physical prowess.\(^{88}\)

Authors of adventure tales for children, however, balanced the influence of the adult romance tradition with moral or didactic elements that recall the devices of early nineteenth-century children’s literature. Bratton notes, for example, that authors transformed the plots and conventions of the romance into children’s adventure stories by “narrowing [their] scope and interests” and by stating in a clear manner “the lessons to be learnt from the action of the tale” (Bratton 110). Indeed, some of the most influential adventure stories are informed by the evangelical, pious tone of early children’s literature or the encyclopedic, factual prose thought appropriate for young readers.\(^{89}\) Marryat, for example, incorporated frequent moral and spiritual lessons into *The Settlers in Canada* (1844), the first tale he wrote explicitly for a young audience. The character Mrs. Campbell, at the beginning of the tale, greets her family’s sudden rise in fortune with just such a lesson, saying to her husband, “I have often felt that we could bear up against any adversity. I trust in God, that we may be as well able to support prosperity, by far the hardest task . . . of the two” (Marryat 4). When, in the very next chapter, her husband laments the reversal of this good fortune, a crisis that requires their emigration to Canada, she replies with the same sense of pious resignation. “It is hard, my dear husband, if we may use that term,” she admits, “but, at the same time, it is the will of Heaven” (Marryat 8). R. M. Ballantyne’s *Coral Island* narrates the adventures of three boys wrecked on a

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\(^{88}\) It is not surprising, then, that many of the most noted authors of boys’ adventure stories—including Frederick Marryat, Captain Mayne Reid, Charles Kingsley, and G. A. Henty—began their literary careers writing for adults. R. M. Ballantyne, remembered for his desert island tale *The Coral Island*, began writing for children when publisher William Nelson noticed the author’s *Hudson Bay*, a text for adults about his adventures at remote Canadian trading posts, and suggested that the author write a children’s tale (Sutherland 39).

\(^{89}\) For more information on earlier, didactic traditions of children’s literature, see my introductory chapter.
deserted island—certainly reminiscent of Crusoe’s shipwreck—yet intersperses their adventures with lessons in natural history. When the oldest of the boys, Jack, spies “a tree of remarkably beautiful appearance,” he swiftly declares it “the celebrated breadfruit tree” and lectures the younger boys, Ralph and Peterkin, on the tree’s merits. The breadfruit tree “affords capital gum,” Jack notes, “which serves the natives for pitching their canoes; the bark of the young branches is made by them into cloth; and of the wood, which is durable and of a good colour, they build their houses” (Ballantyne 52).  

Jack’s studied description of the breadfruit tree is one of many instructive digressions. *Coral Island*, like many adventure stories, self-consciously addresses two audiences, taking part in literary traditions for both adults and children. In fact, many nineteenth-century readers and reviewers, and critics today, categorize adventure stories written explicitly for children with those composed for an adult audience, such as *Last of the Mohicans* or H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*.

Scholars and historians of boys’ adventure stories offer a variety of historical, cultural, and ideological motives for the emergence and success of the adventure story. Most understand the genre as an example of how what F. J. Harvey Darton calls the

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90 The SPCK published a number of “books of instruction for schoolroom use” in this model, including *Natural History of Quadrupeds* and *Mungo Park’s Travels*, and the RTS followed suit with a series that included titles such as “The Animalcule” or “The Ant” (Bratton 103). J. M. Barrie parodies this instructional, scientific tone in *Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island* (1901), when young George encounters a tree that he “at once recognised . . . to be the Mango (*Mangifera Indica*) by its lancet-shaped leaves and the cucumber-shaped fruit.”

91 Children adopted a range of adventure tales as their own, regardless of the authors’ intended audience. In *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, Edward Salmon ranked boys’ and girls’ favorite books and authors, based on the responses of 790 children. The boys’ top authors include Kingston, Scott, Jules Verne, Marryat, and Ballantyne, among other writers of adventure tales. (Girls’ top authors include some, but not all, of the same writers, namely Scott and Kingsley.) For a reproduction of Salmon’s rankings, see Jonathan Rose. Also, a survey of 800 readers published in the April 1908 issue of *The Captain: A Magazine for Boys and Old Boys* ranks, according to the preferences of its readers, the twelve best boys’ books ever published. *Treasure Island* earns second place, followed by *Robinson Crusoe* and *Westward Ho!* by Kingsley. Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, Ballantyne’s *Coral Island*, Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, and Marryat’s *Mr. Midshipman Easy* also appear (qtd. in Richards 8).
“spatial expansion of the mind” and the “prosperous geographical destiny” that accompanied the sprawl of the British Empire influenced the shifting paradigms of children’s literature (Darton 298–9). As Jeffrey Richards argues, adventure stories for boys were “steeped in every aspect of imperialism” and acted “not just as a mirror of the age but an active agency constructing and perpetuating a view of the world in which British imperialism was an integral part of the cultural and psychological formation of each new generation of readers” (Richards 3). However, while imperialist readings of authors such as Ballantyne and W. H. G. Kingston dominate criticism of the genre, others locate the adventure story in broader Victorian conceptualizations of manhood important but not limited to imperialism. Guy Davidson, for example, characterizes the adventure story as part of the “response to the diversification and expansion of the literary marketplace in the 1880s” that resulted in “the revival of the romance.” The romance, according to Davidson, was “a means of reinvigorating and re-masculinising a national literary culture regarded as having been rendered effete and effeminate by the excessive influence of realism” (Davidson 60). Nelson makes a similar argument for the rise of the genre to popularity or even the status of “high culture,” noting that the trials of Oscar Wilde encouraged Victorians to restate their culture’s masculinity at the fin-de-siècle (Nelson 146). Boys’ adventure stories, these critics contend, mediate between a boy readership and the men that authors, publishers, parents, and teachers hope those boys will someday become—men who can rejuvenate a deteriorating culture and rule an

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92 “Imperialism did not remain static and unchanging any more than the Empire itself did. Its nature changed over the century and this is reflected in boys’ fiction. The evangelicalism, the commercial and cultural imperialism that characterize the work of mid-century writers like Ballantyne and Kingston gave way in the last decades of the nineteenth century to the aggressive militarism of G. A. Henty and Gordon Stables” (Richards 5).
empire; adventure stories connect generations through a discourse of mannered masculinity.

The adventure story, then, demonstrates not only the united interests of man and boy in desert island tales but also the man’s interest in the boy, the desire to use these tales as a means of introducing boys into a code of masculinity that would unite generations as robust citizens of the empire. The dual participation of young and old dominates the content of traditional adventure tales; for example, as Marah Gubar explains, the sea or pirate story “encourages boy readers to believe that a juvenile crewmate—however young and inexperienced he may be—can function as an invaluable collaborator in the important work of taming the unruly world outside England” (Gubar 69). Moreover, these intergenerational relationships were reiterated in the prefaces, dedications, and other paratextual materials that construct a dual readership for the genre. Darton calls this the “deliberate fusion of father and son into one reader,” the making of boys and men into “one class,” an integration that Darton argues has still not dissolved (Darton 296, 294). Ballantyne’s *Coral Island* is prefaced by a note from the fictional Ralph Rover, who insists that he presents his book “especially for boys” but concludes the preface by addressing “any boy or man” who may be holding the volume (Ballantyne 5, emphasis added). In a similar manner, the fictional narrator of *King Solomon’s Mines*, Alan Quartermain, dedicates the tale to “all the big and little boys who read it” (Haggard 37). This insistence of the interest of both boys and men was also evident in boys’ periodicals. Kingston, promoting *Kingston’s Magazine for Boys*, repeatedly explained to

93 While Gubar recognizes how child characters were represented as active collaborators with adults in the traditional adventure tale, she contends that in *Treasure Island* Stevenson does not allow the young Jim to unequivocally partner with the buccaneers and gentlemen that share his tale (69). “Moments in which Jim triumphs in the traditional way are inevitably followed by ones that undermine the idea that he functions as an autonomous agent and empowered colleague,” writes Gubar (70).
his audience that he was writing for all ages and all classes, urging his readers “to get it into naval and military libraries, both for officers and men, at home and abroad—into institutes and village libraries” (qtd. in Bratton 129, emphasis added). *Young Folks*, the children’s periodical edited by James Henderson that published Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* from October 1881 until January 1882, was published under the title *Old and Young* between July 1891 and September 1896, when it was rechristened as the still age-ambiguous *Folks at Home*. While the generations’ investment in these tales and periodicals of adventure would differ—grown men, for example, may have read with a degree of nostalgia certainly not felt by their young counterparts—the adventure story persistently addressed one, intergenerational readership.

The success of *Treasure Island* among the child readers of *Young Folks* is debatable, but nineteenth-century reviewers of the 1883 one-volume publication of the novel praise its cross-generational appeal.⁹⁴ An anonymous reviewer in the *Academy* notes that the story “is calculated to fascinate the old boy as well as the young” (Anonymous *Academy* 362), and another in the *Pall Mall Gazette* remarks that it is “a book for boys which can keep the hardened and elderly reviewers in a state of pleasing excitement and attention” (Anonymous *Pall Mall* 4). An unsigned article published in *The Saturday Review*, written by Stevenson’s friend W. E. Henley, praises *Treasure Island* as “a book for boys which will be delightful to all grown men who have the sentiment of treasure-hunting and are touched with the true spirit of the Spanish Main” (Henley 737–8). Stevenson encouraged this intergenerational reading of his novel. In

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⁹⁴ For different perspectives on the success of the serialized *Treasure Island*, see David Angus, who notes that the “young folks in question. . . were neither entertained nor amused, and said so” (Angus 83). Also see Jason A. Pierce, who argues that after initial negative reactions by young readers in the correspondence section of the periodical, endorsements of the story-in-progress by editors and reviewers illustrated “the editorial staff’s enthusiasm for the story and the readers’ changing attitudes” (Pierce 363).
the one-volume edition of the *Treasure Island*, he added two paratexts that were not part of the serialized novel, and both speak to the cross-generational appeal common in the adventure story. The first is a prefatory poem entitled “To the Hesitating Purchaser”:

If sailor tales to sailor tunes,
    Storm and adventure, heat and cold,
If schooners, islands, and maroons
    And Buccaneers and buried Gold,
And all the old romance, retold
    Exactly in the ancient way,
Can please, as me they pleased of old,
    The wiser youngsters of to-day:

—So be it, and fall on! If not,
    If studious youth no longer crave,
His ancient appetites forgot,
    Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:
    So be it, also! And may I
And all my pirates share the grave
    Where these and their creations lie!

(Stevenson 772)

Initially, this poem seems to isolate the generations rather than unite them, setting the adult author apart from the “wiser youngsters” and “studious youth” who may not delight in a sea tale “retold / Exactly in the ancient way.” However, this poem deploys a common argument for the cross-generational appeal of the adventure story. Stevenson represents a love of “Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave, / Or Cooper of the wood and wave” as a natural, almost biological state of boyhood—their “ancient appetites”—a sort of genetic desire passed down through generations of men. By uniting an appeal to his young readers with an appeal to primitive literary tastes, Stevenson employs the discourse of the romantic revival of the 1880s, a movement that valued the sea tale and adventure story for their ability to speak to the primal needs of man, those elements of his
nature that were connected with both his ancestry and his childlike spirit. (These associations were related but not identical to connections between children and oral cultures, discussed in Chapter One.) Stevenson had used this strategy in his essay “A Gossip on Romance,” published in 1882 between Treasure Island’s serialization and its book publication, in which he argues that the adventure tale or romance meets the most basic needs of our humanity, satisfying the reader’s mind “like things to eat,” and also that it “is to the grown man what play is to the child,” delighting both “the schoolboy and the sage” (Stevenson “Gossip” 179, 180, 175). As Davidson argues, the value of romances such as Treasure Island, according to Stevenson, “depends upon, and is articulated through, a construction of the male child as a locus of natural, spontaneous experience”—a construction that recalls the embodied boyhood of Young William in Wordsworth’s Prelude—and its success is achieved through the meeting of a reader and his impulses, both primitive and childlike, in the pages of fiction (Davidson 63). If boys or men do not enjoy Treasure Island, it is because they have forfeited their gendered inheritance, denying those appetites that connect them to their ancestors. “If this don’t fetch the kids,” Stevenson writes of Treasure Island in a letter to Henley, “why, they have gone rotten since my day” (Stevenson Letters 3.224).

Stevenson is interested, however, not only in the nature of this inherited tradition, shared between men and boys, but also in how it is reproduced. He offers one theory in the last lines of the poem, noting that even if the current generation rejects Treasure Island, the tale will “share the grave” of adventures past. It is just such hidden treasures that—like hidden maps and those documents in sensation fiction or gothic tales that turn up “in the secret drawer of an old ebony secretary”—act as the germ of further

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95 For a discussion of the connection between childhood and primitive cultures, see Cunningham.
adventures, to be unearthed by future generations less effete in their literary tastes (Stevenson “Chapter” 216). *Treasure Island* itself begins with such an act of recovery, when the boy Jim Hawkins and his adult companions, Doctor Livesey and Squire Trelawney, salvage Captain Flint’s treasure map from the deceased Billy Bones’s sea chest. However, the title of the poem, “To the Hesitating Purchaser,” suggests another, more concrete way the intergenerational appeal of the adventure story is reproduced: through the professional world of authorship, publication, and circulation. The familiar tropes and narratives of the adventure story are transmitted from author to author—from Kingston, Ballantyne, and Cooper to Stevenson—while the appetite for them is passed along from reader to reader—from the now-adults who once enjoyed those authors to the youth of today—through the commodity culture of the literary marketplace. As Davidson notes, Stevenson’s understanding of the romantic tradition as closely tied to commodity culture is unusual among the key players in the romantic revival, who in most cases represented the romance as isolated from the contamination in the marketplace. “By situating ‘ancient appetites’ in the context of commodity consumption—a solicitation of the ‘hesitating purchaser’—the poem points to the determination of such notions as the ‘ancient’ and the ‘natural’ by consumer culture,” writes Davidson (66–7). Stevenson unites the imaginative impulses of the adventure story—which join generations through a creative, cultural inheritance—with the genre’s dependence on the commodification of the literary market, two understandings of the adventure tale that are often represented as contradictory.

The second paratext appended by Stevenson in the one-volume edition of *Treasure Island* is a dedication to Osbourne, which begins, “To Lloyd Osbourne, An
American Gentleman, In accordance with whose classic taste the following narrative has been designed” (Stevenson 773). This dedication—when placed in the larger context of Stevenson’s creative partnership with Osbourne—resituates the relationship between adult and child, author and reader, imagination and marketplace addressed in “To the Hesitating Purchaser” within the familial model of stepfather and stepson. Osbourne, who was fifteen years old at the 1883 publication of Treasure Island, is characterized here not as a boy but as an adult, an “American gentleman” with “classic taste,” and the time he spent with Stevenson is transformed into “numerous delightful hours,” a phrase that suggests leisure time between equals. The collaborative relationship between Stevenson and Osbourne, since the earlier projects of the small press, was both a childlike friendship based on imaginative play and partnership founded on the professional processes of authorship and publication, and here it is represented in a manner that again complicates distinctions of age and generation. More importantly, however, this dedication is the first suggestion of a new dimension of intergenerational collaboration that Stevenson, with the publication of Treasure Island, adds to the genre of the adventure story. While the adventure tale since its origins was directed toward an intergenerational readership, Stevenson’s story is a product of an intergenerational relationship: a coauthored text, a narrative collaboration composed through the efforts of adult and child. As detailed in the introductory chapter of this project, Stevenson, like many writers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, thought adults’ and children’s imaginations to be inherently different, but he used this genre to unite the creative and narrative strengths of adults and children by not only creating a final text that holds intergenerational appeal but also incorporating and integrating multiple generations in the
act of composition. In other words, Stevenson used the genre of the adventure story, already replete with potential for intergenerational relationships, to explore how adults and children can comprise not only one reader but also one author.

Osbourne was not Stevenson’s sole interlocutor. While many reviewers praised the novel as evidence of Stevenson’s original genius—an unsigned review in the Graphic, for example, insists that “there is no resemblance between Mr. Stevenson and any other boys’ writer” (Anonymous Graphic 599)—Stevenson, in his essay “My First Book,” admits the great debt he feels toward a series of other writers who, like Osbourne, influenced Treasure Island. In a frequently quoted passage of the essay, Stevensoncatalogues those who preceded him in his mapping of Treasure Island: “No doubt the parrot once belonged to Robinson Crusoe. No doubt the skeleton is conveyed from Poe. . . . The stockade, I am told, is from Masterman Ready. . . . It is my debt to Washington Irving that exercises my conscience, and justly so, for I believe plagiarism was rarely carried farther” (280). Many read this passage as evidence of Stevenson’s struggles with the norms of popular literature and his aspiration for high art. Glenda Norquay, for example, reads this as Stevenson’s recognition of “the commercial and intertextual context in which he operates”; he is naming his sources “but at the same time lay[ing] claim to the uniqueness and originality necessary for the ‘artist’” (Norquay 67). Yet it is important to note the particular method of intertextuality Stevenson describes. His discussion of the details he draws from past fictions—and the relationship between those details and his own narrative—may indeed function in part to assert his “uniqueness and originality.” More importantly, however, Stevenson suggests that his novel is in part a

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96 Treasure Island was not Stevenson’s first book. “But I am well aware,” he writes, “that . . . the great public, regards what else I have written with indifference, if not aversion” (Stevenson “First” 277).
pastiche, an accumulation of the landscapes, characters, and plots of his literary predecessors, and that his role as author, whether he fulfills it consciously or unconsciously, is to integrate his own tale into a narrative already articulated. A successful adventure story requires originality, but it also requires its author to encounter and manage previous literary generations in a process of composition that is, at its core, social and collaborative. Stevenson emphasizes that this is an act of creative negotiation, not merely allusion or imitation, by taking pains to stage in “My First Book” an encounter between himself and the authors who shape his work—an encounter expressed in tropes and metaphors drawn from the adventure story. “These useful authors had fulfilled the poet’s saying,” he writes, because “departing, they had left behind them ‘Footprints in the sands of time; Footprints that perhaps another—’ and I was the other!” (280). These lines, moreover, are quoted from yet another source text: “A Psalm of Life” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, which employs themes of shipwrecks and footprints. Stevenson imagines himself occupying the same landscape as Defoe, Poe, Irving, and Marryat and encountering their footprints like Crusoe encounters Friday’s. He discovers that he is not alone in this literary endeavor.97

Stevenson’s figuration of his relationship to his literary ancestors through images of footprints and discovery recalls an earlier moment in the essay: a rhapsodic digression on the suggestive power of maps. The landscapes and language of maps fire Stevenson’s imagination in a manner similar to the landscapes and language of previous authors of adventure stories:

97 For a discussion of the influence of popular boys’ stories on Treasure Island, see Watson and Hardesty and Mann.
The names, the shapes of the woodlands, the courses of the roads and rivers, the
prehistoric footsteps of man still distinctly traceable up hill and down dale . . .
here is an inexhaustible fund of interest for any man with eyes to see, or
tuppenceworth of imagination to understand with. No child but must remember
laying his head in the grass, staring into the infinitesimal forest, and seeing it
grow populous with fairy armies. Somewhat in this way, as I pored upon my map
of Treasure Island, the future characters of the book began to appear there visibly
among imaginary woods; and their brown faces and bright weapons peeped out
upon me from unexpected quarters . . . on these few square inches of a flat
projection.

(Stevenson, “First” 279)

If the figurative footprints of past authors represent Stevenson’s negotiations with the
literary tradition of the adventure story, the figures and footsteps on these maps document
a different source of inspiration: a return to the active, adventurous imagination of
childhood. This passage is an illustration and expansion of Stevenson’s theories on the
imagination forwarded in “Child’s Play,” discussed in the introduction to this project. In
this essay, Stevenson identifies the riotous and very physical play of children as well as
their attachment to toys and “props” as evidence of a flaw in the young’s powers of
fancy, but he admires the child who, in possession of a more embodied imagination, “acts
his parts.” “That stage-wardrobe and scene-room that we call memory is so ill-provided”
with first-hand experiences that he cannot contain his imagination within the mind.
Instead, he must “body out” his play, moving his limbs to imitate the characters of his
fancy and using everyday objects as props to aid his make-believe; “he leaps, he runs,
and sets the blood agog over all his body. And so his play breathes him; and he no
sooner assumes a passion than he gives it vent” (Stevenson “Play” 177). The adult, on
the other hand—whose fancies are “transformed and seen through theories and
association as through coloured windows,” filtered through “history, and gossip, and
economical speculations, and God knows what”— instead participates in an “intellectual
form of play” that does not find vent through physical activity (Stevenson “Play” 171,
The quotation above, however, recalls the embodied child imagination. The markings on the map are the raw materials for a childlike fancy, which can perceive the narratives these materials inspire. Fairy armies arise out of the map for the watching child like the soldiers and fleets of ships that populate the Land of Counterpane in Stevenson’s *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1185). The same imaginative commitment to play Stevenson observes in children finds expression through the object of the map, which inspires a man with “tuppenceworth of imagination” to body out the map itself, drawing forth populations to inhabit the map’s forests and islands. The two-dimensional map, its flat names and shapes, becomes three-dimensional when the author approaches it as a child would, “laying his head in the grass, staring into the infinitesimal forest.”

Stevenson’s model of collaboration, figured through the images of maps and footprints, suffuses every stage of the production of *Treasure Island*, including its composition, content, and publication. It is possible to trace the power of this model through the series of maps—at least four—that appear both outside and inside the text, each written on by more than one hand. The first of these, and perhaps the most famous, is a watercolor map Stevenson and Osbourne created together in Braemar, Scotland in the summer of 1881. Despite its pivotal role in Stevenson’s literary career, the artist responsible for the map is contested in separate accounts by Osbourne and Stevenson. Examining these accounts side by side reveals that this map incorporates both the sense of professional negotiation and the intersection of adult and child imaginations that maps and their markings signify for Stevenson. Osbourne’s account, published in a preface to the novel, reads:

I happened to be tinting the map of an island I had drawn. Stevenson came in as I was finishing it, and . . . leaned over my shoulder, and was soon elaborating the
map, and naming it. I shall never forget the thrill of Skeleton Island, Spy Glass Hill, nor the heart-stirring climax of the three red crosses! And the great climax still when we wrote down the words “Treasure Island” at the top right-hand corner! . . . “Oh, for a story about it,” I exclaimed . . . somehow conscious of his own enthusiasm in the idea.

(Osbourne “Note” x–xi)

Osbourne registers his discontent at his stepfather’s thoughtless piracy of his own childish work: “[A]fter writing in a few more names he put the map in his pocket, and I can recall the little feeling of disappointment I had at losing it. After all, it was my map” (xi). The difficulties of adult-child collaboration, always an uneven power relationship, become evident here. Osbourne’s account suggests that, in the words of Gubar, “entering into a partnership with a stronger party raises the specter of coercion” (8). However, by insisting that the map originated in his own creative endeavors and that Stevenson, recognizing its potential, appropriated it for the purposes of his story, Osbourne assigns himself a pivotal role in a novel that, by the time Osbourne was writing his preface, was surprisingly successful. “Had it not been for me, and my childish box of paints,” writes Osbourne, “there would have been no such book as Treasure Island’” (Osbourne “Note” xi). In recounting the origins of the map, Osbourne manages and negotiates the larger-than-life reputation of his most immediate literary ancestor, just as Stevenson negotiated with the weight of past fictions such as Robinson Crusoe and Masterman Ready.

Osbourne, however, expresses his relationship with Stevenson in a tone that suggests intergenerational enmity rather than collaboration. As a child, Osbourne may have been aware of the importance of the watercolor map to Stevenson’s career—at least, the grown Osbourne projects this awareness onto his youth—and with the arrogance of the young

98 Osbourne, who would struggle with not wholly positive reviews of his own fiction, writes that his stepfather, before Treasure Island, “was an unknown and unsuccessful author . . . who wrote books that never passed beyond one small edition, and whose gay acquiescence in failure cost me many a childish pang” (Osbourne “Note” ix).
pine in *The Graver and the Pen*, he takes the last word, expressing what he considers to be his substantial contribution to his stepfather’s legacy.

Stevenson’s account of the map in “My First Book” is decidedly different:

There was a school-boy . . . much in want of “something craggy to break his mind upon.” He had no thought of literature; it was the art of Raphael that received his fleeting suffrages, and with the aid of pen and ink and a shilling box of water-colours, he had soon turned one of the rooms into a picture-gallery . . . I would sometimes unbend a little, join the artist (so to speak) at the easel, and pass the afternoon with him in a generous emulation, making coloured drawings. On one of these occasions I made a map of an island . . . and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance *Treasure Island*. (Stevenson “First” 278–79)

Here, Stevenson claims both the map and the creative energy it inspires, and Osbourne is relegated to an anonymous “school-boy.” The map’s suggestive landscape belongs to the author alone, who “ticketed” his own performance. The assumption that Osbourne “had no thought of literature” further estranges the boy from the adventure story the watercolor map would inspire. These two accounts certainly betray a degree of competition, especially on Osbourne’s part, suggesting that collaborating as an adult-child pair, through the visual medium of watercolors, is agreeable in a way that expressing this collaboration in prose, when Osbourne has grown into an adult and a writer, is not.

Notably, however, the individual ambition evident in these paired accounts is undermined by the implicit suggestion in both that the map and the adventure tale born out of it could not be created without the contribution of both author and schoolboy, without both adult and child imaginations. While Osbourne self-confidently claims ownership of the painting, he does not discern its narrative qualities until Stevenson enters the scene, “elaborating the map”; at this moment, the map is endowed with the “thrill” of adventure, with geographical peaks that correspond to plot climaxes. Under
Stevenson’s hand, the map becomes inseparable from the map in the story; it is “very precious owing to its associations with pirates, and the fact that it had been found in an old sea chest” (Osbourne “Note” xi). While Stevenson also claims the map as his own, his artistic endeavors are described as an imitation of his stepson. Stevenson would “join the artist (so to speak) at the easel,” a phrase that seems to describe the two, adult and child, painting on the same surface. The manuscript that emerges from the map certainly is authored by Stevenson, but the map, and therefore the manuscript, would not exist without Osbourne, who in Stevenson’s account embodies the very subject of the adventure story, disappearing into the language of the narrative to emerge as the sort of doomed vessel that often appears at the beginning of sea stories, looking for “something craggy to break his mind upon.”

This collaboration between the adult Stevenson and the child Osbourne itself becomes a map—a guide for a further series of adult-child collaborations inside and outside the text of Treasure Island that are often established over that exceptionally suggestive object, the map, and that integrate generations in an act of joint authorship. The watercolor map of Treasure Island, like the maps Stevenson praises in “My First Book,” generates narrative possibilities, acting as a model of familial collaboration that transforms the first half of the book. Stevenson composed the first chapters of Treasure Island quickly and followed his individual efforts with a daily ritual of cooperative reading, response, and revision; “day after day . . . I read aloud my morning’s work to the family,” Stevenson writes, noting that his son, wife, and parents were sometimes joined by a series of visitors, including Gosse, Sidney Colvin, and Alexander Japp, who passed the manuscript along to Henderson, editor of Young Folks, for publication (Stevenson
“First” 280). While several family members and friends participated in these readings, it was Osbourne and Stevenson’s father Thomas who proved the most enthusiastic contributors. As Fanny Stevenson writes, Thomas Stevenson was very invested in the tale and “would sit entranced during our daily chapter, his noble head bent forward, his great, glowing eyes fixed on his son’s face. Every incident of the story could be read in his changing countenance. At any slip in style, or taste, or judgment he would perceptibly wince” (F. Stevenson xiii–xiv). This interest transformed into participation, and, as Stevenson notes, his father “not only heard with delight the daily chapter, but set himself actively to collaborate” (Stevenson “First” 280). Stevenson’s father contributed a number of details, including the name of Captain Flint’s old ship, the Walrus, some details regarding the marooned man, Ben Gunn, and the inventory of Billy Bones’s chest, which he “must have passed the better part of a day preparing, on the back of a legal envelope” (Stevenson “First” 281). Stevenson, then, expanded the possibilities of intergenerational collaboration, including not only his literary ancestors—drawing upon the conventions of the adventure story and managing the influence of the genre’s most respected authors—but also previous and subsequent familial generations, thereby building a multigenerational partnership.

Thomas Stevenson includes, at the bottom of Billy Bones’s chest, Captain Flint’s treasure map, wrapped in oilskin, the fictional counterpart to the Braemar watercolor map and a document that will send Jim, Trelawney, and Livesey on their adventure. In his description of this map, Stevenson again underscores the map’s potential for of intergenerational collaboration through the act of writing:

99 For an extensive treatment of how Stevenson’s writing, including Treasure Island but especially Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, was effected by his relationship with his father, and vice versa, see Beattie.
The doctor opened the seals with great care, and there fell out the map of an island, with latitude and longitude, soundings, names of hills, and bays and inlets, and every particular that would be needed to bring a ship to a safe anchorage upon its shores . . . There were several additions of a later date; but, above all, three crosses of red ink—two on the north part of the island, one in the southwest, and, beside this last, in the same red ink, and in a small, neat hand, very different from the captain’s tottery characters, these words: “Bulk of the treasure here.”

(Stevenson 77 62)

This map represents the legacy of multiple explorers, chronicling their contributions not through footprints but instead through multiple layers of handwriting (a motif Stevenson would return to in *Jekyll and Hyde*). This map is a composite of two or more distinctive hands—the original instructions printed on the map are supplemented by “several additions of a later date,” “three crosses of red ink,” and notes “in a small, neat hand, very different from the captain’s tottery characters”—and yet these various hands work together to create, like the Braemar watercolor map, a tale that not only transforms Jim, the squire, and the doctor into actors embarking on a new adventure but also constantly shifts and offers new narrative possibilities. The map has been spread on the table only for a moment, for example, when the squire, inspired by its notes and information, casts his companions as stock characters in an adventure story. “You’ll make a famous cabin-boy, Hawkins,” decides Trelawney. “You, Livesey, are ship’s doctor; I am admiral” (Stevenson 77 44). The squire’s bold proclamations and even his careful arrangements for the journey cannot contain the narrative potential of the map. Before boarding their ship, the *Hispaniola*, Jim pores over it constantly and imagines a number of possible journeys and outcomes. “I approached that island in my fancy, from every possible direction,” Jim muses. “I explored every acre of its surface; I climbed a thousand times to that tall hill they call the Spy-glass, and from the top enjoyed the most wonderful and
changing prospects. Sometimes the isle was thick with savages, with whom we fought; sometimes full of dangerous animals that hunted us" (Stevenson *TI 47*). Jim examines this map as Stevenson studies its counterpart in “My First Book,” and both documents illustrate a number of possible stories simultaneously—the prospect of savages or wild beasts, of daring victory or danger.

Not every map consulted or created during the composition of *Treasure Island*, however, produces adult-child relationships and narrative possibility. Two additional maps—one that appears “outside” the novel and another that appears in the story—do not anticipate and generate story but instead respond to a story already written. The original map illustration meant to accompany the one-volume book publication of *Treasure Island*, for example, was lost, and Stevenson was compelled to recreate the original. “It is one thing to draw a map at random, set a scale in one corner of it at a venture, and write up a story to the measurements,” he writes. “It is quite another to have to examine a whole book, make an inventory of all the allusions contained in it, and with a pair of compasses painfully design a map to suit the data” (Stevenson “First” 282–3). Although Stevenson attempts to recreate the layers of intergenerational writing that created the original map—“my father himself,” notes Stevenson, “brought into service a knack he had of various writing, and elaborately forged the signature of Captain Flint and the sailing directions of Billy Bones”—this map does not possess the same capacity for suggestion. “[S]omehow it was never *Treasure Island* to me,” he laments (Stevenson “First” 283). This map has a complement inside the story: an edited copy of Billy Bones’s map that Trelawney gives to Long John Silver so the sea cook can instruct the crew on the best way to approach the island. When the squire gives the map to Silver,
“Long John’s eyes burned in his head as he took the chart,” notes Jim, “but, by the fresh look of the paper, I knew he was doomed to disappointment. This was not the map we found in Billy Bones’s chest, but an accurate copy, complete in all things . . . with the single exception of the red crosses and written notes” (Stevenson 77108). Silver does not betray to the squire that he knows this map is an edited copy; however, because the map cannot lead Silver and the mutinous crew to the treasure, their rebellion must be postponed until the squire, the doctor, and Jim direct the buccaneers to the trove. The original of this map inspired adventure, acting as the driving force behind the tale, but this edited map, composed as a reaction to the adventure rather than creating it, shuts off or at least delays a narrative possibility of mutiny. The map, flattened, robbed of its collaborative nature, is no longer suggestive, only factual.

In most cases, however, Stevenson uses the treasure map, then, to represent and even facilitate intergenerational coauthorship through the act of writing. It is a palimpsest, representing in layers of ink or footprints the integration of the adult’s and child’s imaginations, past authors and original fictions, and the narrative possibility such integrations produce. However, this sort of collaboration, between adult and child, poses unique challenges—namely, the difficulty of overcoming the fundamental difference between the adult’s and child’s imaginations. In “Child’s Play,” Stevenson represents the differences and similarities between adult’s and children’s imagination not only in terms of the embodied and the intellectual—a distinction between the child whose blood is “agog over all his body” and the adult, who carries out his fantasies “while sitting quietly by the fire or lying prone in bed” (177)—but also in terms of landscape and footprints. “Although the ways of children cross with those of their elders in a hundred places daily,
they never go in the same direction nor so much as lie in the same element,” he writes. “So may the telegraph-wires intersect with the line of the high road, or so might a landscape-painter and a bagman visit the same country, and yet move in different worlds” (Stevenson “Play” 174). Children and adults are not isolated due to the content of their fancies—for, as Stevenson notes, “children think very much the same thoughts and dream the same dreams, as bearded men and marriageable women”—but instead due to the way they express the movements of the imagination. The imaginations of the adult and child, then, may “cross . . . in a hundred places daily,” may “visit the same country,” and yet never find a mutual “element” in which to enact and narrate their similar fancies. The old and young, like the bagman and the landscape-painter, see the same horizon but experience the view in widely different ways.

Collaborating with a child, then, involves overcoming both the difficulties commonly associated with multiple authorship—assigning authorial roles, creating a cohesive voice, or resolving differences of style, for example—and the widely different ways adults and children engage the physical world and their very bodies while exercising their imaginations. In other words, true collaboration with a child, for Stevenson, requires not only a creative consideration of the same landscape, an act that can take place in “different worlds” or in separate elements, but also, on the part of the adult, a physical exertion, a consideration of the embodied, youthful imagination. In the world outside Treasure Island, Stevenson practices this approach to adult-child collaboration by exhibiting the charisma of a boy when engaged in imaginative play with the young Osbourne. For example, the complex war games Stevenson staged with Osbourne in Switzerland, while not necessarily physically rigorous, allowed Stevenson to
engage both the filtered and organized imagination of the adult and the passion and imaginative commitment of the childlike imagination the author describes in “Child’s Play.” The pair bent over a map of mountains, towns, rivers, and bridges sprawled on the floor of the attic of Chalet am Stein, and Stevenson took the movements of his tin soldiers so seriously that “he studied [Edward Bruce] Hamley’s *Operations of War* and other military documents, planned extensive campaigns, wrote reports by war correspondents for fictitious rival journals, and in general played the game *more fully and intensely than even the boy did*” (Hart 23–4, emphasis added). Osbourne notes that he and Stevenson “used to play . . . with unfailing zest, until [their] knees would ache and [their] backs get sore with the stopping and kneeling” (Stevenson “Young Friends” 306–7). In these games, Stevenson integrates the spontaneous boyhood game of tin soldiers, which he plays with an intensity and even a physical commitment that matches or exceeds Osbourne’s, with the informed adult imagination, organized and filtered through war manuals and the norms of military correspondence.

In the fictive world of *Treasure Island*, however, Stevenson imagines a more complete integration of the vigorous, active child imagination and the more limited imagination of the adult. Some of the most important moments in the plot—moments when the story could move in a number of directions—are marked by a momentary physical contact and sometimes confusion of adult and child bodies. In other words, within the world of the novel, adults do not simply re-embody the childlike imagination to create narrative but instead act in cooperation with the child’s body, physically appropriating it to move the plot forward. Early in the tale, for example, the blind pirate

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100 This quotation comes from *Letters to Young Friends*, a series of stories about Samoa Stevenson wrote for *St. Nicholas* between December 1895 and February 1896. This series was yet another collaboration. Osbourne edited the letters and wrote an introduction and commentary throughout.
Pew and the young, able-bodied Jim work together as one, whole body in order to deliver the ominous black spot, the pirate equivalent of a death sentence, to Billy Bones. When Pew finds Hawkins outside the Admiral Benbow Inn, he grips the boy’s arm “like a vice” and leads him into the parlor, where the sick Billy Bones rests. Pew tells Billy Bones to remain seated and hold out his left hand while ordering Jim to “take [Bones’s] left hand by the wrist, and bring it near to my right.” “We both obeyed him to the letter,” Jim notes, “and I saw him pass something from the hollow of the hand that held his stick into the palm of the captain’s, which closed upon it instantly” (Stevenson TI 26–7). Pew’s insistence that Jim help him deliver the black spot is unusual; though blind, Pew is self-sufficient and even agile, exiting the parlor and continuing down the road “with incredible accuracy and nimbleness” directly after handing over the black spot (Stevenson TI 27). However, Stevenson takes pains to stage the collective action of disabled adult and able child, the simultaneous and complicit movement of the arms of both adult and child, during this key moment in the plot. The delivery of the black spot, after all, leads to Jim’s discovery of the treasure map. Billy Bones, unnerved by this news of his impending death, dies of “thundering apoplexy,” leaving behind his treasure and documents (Stevenson TI 28).

More central to the plot of Treasure Island, however, is the relationship between Jim and the disfigured sea cook, Long John Silver. Silver is surprisingly swift on one strong leg and a crutch; when Jim first encounters Silver at the Spy Glass tavern, he notes that Silver’s “left leg was cut off close by the hip, and under the left shoulder he carried a crutch, which he managed with wonderful dexterity, hopping about upon it like a bird” (Stevenson TI 52). On board the Hispaniola, Silver “had a line or two rigged up to help
him across the widest spaces—Long John's earrings, they were called; and he would hand himself from one place to another . . . as quickly as another man could walk” (Stevenson TI 64). However, despite his agility, Silver appears throughout the novel as the disabled adult counterpart to the youthful Jim. Silver calls Jim “the picter of my own self when I was young and handsome” and, once on the island, he tells Livesey that he and Jim sleep “stem to stem” in the stockade (Stevenson TI 168, 180). When the wounded body of the cunning Silver is imagined next to the strong body of the naïve Jim—when the two characters collaborate in conversation or in action—the result is the sort of narrative possibility inherent in the treasure map. For example, as the Hispaniola lies moored offshore Treasure Island, Silver lays his hand upon Jim's arm and muses: “This here is . . . a sweet spot for a lad to get ashore on. You'll bathe, and you'll climb trees, and you'll hunt goats, you will; and you'll get aloft on them hills like a goat yourself. Why, it makes me young again. I was going to forget my timber leg, I was. It's a pleasant thing to be young, and have ten toes, and you may lay to that” (Stevenson TI 74). Here, Silver's consciousness of his timber leg leads him to superimpose his own youth onto the young body of Jim, and Silver's past experiences on the island, for he has landed there before, intersect with Jim's youthful potential, generating a list of possibilities that recalls the “sea-dreams” and “charming anticipations of strange islands and adventures” Jim, poring over the map, imagined before his journey (Stevenson TI 47). Even when the narrative is nearly complete—when the battle for treasure between Silver and his mutinous crew and the band of men led by the squire and doctor is at an end—the collaboration between Silver and Jim, imagined through their contrasting youthful and aged bodies, remains a site for imaginative and narrative possibility. “Ah,
you that’s young—you and me might have done a power of good together!” exclaims Silver (Stevenson *TI* 173).

Jim’s encounters with Pew and Silver may momentarily align the adult and child imaginations, generating narrative possibility through a confusion of youthful and aged bodies; however, these relationships also offer a portrait of the potentially volatile nature of collaborative relationships. As Gubar argues, *Treasure Island* can be read as a “cautionary tale of a boy who is seduced and betrayed” by the adults who appear to respect and flatter him (91), and Jim learns throughout his sea adventures that collaboration can brutally or artfully disguise treachery. The “pleasing vision of juvenile power and potency is constantly punctured,” Gubar writes, for “each time Jim gets established as a heroic figure, his agency is quickly shown to be chimerical; his collaboration compelled; his actions circumscribed” (82). Pew and Silver resort to deceit, intimidation, and even violence, feigning helplessness—in Pew’s case, literally twisting Jim’s arm—in order to take advantage of the boy’s youth and assumed naivété. These collaborations quickly deteriorate into exploitation or dissolve into enmity. Once Pew has taken advantage of Jim’s keen eyes to deliver the black spot to Billy Bones, their partnership ends abruptly, and Silver’s hand on Jim’s shoulder, his lamentations about his timber leg, are staged—a malicious act meant to lull his shipmates into a sense of security before he makes his violent bid for the wealth hidden on Treasure Island.

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101 Stevenson reproduces this vacillation between adult and child in the narrative structure of *Treasure Island*, a story split between the narration of Jim, who recounts the bulk of the tale, and Livesey, who intervenes to narrate chapters sixteen through eighteen. Livesey’s narration creates a disruption in the text; a reader grown accustomed to Jim’s narration—who for fifteen chapters has read the “I” as belonging to the boy—must self-consciously redefine the first person as the adult doctor. Indeed, this confusion is present throughout the text, even in those early chapters narrated by Jim. His narration is similarly divided between adult and child, for while he relates an adventure he experienced as a boy, he does so from the position of an adult remembering his youth. Jim is, as Fiona McCulloch notes, “a [child] hero who is, in effect, a masquerading adult” (McCulloch 75).
Notably, Stevenson, a self-professed admirer of the unbridled charisma of the youthful imagination, does not allow the underhanded manipulations of the adult world to undermine Jim’s efforts at every turn. At times, it is Jim’s youthful activity that ultimately ends an intergenerational partnership. In particular, Stevenson stages an exhilarating victory for Jim over the coxswain Israel Hands. The two find themselves alone aboard the *Hispaniola*, unwilling collaborators in steering the schooner into the sheltered northern inlet of the island. “[O]ur interests jumped together,” concedes Jim. Hands “issued his commands,” which Jim “breathlessly obeyed,” and the two navigate the schooner through the narrow Northern Inlet “with a certainty and neatness” (154–55). However, once this joint interest is gone, once the boat is safely run aground, their collaboration ends, and the very forces that made their partnership successful threaten to destroy it. Jim’s youthful, healthy body, which moments earlier deftly executed Hands’s orders, enables him to dodge the coxswain’s attacks and best him in a fast-paced battle of wits and daring. Jim remembers their duel as “such a game as I had often played at home about the rocks of Black Hill Cove, but never before, you may be sure, with such a wildly beating heart as now. Still, as I say, it was a boy’s game, and I thought I could hold my own at it, against an elderly seaman with a wounded thigh” (157). Violence and adventure is, here, a game—an evocation of the playfully delinquent children in the romance tradition. Jim’s agility, sharpened through the games of childhood, gets the better of Hands, who at the close of the scene falls into the shallow water of the inlet, shot by Jim’s dual pistols.  

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102 Gubar provides a different reading of this scene (86–87). She notes that when Hands throws a dagger that pins Jim’s shoulder to the mast, Jim fires his pistols in surprise, without aiming, and coincidentally kills the buccaneer. Jim’s triumph is not due to his agility, then, but to “fickle chance” (87). However, it is Jim’s boyish agility that permits his survival until the fatal shots are made.
IV. CLOSER THAN AN EYE

In *Treasure Island*, Stevenson figures collaboration—with his literary predecessors, such as Defoe and Irving, and with the forces of childlike creativity, embodied by the young Osbourne—as an act of integration, of crisscrossing footprints and overlapping handwriting, of the superimposition of one body onto another. While the genre of the adventure story certainly is conducive to this approach, Stevenson continued his exploration of multiple authorship in the novel for which he is perhaps most remembered, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). His continuing preoccupation is evident in his 1888 essay “A Chapter on Dreams,” published in *Scribner’s Magazine*, in which Stevenson discusses the inspiration for and composition of the novel. In the latter half of the essay, Stevenson admits—in a confessional mode that recalls his earlier essay “My First Book”—that he did not write *Jekyll and Hyde* alone. Here, however, Stevenson does not look *outward* to texts and authors he pillaged for content or to friends and family who assisted in the novel’s composition but instead turns *inward*, naming as coauthors “the little people who manage man’s internal theatre,” his “sleepless Brownies,” each one “some Familiar, some unseen collaborator” (Stevenson “Chapter” 219, 221, 224). These “little people” provide him with fodder for his stories while he dreams, and Stevenson describes the act of composition as a complex and sometimes confused negotiation between himself and the Brownies. The latter are assigned the more creative and imaginative duties of writing; they act upon their stage scenes and entire plots that become Stevenson’s published material. They “do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as
well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself,” writes the author (Stevenson “Chapter” 223–4). The Brownies’ autonomy, however, is checked by Stevenson, who despite his self-abnegation plays the pivotal role of professional author. Once the little people have provided him with raw material, he writes, “I pull back and I cut down; and I dress the whole in the best words and sentences that I can find and make. I hold the pen, too; and I do the sitting at the table, which is about the worst of it; and when all is done, I make up the manuscript and pay for the registration; so that, on the whole, I have some claim to share” (Stevenson “Chapter” 224). Stevenson, then, assigns himself the mechanical or manual tasks of authorship, such as editing and copyright.

Because the Brownies are associated with a dream state, they lend themselves—like Jekyll and Hyde, the novel they produce—to psychological readings. Stephen D. Arata, for example, points to the “proto-psychoanalytic language” Stevenson employs in “A Chapter on Dreams” and argues that the author locates creativity in the unconscious, imagining a version of Percy Shelley’s Cave of Prometheus. The Brownies, contends Arata, are “easily identified with the raging energies of the id” (Arata 249). Claire Harman, in her biography of Stevenson, also reads Stevenson’s depiction of the Brownies psychoanalytically, contending that this essay is a “statement of what an ego-psychologist would now call the problem of self-appointment” (Harman 299). Both are plausible readings, but I argue that this essay is also a further meditation by Stevenson on the social aspects of authorship and the possibility of achieving an ideal of collaboration through integration. Stevenson presents the figure of “man’s internal theatre” and the Brownies on its stage to examine once again the possibility of assimilating the child’s vivid imagination into the adult’s modes of authorship and a mature creativity that is restrained
by, filtered through, and organized around adult experience. In describing the
relationship between his own authorship and the role of his Brownies, Stevenson takes
the concept of integration between adult and child collaborators to the extreme,
figuratively enclosing his child coauthors within his very body, containing them within
his skull. The intersection of adult and child coauthors staged in Stevenson’s earlier
works—the fusion of creativity and literary production in the smudged pages of Not I, for
example, or the superimposition of the youth of Silver onto the body of young Jim,
gamboling on the map-turned-land of Treasure Island—collectively lead up to this
figuration of the Brownie’s acting out their play on the mental stage of Stevenson. The
imaginative child Stevenson describes in “Child’s Play,” the youth who, in his passionate
make-believe, “leaps . . . runs, and sets the blood agog all over his body,” is here
transformed into the Brownies, who “like their stories hot and hot, full of passion and . . .
alive with animating incident.” These Brownies in turn exist within the body of the adult,
who is “a realist bemired up to the ears in actuality” but who can edit and publish the
Brownies’ manuscript (Stevenson “Chapter” 225, 224).

Arata notes that, like Freud, “Stevenson distinguishes between dream and waking
world in terms of a series of productive contrasts”—contrasts which assumedly map onto
the writer and his Little People with a certain degree of tidiness—“energy and order,
licentiousness and morality . . . spontaneity and craft, and so on” (Arata 248). However,
while it is tempting to arrange the Brownies and Stevenson into such a series of
conflicting dyads, Stevenson disallows this simple categorization. The Brownies
certainly act out their play without restraint, like children, but their play is mediated
through and informed by adult concerns. According to Stevenson, they at first “played
upon their stage like children” but soon, under “rigorous training,” became “drilled actors performing a set piece” (Stevenson “Chapter” 219–20). When Stevenson faces the financial pressures of day-to-day life, “[w]hen the bank begins to send letters and the butcher to linger at the back gate,” the Brownies intuitively produce marketable tales to be refined by their adult coauthor. The Brownies “share in [the author’s] financial worries and have an eye to the bank-book; they share plainly in his training; they have plainly learned like him to build the scheme of a considerate story and to arrange emotion in progressive order . . . and one thing is beyond doubt, they can tell him a story piece by piece, like a serial” (Stevenson “Chapter” 223). The Brownies understand the motives and modes of authorship, including the relationship between creativity and professional systems of publication and compensation, and in this way their onstage play recalls the savvy editorial practices of the young Osbourne, marketing the privately printed poetry collections of his stepfather at the Belvedere Hotel. The Brownie—a being with an adult consciousness housed in a small, childlike body, married to both the creative spirit and the literary marketplace—suggests in itself a microcosm of the profitable integration of the adult’s and child’s imaginations. In turn, the Brownie and the adult author are nesting dolls or Chinese boxes, their relationship the ideal of intergenerational collaboration.

The simultaneous adult and child nature of these little people is underscored by their name. Stevenson, by dubbing his coauthors “Brownies,” activates a folk tradition of pixie-like creatures of ambiguous age and origin that perform the daily tasks of the household while adults are asleep.103 The nature of the Brownies changes from story to story; their naiveté and childlike qualities represented in some versions of their legend are tempered by other tales that describe them as miniature adults. Juliana Horatia Ewing’s

103 For a concise description of the legend of the Brownies, see Carol Rose.
story *The Brownies*, published in the *Monthly Packet* in 1865, popularized the story for nineteenth-century readers of children’s literature. In her tale, the traditional representation of Brownies as elfin or supernatural creatures is revealed as an artifice that obscures the identity of the true do-gooders—human children who sweep the hearth and start the fire while their impoverished and careworn parents sleep in the next room. According to Ewing, “[a]ll children are Brownies” (Ewing 160, emphasis added).

However, in the tradition of the Brownie tale, which stretches years before Ewing’s story, the Brownies appeared as both adults and children, sometimes simultaneously, as man-children, young in size and spirit but somehow aged. It is this incarnation of the Brownie that appears, for example, in “The Elves,” included in the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, which features “two tiny little naked men” with adept “little fingers” who spend their nights assisting a poor shoemaker and are subsequently rewarded with “little shirts, coats, vests, and breeches,” “cute little articles of clothing” made by the shoemaker’s wife (Grimm185). They are simultaneously adults, little men, and children, naked, wild, small, and cute. While, in most cases, Brownies are glad to perform the most tedious jobs of the household, the Brownies in the Grimms’ tale are much more creative; they make beautifully-crafted shoes, “not a false stitch on them. It was as if the shoes were intended as a masterpiece,” and customers “paid more than the usual price” for such works of art (Grimm 184). Perhaps when Stevenson wrote “A Chapter on Dreams” he had in mind this variety of Brownie—the adult and child in one body, inspired by childhood make-believe but mindful of the professional and financial concerns of adulthood, and composing with Stevenson’s help works of art that can pay the bills.104

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104 The Brownie myth, while powerful in England and Scotland at the moment of Stevenson’s writing, continues to permeate literary and visual culture today. W. E. B. DuBois, for example, named the
The Brownies' playhouse in "A Chapter on Dreams" is matched by a "surgical theatre" described earlier in the essay, where the dreaming Stevenson witnesses "monstrous malformations and the abhorred dexterity of surgeons," and these theaters in turn find their sinister complement in the dissecting room and laboratory of Dr. Henry Jekyll (Stevenson "Chapter" 218). These last chambers, like the theater of the Brownies, are enclosed in a sort of skull. The alleyway exterior of the building that contains Jekyll's laboratories is described as "a blind forehead of discoloured wall" that "bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence." These rooms enclose their own pair of collaborators: Jekyll, whose public image as "honourable and distinguished" and his "imperious desire to carry [his] head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance" marks him as the professional adult to the wild and morbidly passionate child Edward Hyde (Stevenson JH 6, 52). The story of Jekyll and Hyde—like Stevenson's account of adult-child relationships in Treasure Island and like the narrative of the author and his Brownies provided in "A Chapter on Dreams"—describes the integrative collaboration of adult and child imagined through the act of narration, in particular through the motifs of intersecting handwriting and superimposed bodies. However, Jekyll and Hyde, more than Treasure Island, is skeptical about the possibility of continued narrative partnerships between generations.

Defining Hyde as a child has what some would consider disagreeable consequences, for it aligns childhood with Hyde's moral depravity, implied sexual

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children's periodical he edited from 1920-22 The Brownies' Book, and, of course, the Brownies, the junior branch of the Girl Guides, take their name, the inspiration for their activities, and their rituals from Juliana Horatia Ewing's story—unfortunately without permission. See Maxwell pp. 145-6.
license, and irrational violence. Stevenson was not known for celebrating a child’s malice or wickedness like other Victorian and Edwardian writers for children, such as J. M. Barrie, who famously praised the young because they are “gay and innocent and heartless” (Barrie *Peter* 226). Stevenson’s recognition of childhood cruelty reaches its limit in *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, where he writes of “[c]rue children” who grow up to be hated by their nieces and nephews and the senseless violence of the boy who destroys his city of blocks: “Now I have done with it, down let it go! / All in a moment the town is laid low” (Stevenson *Garden* 1188, 1194). However, Stevenson does acknowledge that the child’s preoccupation with fulfilling fancy—his manner of acting out his passions without the filter of adult experience or a true desire to participate in the rational world—can produce cruelty or moral callousness; for example, in “Child’s Play,” Stevenson notes that children “will parody an execution, a deathbed, or the funeral of the young man of Nain, with all the cheerfulness in the world” (Stevenson “Play” 176).

It is this childlike carelessness that Hyde embodies, his violent fantasies plucked from the world of the imagination and acted out with terrible consequences in the “real” world. In this way, the novel insists upon Hyde’s childlike nature in relation to Jekyll’s age. At times, for example, Hyde is imagined as an incarnation of the doctor’s reckless youth, “the ghost of some old sin” revisiting from the days when Jekyll “was wild [and]

105 There are an array of readings of Hyde and what cultural anxieties he may represent. Many have written on his similarity to the criminal figure outlined by writers such as Cesare Lombroso. See Lawler. Elaine Showalter reads Hyde as a sign of homosexual anxieties in the upper-middle class. Arata characterizes Hyde in part as Jekyll’s child, noting that the doctor is Hyde’s mentor, educating him on how to be a “gentleman” (Arata 241). However, Arata is primarily concerned with how Hyde embodies class anxieties, noting that Hyde is both “a figure who embodies a bourgeois readership’s worst fears about . . . a marauding and immoral underclass and a dissipated and immoral leisure class” and a criticism of the professional class (Arata 235). For a discussion of the many meanings of Hyde, see Veeder and Hirsch’s introduction to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde After One Hundred Years*.

106 For one reading of Victorians’ recognition and even desire for the misbehaving child, see “The Naughty Child” in Kincaid, pp. 246–74.

107 See “Good and Bad Children” and “Block City” in *A Child’s Garden of Verses*. J. M. Barrie commented that the children in Stevenson’s *Garden* are “cherubs without souls” (Barrie *Edinburgh* 104–5).
young” and careless of the repercussions of his pleasures (Stevenson *JH* 17). Jekyll, in his “statement of the case,” admits that as Hyde he enjoys a body that is “younger, lighter, happier” and “a heady recklessness . . . a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul” (Stevenson *JH* 54). It is his “freedom” as Hyde to ignore the costs of his passions that makes his exploits as the younger double so exciting compared to the upright existence of Jekyll, the “elderly and discontented doctor” (Stevenson *JH* 60). The matter of Jekyll’s will also situates Hyde as an insensitive child, this time acting the role not of a young Jekyll but as the doctor’s son. Gabriel Utterson is understandably troubled when Jekyll names Hyde as a sort of firstborn child, heir to all Jekyll possesses, and worries that Hyde, anxious to inherit, is prepared to do violence to the doctor (Stevenson *JH* 11). Jekyll himself, after all, claims that he has “more than a father’s interest” while Hyde exhibits “more than a son’s indifference” (Stevenson *JH* 59). Critics, in nineteenth-century reviews of the tale, reproduce the characterization of Hyde as child, dangerous due to his thoughtless and somehow playful submission to passion; for example, James Ashcroft Noble, in the *Academy*, calls Hyde “a monster whose *play* is outrage and murder” (Noble 55, emphasis added). Recent commentators have drawn similar conclusions. Jerome Charyn, citing Stevenson’s own troubled relationship with his father, dubs Hyde “Stevenson’s portrait of the artist as a bad little boy,” or “that unredeemed child in Jekyll (and Stevenson himself), that dwarf who stays asleep until Jekyll pushes him out” (Charyn 107).

With the childlike figure of Hyde, Stevenson literalizes his contention in “Child’s Play” that children “body out” their fantasies. Hyde is *another body* for Jekyll, separate from the adult world. Jekyll has found a way—albeit an insidious one, far removed from
Stevenson’s reenactment of child’s play in his soldier games with Osbourne—to “body out” his fantasies, to cast off the filtered existence of maturity and to project a separate self who can participate in the child’s sense of play and pleasure. In doing so, the doctor has formed a pact with his smaller, childlike partner, a collaboration in which Jekyll maintains his position as “Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., &c.” while enjoying the unfettered play of youth (Stevenson JH 11). The reader first learns of this partnership when it has already gone awry, but it is important to note that at the beginning of his experiment Jekyll understood Hyde not as an enemy but as a coauthor, the two of them collaborating to write a pair of related narratives, each seamless and perfect: a story of the public professional existing alongside but untainted by a story of hedonistic pleasure and license. “Men before have hired bravos to transact their crimes while their own person and reputation sat under shelter,” argues Jekyll. “I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty” (Stevenson JH 56, emphasis added).

The proper partner for Jekyll’s purposes is necessarily childlike, for the pleasure is not necessarily in the crimes committed but instead in the freedom to do so, in the escape from the restraints of mature responsibility. Because Hyde is “like a schoolboy,” this collaboration is ideal—providing, of course, that Jekyll is able to exert a degree of control over his bravo and achieve a balance between doctor and fiend, between “genial respectability” and schoolboy liberty, between plodding in the public eye and springing headlong into dark London streets.
Of course, Jekyll’s initial elation at the advantages of his double life and the freedoms afforded him by his collaboration with Hyde is soon overshadowed by the difficulties of managing his double identity. The doctor’s thrill of discovery has already abated at the beginning of the novel, replaced by his increasing anxiety that Hyde is no longer his coauthor, a partner in narrating their conjoined existence, but instead sole author. The advantages Jekyll had anticipated of collaborating with a childlike spirit that is truly part of himself, residing inside his body as the Brownies live in the internal theater of Stevenson, are overshadowed by a realization that this creature has become not an “unseen collaborator” but an enemy “caged in [his] flesh” (Stevenson JH 65). This anxiety is first suggested in Jekyll’s will, which grants Jekyll’s double sole proprietorship of the doctor’s identity—allows him, in the words of Utterson, to “step into the said Henry Jekyll’s shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation,” a caveat that betrays Jekyll’s suspicion that Hyde will soon take over his existence completely, fill his entire body (Stevenson JH 11). It is more fully articulated at the end of the novel, in the doctor’s confession, in which Jekyll articulates his fears that Hyde’s growing influence over their partnership suggests his own waning or even disappearing “power of voluntary change”; Jekyll knows that his ability to control the parameters of their collaboration will soon be “forfeited” to the more reckless partner (Stevenson JH 59). The doctor’s fears are corroborated by the involuntary transformations at the end of the tale. As Arata notes, “[w]here earlier the transitions between Jekyll and Hyde were clean and sharp (and painful), later the two personalities develop a mutual fluidity. By the end the doctor’s body metamorphoses continually from Jekyll to Hyde and back again, as if to indicate that we need no longer distinguish between them” (Arata 240).
These transformations would seem to mark the ultimate achievement of integrative collaboration between Jekyll and Hyde: the moment when the two identities become one and the same. However, the involuntary transformations Jekyll experiences in fact demonstrate the increasing struggle to maintain the collaborative character of his relationship with Hyde. The transitions from doctor to fiend are not evidence of their interchangeability but instead proof of Hyde’s increasing dominance of their partnership, for the metamorphoses that mark the end of the narrative do not fluctuate with the sense of balance and “mutual fluidity” Arata suggests—“from Jekyll to Hyde and back again”—but instead are staged as a struggle by the doctor against his child double, a resistance that Hyde, more and more often, can easily overcome. As Jekyll notes, “it seemed only by a great effort as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, that I was able to wear the countenance of Jekyll” (Stevenson JH 64). The doctor on more than one occasion finds himself involuntarily transformed into Hyde, but Hyde only submits to Jekyll when it suits his interests. Toward the end of the experiment, Hyde, “that insurgent horror,” was “knit to [Jekyll] closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of his life” (Stevenson JH 65). Hyde only willingly submits to Jekyll’s authority—only “commit[s] temporary suicide” by reverting to a mere element of the doctor’s identity rather than its sole controlling force—when struck by a “terror of the gallows” (Stevenson JH 65). The language used to describe the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde at this moment, more than at any other place in the novel, resembles the language in “A Chapter on Dreams” used to describe the collaboration between
Stevenson and his Brownies. Hyde is contained inside the body of Jekyll—muttering and gamboling like the Brownies upon their stage—and, like the Brownies, he is most powerful while his host is sleeping. However, while Stevenson, in the essay, asserts his authority to transform the “evolutions” of his Brownies into a narrative that encapsulates both their passions and his practicality—“I hold the pen,” he insists. “I pull back and I cut down”—Jekyll can no longer assert this power. His role in collaboration with Hyde is nearly extinct. Hyde controls the narrative and, in turn, their coexistence.

This is a failure of Jekyll and Hyde’s partnership, suggesting the possibility that one authorial agent can overthrow his partner and a degree of skepticism about the feasibility of collaboration. Stevenson expresses these misgivings by repurposing and redefining those motifs that in his earlier work signaled the success of this model of authorship and its ability to generate narrative possibility. One of the first strategies Jekyll adopts to manage his double, for example, is handwriting. When Hyde tramples a little girl in the street and is forced by the angry crowd that gathers to compensate the child’s family financially, the only means he has to do so is with Jekyll’s checkbook, using Jekyll’s signature, for handwriting is one element of the doctor’s identity that Hyde inherits without alteration. The ability of two separate hands to create a single text in which the discrete contributions of its coauthors are completely integrated, nearly indistinguishable, is valued in the world of the Davos Press, where printer and author collaborate to produce a single printed page that communicates the nuanced dynamic between the many actors in the social process of publication. It is similarly valued in Treasure Island, where the crisscrossing layers of handwriting on Flint’s map are both a nod to a literary tradition and the germ of a new and exciting adventure. In Jekyll and
Hyde, however, the seamless text created by the hands of the doctor and his double, their identical handwriting, threatens their partnership, leading those outside their dyad to suspect their unusual connection; thus, Jekyll is led to invent a different hand for Hyde by “sloping [his] hand backward” (Stevenson JH 57). The handwriting Jekyll invents maintains his personality as discrete from his double, but it also expresses the pair’s inherent unity and acknowledges Jekyll as the origin of Hyde. It was the doctor’s writing that was modified to accommodate a double; Hyde, as Ronald Thomas notes, is “the product of Jekyll’s pen,” and Jekyll uses this intimate link to Hyde through handwriting to manage the terms of their partnership (Thomas 78). This careful balance, however, soon breaks down. The “rather singular resemblance” between the handwriting of Jekyll and Hyde leads Utterson’s clerk, Mr. Guest, to suspect the connection between the respectable doctor and the monstrous Hyde, now under suspicion for the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, a suspicion that could sabotage their pact of pleasure and public image (Stevenson JH 27). The seamless text created by Jekyll and Hyde, then, cuts short the possibilities of ongoing, parallel narratives, and the two stories converge into a single narrative of fear and evasion or, as Utterson calls it, Hyde and Seek (Stevenson JH 14).

Guest’s comparison of the autographs of Jekyll and Hyde is followed by a series of incidents in which handwriting betrays that Jekyll and Hyde are in fact one hand, one authorial agent, in a manner that threatens their partnership or expresses its uncontrollable nature. Handwriting, in other words, becomes an element of the story that signals the vanishing possibility of collaboration, its deterioration into a fight for narrative authority. For example, when Jekyll locks himself inside his laboratory and sends letters to every druggist in London, searching for the correct chemical components
to control his unpredictable transformations, the passion of Hyde finds expression in the

doctor's writing. Utterson, examining Jekyll’s most recent letter, notes that for a time

“the letter [ran] composedly enough, but here with a sudden splutter of the pen, the

writer’s emotion had broken loose. ‘For God’s sake,’ he had added, ‘find me some of the

old [sample]’ (Stevenson JH 37). Here, Jekyll’s restraint falters as he strains to silence

Hyde, a conflict that finds expression in ink. Later, when Utterson and the doctor’s

servants break down the door to Jekyll’s laboratory, Utterson finds evidence of Hyde’s

appropriation of Jekyll’s hand—both his physical hand and his handwriting. The lawyer

“was amazed to find . . . a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times

demanded a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies”

(Stevenson JH 42). Many critics, including Thomas and Arata, rightfully contend that

Hyde’s ability to write as Jekyll generates a skepticism about the authenticity of text and
doubts about the ability of handwriting to signal identity. They argue that this is

Stevenson’s way of suggesting the “disappearance of the author,” an early example of the

modernist “dissociation of writing from selfhood” (Thomas 78, Arata 253). It is also

possible, however, to understand those moments when Hyde commandeers Jekyll’s hand

as Stevenson’s illustration of the limits of collaboration. The bleak conclusion of Jekyll’s

experiment suggests that even the most accommodating model of coauthorship cannot

unfailingly contain two authorial agents while remaining a seamless text. The challenge,

perhaps, becomes particularly difficult when an adult author attempts to assimilate the

energy of the childlike imagination, a force that, while not always imagined in a form as

sinister as Hyde, is powerful in its own right and careless of the adult, rational world.
Stevenson, then, reprises the motif of handwriting, so central to his depiction of the possibilities of integrative collaboration in his earlier work, only to alter its meaning, to transform it into a symptom of the difficulties or even impossibilities of coauthorship. The motif of superimposed or paired bodies, which in Stevenson’s earlier work similarly suggests—through the paired bodies of Jim and Silver, or through the symbiotic and very physical collaboration between the author and his Brownies—the narrative possibility inherent in adult-child collaboration is also, and quite obviously, revisited in this novel. However, *Jekyll and Hyde* stages an adult-child pair that, once separated, cannot achieve again the integrated, single self that would represent successful collaboration. Jekyll cannot recreate the balance of chemicals that allows him to reincorporate Hyde because the initial compound that began his experiment was an anomaly, unlikely to occur again. “I am now persuaded,” Jekyll writes at the end of the novel, after ransacking London for the appropriate drug, “that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught” (*Stevenson JH* 66). Popular adaptations of Stevenson’s novel on stage and film revisit again and again the picture of Hyde as part of Jekyll, contained within his body, seen inside the upright form of the medical man.108 Posters advertising theater and film adaptation of *Jekyll and Hyde*, for example, frequently showcase the superimposed images of the two. The most familiar example is the promotional photograph of Richard Mansfield’s dual portrayal of both parts in the London adaptation opened in 1887 (Fig. 9). It seems however, that the balance of chemicals employed in photography could achieve a transformation that Jekyll himself

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108 For a full account of the representations of *Jekyll and Hyde* in its stage premiere, see Pinkston.
could not duplicate. The failure of Jekyll to recreate his compound, and indeed the implication that the compound itself can never be recreated, suggests not the difficulty of integrative collaboration but instead its near impossibility. Jekyll’s admission of failure is followed by the final two paragraphs of the novel, in which he submits to the inevitable transformation into Hyde—who is now a weeping, helpless creature terrified of arrest and punishment—and his eventual death. Hyde dies as Jekyll, contorted on the floor after swallowing a vial of cyanide. This final act of violence marks the death of any possibility of the successful coexistence of Jekyll and Hyde, adult and child.  

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109 The death of Jekyll as Hyde is anticipated by the crime at the center of the novel. The murder of Sir Danvers Carew by Hyde—the crime that brings to a head the troubles of the doctor’s double life—similarly destroys all hope of the coexistence of adult and child in one body. Carew is described as both an elderly man—“an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair”—and a childlike figure, who “seemed to breathe such an innocent old-world kindness of disposition” (Stevenson JH 20). Hyde kills off the character who seems to unite youth and age.
V. THE IMPOSSIBILITIES OF COLLABORATION

*Jekyll and Hyde* was published just a few years after the end of Stevenson’s collaboration with the child Osbourne over the small printing press. Hart, who concludes his description of the Stevenson-Osbourne printing venture in the mid-eighties, when Osbourne was “a teen-ager, well beyond his fourteenth birthday,” notes with nostalgia the waning years of the boy’s first collaborations with his stepfather (Hart 44). “In three countries on both sides of the Atlantic they had had their good times together over a little printing press,” Hart writes, “and if they went on to further, more mature collaboration in still another land, across the Pacific, it was the period of youth and playthings of youth that both enjoyed most in their associations together” (Hart 46). While Hart’s portrayal of this phase of the pair’s collaboration is sentimental, it does suggest something quite true: that Stevenson and Osbourne’s later, “more mature collaboration” would be decidedly different from their partnership as schoolboy and emerging writer. Stevenson and Osbourne would continue to collaborate until Stevenson’s death in December in 1894, but their literary projects would be governed by a new set of expectations and negotiations, the “new standards” Osbourne saw developing in his teenage years.

The two started coauthoring novels in the 1880s, when Osbourne was in his twenties, and Stevenson had a much different perception of his stepson as a grown man than as the schoolboy “much in want of ‘something craggy to break his mind upon.’” In an 1893 letter to Barrie, Stevenson calls Osbourne “The Boy” but notes good-humoredly that Osbourne “keeps nothing of youth but some of its intolerance” (*Letters* 8.46–7).110 It

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110 Years later, in 1949, Morley would call Osbourne an “unspoiled little innocent” and claim he was “perhaps the greatest American boy (barefoot, with cheek) since Whittier and Mark Twain” (Morley 89–
is a different project for Stevenson to collaborate with this young man who is still, in a sense, the boy whose box of watercolor paints helped create Treasure Island—still “his mother’s curly headed boy”—and yet no longer a child (Stevenson Letters 8.47). Their early collaborations were experiments in resolving the conflict between a youthful imagination and the practical mechanics of writing and the marketplace, resulting in texts and tropes—such as their small press poetry collection and the treasure map—that signify the resolution of these conflicts. The pair’s later collaborations, however, are between not only two adults but also two professionals, two writers embroiled in the negotiations of professional authorship. The names of both Stevenson and Osbourne appear on the title pages of these three novels—Stevenson’s usually first, at the insistence of the publisher—and both have a literary reputation to consider. While Osbourne had yet to seriously embark on a solo literary career, he was certainly beginning to consider himself as a soon-to-be professional author. Accordingly, Osbourne understood these later collaborations with Stevenson as evidence that his stepfather saw him as a serious writer, noting that after their work together on The Ebb-Tide Stevenson “regarded me seriously as a fellow-craftsman; sought my judgment and often took it” (Osbourne Portrait 99).

Therefore, the conflicts that arise both in Stevenson’s accounts of their collaboration in his letters and inside the text of the novels they produce are conflicts primarily on the level of language—such as genre, style, word choice, and structure—and suggest the conflict between two professional authorial personae, the natural tension arising between two men working to express the same idea in different language. Osbourne notes that, for the most part, he provided an initial plot outline—“I always wrote the first draft, to
break the ground,” Osbourne notes—that was later elaborated upon by Stevenson, who would return drafts to Osbourne over and over again, often expressing displeasure at the way the plot was put into narrative form (qtd. in Hinchcliffe xviii). The partnership between Stevenson and the adult Osbourne was a series of compromises, a give and take not primarily over the direction of the story but instead over the best way to express a narrative that isn’t as flexible.

Stevenson found this mode of collaboration challenging or, at least, felt compelled to represent it as more difficult than his partnerships with children. In “My First Book,” Stevenson boasts that the intersection of youthful play and professional authorship that took place over the watercolor map at Braemar inspired him to immediately dash off the first half of *Treasure Island*, but accounts of the composition of *The Wrong Box*, *The Wrecker*, and *Ebb Tide* are not characterized by such ease. Writing to his cousin Bob in September 1894 about *The Wrecker*, Stevenson is overwhelmed by what he calls the “impossibilities of collaboration,” noting that

> the great difficulty of collaboration is that you can’t *tell* what you mean. I know what kind of effect I want a character to give—what kind of *tache* he is to make; but how am I to tell my collaborator in words? . . . I, as a *personal artist*, can begin a character with only a haze in my head, but how if I have to translate the haze into words before I begin? . . . These are the times that illustrate to a man the inadequacy of spoken language. Now—to be just to written language—I can (or could) find a language for my every mood, but how could I *tell* anyone beforehand, what this effect was to be, which it would take every art that I possessed, and *hours and hours of deliberate labour and selection and rejection*, to produce? There are the impossibilities of collaboration.

*(Stevenson *Letters* 8.364, emphasis added)*

Here, there is no serendipitous coming together of author and printer, no seamless movement from map to page, no child figure charismatically providing the adult author with stories to sell. The collaborative process between Osbourne and Stevenson is
characterized instead by a breakdown of communication, and notably a disjunction
between the practices of one “personal artist” and another. Stevenson cannot
communicate to Osbourne the details of the procedures he follows as a professional
author—the “deliberate labour” and “selection and rejection” that produce the character
types and plot lines he finds effective. While Stevenson names the “inadequacy of
spoken language” as the culprit, it seems that this trouble arises, in part, from the altered
expectations he brings to this collaboration. Stevenson no longer looks to Osbourne to
provide the sort of uninhibited sense of play to feed the established author’s pen but
instead looks to him to replicate his own professional practices of authorship. It is more
difficult, Stevenson discovers, to coordinate two adult imaginations than to supplement
the adult imagination with the riotous child fancy, which need not understand why one
word is better than another, why one sentence works and another does not.

All three novels coauthored by Stevenson and Osbourne provide evidence of this
new mode of collaboration and its “impossibilities”; however, I will conclude this chapter
by examining briefly *Ebb Tide*, fittingly the last of their coauthored novels. The subtitle
of this novel is “A Trio & Quartette,” suggesting in the language of music how many
voices can combine to create a single sound—a subtitle that also holds the possibility of
harmony or dissonance. Moreover, as this subtitle suggests, the novel explores the
dynamic between three and then four collaborators, exceeding the dyad suggested by
coauthorship as well as the themes of duality that have come to characterize Stevenson
studies. In this sense, *Ebb Tide* builds on Dr. Jekyll’s hypothesis, in the final pages of
*Jekyll and Hyde*, that “man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious,
incongruous and independent denizens” (Stevenson *JH* 53). The novel is divided into
two parts—“The Trio” and “The Quartette”—and describes the adventures of three men living in an abandoned prison on an island in the South Seas: Robert Herrick, an Oxford educated young man who has failed spectacularly through a string of careers and finally committed himself to self-exile; Huish, described as a “vulgar and bad-hearted cockney clerk”; and the American master-mariner Davis, who has disgraced himself by crashing his boat while drunk, killing seven members of his crew (Stevenson Ebb 7). The three manage to commandeer a schooner, called the Farallone, carrying a load of champagne, because its crew has been killed off by smallpox. When the three realize that most of the champagne is in fact water and are blown off course by foul weather, they redirect their journey to the nearest land, where they meet Attwater, a cultured yet intimidating Englishman who has taken control of an island. Attwater, a character of “silken brutality,” oversees a troop of natives in an offshore pearl expedition and preaches his own brand of fervent Christianity (Stevenson Ebb 72–3). Attwater separates Herrick from his companions, and the intelligent but cowardly man finds himself caught between the domineering Attwater and his friends, Davis and Huish, who are plotting to rob Attwater of his pearls, kill him if necessary, and flee. The story ends in the attempt at a parley, during which Huish plans to hurl a bottle of vitriol in Attwater’s face. Attwater anticipates the attack, kills Huish, and claims Davis as a religious convert.

In the first half of the novel, Herrick, Davis, and Huish form a relatively stable community. While their temperaments and histories are very different, they have learned to empathize with one another over their shared fate. They keep each other warm at night, lying in “one wet mass” in their makeshift home, and, while the drunken behavior of Huish and Davis irks Herrick, he must concede that over the time they shared on the
island and at sea they “were become brothers; there was an implied bond of loyalty in their cohabitation of the ship and their past miseries” (Stevenson *Ebb* 88). Notably, the disagreements that do occur among them arise when the three try to give voice to a cohesive expression of their adventures or their hopes for escape through storytelling or narration. For example, the novel opens with the three on the beach, bored, ill, and hungry. Davis asks for a story to ease their distress, and the dreamy Herrick obliges with an escapist tale resembling the stories in the *Arabian Nights*, in which he is rewarded for a random act of kindness with a magic-carpet journey to London, where he partakes of the luxuries he has not enjoyed in many years. Initially, his companions speak up to alter and add detail to Herrick’s tale, imagining in unison their own escape from the island. Davis, for example, speculates about how long the journey would take and the type of currency commonly found aboard a flying carpet—which, apparently, is double-eagles (Stevenson *Ebb* 10). However, the chapter ends with the others explaining to Herrick how they fundamentally disagree with the manner in which he composes a story; their contentions, it seems, ultimately arise out of genre concerns, even if the trio would not define their problems as such. Huish, the most argumentative of the three, raves that Herrick’s tale, which at times is decidedly pious, is “like the rot there is in tracts” (Stevenson *Ebb* 9). The emendations he suggests would transform the story into something more likely to be sold alongside penny dreadfuls. “I think you are about the poorest ’and at a yarn,” he gripes. “Crikey, it’s like *Ministering Children*! I can tell you there would be more beer and skittles about my little jaunt” (Stevenson *Ebb* 11).\(^\text{111}\)

D\(\text{Davis, on the other hand, thinks something a little more autobiographical and less}

\(^\text{111}\) Huish is referring to *Ministering Children: A Tale Dedicated to Childhood* (1854) by Maria Louisa Charlesworth. It is a pious book meant to teach young people sympathy for the poor.
fantastic would be more suitable, and suggests getting rid of Herrick’s “fancy rigs” and opting instead for the tale of a holiday feast among family (Stevenson Ebb 12). Herrick’s tale degenerates into a draft to be reconsidered, amended, and eventually rewritten completely, and the exchange of edits and revisions is only cut short when a storm forces the three men to quit the tale and take shelter.

The minor disagreements between Huish, Davis, and Herrick are for the most part resolved at the end of “The Trio,” which ends with a chapter entitled “Partners,” an account of how the three agree upon the best course of action after discovering their sham cargo and limited supplies. Their semantic squabbles, however, are amplified in “The Quartette,” the second half of the novel set on Attwater’s island, where the delicate balance of their partnership is destabilized by the addition of a fourth. Tensions mount when, upon meeting the trio’s schooner as it sails into the bay, Attwater blatantly favors the relatively cultured Herrick over his coarse companions, whom he calls “vulgar wolves” (Stevenson Ebb 85). The partnership of Huish, Davis, and Herrick, however, is fatally undermined when Huish and Davis conspire to use Herrick’s new intimacy with Attwater to determine the location of Attwater’s cache of pearls. Herrick is caught between his obligations to his partners and his own ethical impulses, which encourage him to take a different, if lonely, course of action and warn Attwater of the attack:

The three lives went up and down before [Herrick] like buckets in a well or like the scales of balances. It had come to a choice, one that must be speedy . . . Horror of sudden death for horror of sudden death, there was here no hesitation possible: it must be Attwater. And no sooner was the thought formed (which was a sentence) than the whole mind of the man ran in a panic to the other side; and when he looked within himself, he was aware only of turbulence and inarticulate outcry.

(Stevenson Ebb 87–8, emphasis added)
Here, the uneasy collaboration Herrick has formed with Huish and Davis cannot survive his allegiance to Attwater. Notably, his conflict, like the many conflicts experienced between Stevenson and Osbourne as they drafted the novel, is expressed on the level of language. Herrick must write a sentence—a single line in the text that will either confirm his companions’ version of the story or allow Herrick to take possession of his own narrative, abandoning his partners and demonstrating an ambition similar to that of the ruggedly independent Attwater.

In *Ebb Tide*, as in *Jekyll and Hyde*, the narrative ends with the collapse of the possibility of collaboration. Herrick decides to abandon the crew of the *Farallone* and inform Attwater of his companions’ treachery, and soon he is brandishing a Winchester alongside the pearl-fisher. The trio is reduced to a duet, but Huish and Davis remain collaborators and pen together an apologetic letter meant to grant them access to Attwater’s compound. Tellingly, the letter represents both men through its language; while the note is dictated by Davis and uses his refined vocabulary, Huish transcribes it in his own coarse dialect: “It is with feelin’s of shyme and ’artfelt contrition that I approach you,” records Huish. “Our Mr. ’Errick ’as left the ship, and will have doubtless communicated to you the nature of our ’opes. Needless to s’y, these are no longer possible” (*Stevenson Ebb* 120). Huish and Davis land on the beach to deliver the letter to Attwater, and for a brief moment the novel stages a confrontation between the steadfast collaborators and Herrick, armed with his gun, material evidence that he has abandoned their partnership. At the end of the novel, Huish is murdered by Attwater, and Davis is forced to give up his designs on the treasure. The *Farallone* is torched by Herrick, who, with Davis, now lives under the unspoken rule of the pearl-fisher. Herrick’s sentence, his
one-line emendation of his friends’ plan, has reduced their three-pronged narrative into a single story—the unified rule practiced by Attwater upon all on the island.

VI. CONCLUSION

If Stevenson found his later collaborations with his stepson difficult, Osbourne most likely did as well, although for different reasons. While Stevenson expressed a great deal of pride in his stepson’s talents and wished to assist the young man with his established name, Osbourne discovered that collaborating with a well-known author is a problematic means to launch a solo career. Critics’ opinions reveal that many considered Osbourne an impediment to enjoying a new novel by Stevenson. An anonymous critic reviewing *Ebb Tide* for the *Saturday Review*, for example, assures readers that the book is “intensely Stevensonian,” concluding that “it is better to have Mr. Stevenson and another than not have Mr. Stevenson at all” (Anonymous *Saturday* 330). A review of the same novel for the *Speaker* admits with some resignation that “Mr. Stevenson and partner faithfully copy Mr. Stevenson alone” (Anonymous *Speaker* 362). When Osbourne began publishing his own work in the early twentieth century—novels and collections of short stories that were often about automobiles, one of Osbourne’s passions—reviewers continued to mention Stevenson. A critic in the *Nation* writes that Osbourne’s novel *The Adventurer* “bids fair to take its place among a not too numerous company of . . . Stevensonian kindred” (Anonymous *Nation* 518), and a *National Magazine* review of Osbourne’s *A Person of Some Importance* notes that “the influence of Stevenson seems to permeate many of the [book’s] situations” (Anonymous *National* 241). Stevenson
haunts his protégé like a phantom limb, a past collaborator whose presence was so influential that it demands acknowledgment. Many scholars contemporary to Osbourne and today contend that Osbourne’s best work is about his stepfather, and Osbourne is largely remembered for his introductions to Stevenson’s works, his nostalgic memoir An Intimate Portrait of R.L.S., and Memories of Vailima, a collection of meditations on living with Stevenson in the South Seas that Osbourne composed and edited jointly with his sister, Isobel Strong.

Despite this, Osbourne was a prolific author, publishing over a dozen novels and short story collections, and he achieved some fleeting success. He endured his share of scathing reviews. New Outlook found The Adventurer “ordinary and hardly worthwhile” (Anonymous Outlook 497). Reviewers at Critic found nothing very kind to say about Osbourne’s Baby Bullet, apart from noting that it contains “a great many exclamation points” (Anonymous Critic 579). However, even in the early twentieth century some commentators began to suspect that Osbourne’s relationship with Stevenson obscured the younger author’s literary talents. “It is difficult to estimate the place in literature of one whose connections are so distinguished,” notes the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography in 1910. “In this instance, mention of Mr. Osbourne inevitably suggests Stevenson, and brings to memory that master’s witchery of style . . . With that significant fact in mind, it is to be noted that Mr. Osbourne has the gift of story-telling in generous measure and a style of his own that is effective and entertaining” (“Osbourne” 459). Indeed, reviews of Osbourne’s work concur in many points of praise, particularly admiring Osbourne’s humor and narrative pace. A Book News review of the collection Motormaniacs notes that it provides “plenty of healthful laughter” (Anonymous Book
News 817), and the Spectator claims that Baby Bullet has a “narrative [that] moves at a speed suitable to the subject” (Anonymous Spectator 985). While Osbourne’s persistent connection with Stevenson was too apparent for the young writer to escape, he did experience limited success on his own.

However, it is not certain that Osbourne sought to escape these constant comparisons to Stevenson or to abandon the methods of creative collaboration the pair developed together. Osbourne appreciated his relationship with his stepfather and had come to understand—as Stevenson did in “Authors and Publishers”—the social aspects of composition and publication and the unique benefits of collaboration, despite the difficulties models of multiple authorship entail. The strongest evidence of the lasting impression that collaboration with Stevenson made on the young author’s literary imagination is his continuing commitment to creative partnerships. In the early 1900s, Osbourne collaborated with his nephew, Austin Strong, on two plays: The Exile (1903), a portrait of Napoleon stranded on St. Helena, and Little Father of the Wilderness (1905), a twenty-minute drama detailing an encounter between a priest and a king. The former was not received well—many reviewers criticized the authors’ choice of subject matter—but the latter was applauded, and reviews were “unanimous in their praise” (Greene 303). Perhaps heartened by his audience’s encouraging applause, perhaps rejuvenated by his return to the give and take of collaboration, Osbourne returned to the love of maps he once shared with Stevenson, this time in the company of Strong. Together, the two began work on Treasure Island: A Melodrama in Five Acts.
Volume II

Victoria Ford Smith

Between Generations: Imagination, Collaboration, and the Nineteenth-Century Child
CHAPTER THREE
VICE VERSA: WRITING ADULTS AND CREATIVE CHILDREN

*Little Folks* magazine, introduced by Cassell in 1871, was filled with literature, games and contests, illustrations, and two correspondence columns, the “Little Folks Post Office” and the “Question and Answer Page.” The formula was a hit. The periodical survived the stiff competition of the market in children’s magazines and continued publication until 1930. Its success, as Gretchen Galbraith demonstrates, is largely due to the editors’ ability to respond to a rapidly changing market through “ever-evolving opportunities for reader participation” (Galbraith 56). Sam H. Hamer, who became editor of *Little Folks* in 1895, was particularly adept at responding to the demands of his young audience. Hamer—who called himself the “good, kind Editor”—engaged the magazine’s audience by reminding them that they were a powerful force that could not only transform the magazine but also challenge those adult authorities who determined the contours of literature and periodicals for children. Early in his editorship, for example, Hamer asked his readers to send him pictures of what they thought the editor of *Little Folks* looked like. “The resulting collage, mostly of bearded men, but including three women,” notes Galbraith, was published in the 1896 volume of the magazine and was “accompanied by a photograph of a man sitting behind a desk with a *Little Folks* magazine covering his face” (Galbraith 56). The “little folks” who read *Little Folks* literally obscure the editor and replace him with images of an editor they deem appropriate. The identity of the real editor does not matter, Hamer suggests. The magazine belongs to the children who read it.

112 For more on *Little Folks*, see Galbraith, chapter four.
Little Folks was one of many periodicals and texts for children published in the latter half of the nineteenth century that encouraged young readers to participate in the definition of their literature. Authors, editors, and illustrators of children’s literature began to articulate a wish to take seriously the needs, values, and desires of children. Hamer is a particularly powerful example of this trend. His request for portraits of the Little Folks editor was only one of many ways he suggested to his readers their pivotal role in the periodical. He literalized the editorial role of child readers, for example, when he introduced himself in the 1895 volume by writing a fictional account of six children who visit his office to provide their opinions on the magazine, and he sponsored a contest in which children could win a brooch, for girls, or knife, for boys, for submitting the best essay about “How I Would Edit ‘Little Folks’” (Galbraith 55, 63).

Hamer developed the persona of an editor who does not impose upon his audience his own ideas about what is good or entertaining for children but instead allows children to have their say, in their own voices, and he was not alone. An anonymous 1860 essay entitled “Children’s Literature” published in The Quarterly Review notes that “[o]ne of the most interesting features of our modern literature is the ample provision it contains for the real or supposed wants of childhood” (Quarterly 299). By 1888, when Edward Salmon published his report Juvenile Literature as It Is, the voice of children outside the text is an undeniable force exerting pressure on children’s literature. Salmon begins his report by determining what children truly read, asking children themselves and accruing “some two thousand” responses to a survey concerning children’s literature (Salmon
These examples, while anecdotal, suggest that children spoke back to adult authority over the genre of children's literature, often in their own voices, whether those voices be real, as in the case of Salmon's child respondents, or imagined, as in the case of the "six young visitors" stopping in at the editorial offices of Young Folks. As Eveline C. Godley writes in her 1906 essay "A Century of Children's Books," "the modern critic, wishing for a reliable judgment, turns naturally to the children themselves . . . Everything has to give way before the infallible instincts of childhood" (Godley 92–3).

These essays suggest that, throughout the nineteenth century, authors began to investigate how the child might assume an increasingly influential role in what Pierre Bourdieu calls the "field of cultural production," or "the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of a writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer" (Bourdieu 78). In the essays quoted above, the child is recognized as an evaluative force, one of a number of cultural factors that has the authority "to consecrate producers or products" and to grant "literary legitimacy" (Bourdieu 78). It is difficult to determine how much influence children truly had in shaping the genre, but the acknowledgment of children as viable arbiters in the field of cultural production in reviews and prefaces, for example, illustrates a change both in the way Victorians understood the professional writer for children—who now responds to a child readership before, during, and after the act of composition—and the way they understood child readers and children in

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113 Salmon's survey was circulated "to numerous schools for boys and girls," and this necessarily inflects his survey along the lines of class (Salmon 13). Were these schools board schools? Denominational schools? Salmon does not specify.
As supposed participants in the “struggle to define the writer” and the assignation of literary merit, children are, in the words of Virginia Caputo, “active agents engaged in the production of meaning in their own social lives” (Caputo 20). There were a number of cultural constructs of the child circulating in the nineteenth century—the Wordsworthian child trailing clouds of glory, the depraved child the Evangelical movement sought to save, the factory child who became a site of state intervention, to name just a few—but this assertive, opinionated child is a new and significant figure in the Victorian imagination.

The vision of children’s agency constructed by Hamer and Salmon recognizes that children exist, as Margarida Morgado argues, “independently of adult projection,” outside the “ideological, political, and/or linguistic adult structures of meaning and of feeling” (Morgado 206–7). As I outlined in my introduction, much recent scholarship on children’s literature, following Jacqueline Rose’s ground-breaking study The Case of Peter Pan (1984), reduce all representations of children to projections of adults’ desires. While I recognize that the figure of the child is, largely, a cultural construction that varies depending on cultural conditions, I also contend that it is necessary, and responsible, to push beyond Rose’s reading, situating children’s literature alongside other discourses that recognize a child who may be able to speak against or in collusion with adult norms. In other words, it is useful to follow scholars like Morgado, who recognize how “the child as symbol, dream or the product of the wishful thinking and erotic desires of adults” coexists with “representational attempts to capture the intrinsic qualities of a child,” including the child’s point of view and language (Morgado 207).

For a general model of how the reader can influence the author’s composition of a work—as well as how the reader works in tandem with a number of producers in the way “books come into being and spread through society”—see Robert Darnton.
Morgado locates an awareness of the “real” child in literature the early twentieth century, discussing, for example, Henry James’s explorations of the child psyche in *What Maisie Knew* (1897) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) as early examples of this trend. However, the roots of this new construction of childhood are certainly in the Victorian period. Many popular authors in the mid to late 1800s were calling for accurate literary representations of children, even if those representations undermined adults’ expectations or were uncomfortable to read. For example, Geraldine Jewsbury, in the preface to her 1852 novel for children, *The History of an Adopted Child*, seeks to correct the sentimental depictions of children that predominate in Victorian literature and culture with a less ideal picture culled from her own past. “I do not think children are so happy as it is the fashion to represent them,” Jewsbury states. “I recollect so well all my own unhappiness . . . that I have written this history” (Jewsbury v–vi). Similarly, Florence Montgomery wrote a number of novels for both adults and children that explore children’s mental lives to perhaps an unprecedented degree. She entitled her 1867 novel for adults *A Very Simple Story: Being a Chronicle of the Thoughts and Feelings of a Child*, and she prefaced her popular novel *Misunderstood* (1869) by contesting typical representations of the child in literature: “It has been thought that the lives of children, as known by themselves from their own little point of view, are not always sufficiently realised, that they are sometimes overlooked or misunderstood,” writes Montgomery, “and to throw some light, however faint, upon the subject, is one of the objects of this little story” (Montgomery v). At times such treatments of childhood can be

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115 Social historian Philippe Ariès may have argued for an even earlier timeline. In his noted social history *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), Ariès notes that an interest in “little children’s habits and ‘jargon’” began in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. “People . . . amused themselves by picking up their children’s expressions and using their vocabulary.” However, Ariès notes that at this early date it is “a rare thing for literature, even of the most popular kind, to preserve traces of children’s jargon” (Ariès 47).
condescending or sentimental; Montgomery does, after all, use the word “little” twice, and promises only a “faint” illumination of children’s perspectives. The child protagonists of Jewsbury, Montgomery, and similar authors in many ways adhere to Victorian norms of representing ideal, impossibly innocent children. For example, Humphrey Duncombe, the child narrator of *Misunderstood*, expires in a particularly sentimental deathbed scene largely based on the last moments of Paul Dombey in Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (Rosenthal 95). However, it is noteworthy that these authors forcefully express the intention of writing “real” children, even if their execution of this idea falls short.

Recent scholarship in children’s literature has begun to explore how nineteenth-century authors for children responded to the impulse to understand the social lives of real children. Marah Gubar in particular has analyzed Victorians’ recognition of children’s voices by examining at length the rise of the child narrator, deployed in particular in the work of female authors for children such as Dinah Maria Mulock Craik and Juliana Horatia Ewing. Dissatisfied, as I am, with accounts of children’s literature following Rose’s study that interpret literary representations of childhood as “a form of colonization,” in which the child narrator is “the most sneakily seductive” of the many techniques “authors employ to mold and manipulate the child,” Gubar explores child-narrated fictions published from the 1850s to the 1890s and concludes that

[...]

(Gubar 41)
The frequency with which authors for children used child narrators, Gubar argues, suggests both their interest in children’s voices and perspectives, which are not always innocent or attractive, and these authors’ impulse to interrogate “what it means to be an author.” In particular, by tracing child narrators’ use of existing texts—everything from *Jane Eyre* to fairy tales to adventure stories—Gubar contends that authors such as Craik and Ewing “characterize artistic agency not in terms of innocence and unproblematic autonomy but as a struggle that involves recycling, resisting, and revising preexisting narratives,” a form of collaboration (Gubar 42).

This chapter will examine the tendency in Victorian children’s literature to recognize the child’s voice as a force that could speak against and at times overthrow the norms, expectations, and authority of writing (and reading) adults. I will pay particular attention to Dickens’s novella for children, *A Holiday Romance* (1868), and J. M. Barrie’s famous play, *Peter Pan* (1904). These texts suggest that the ideal Romantic child is increasingly fractured and challenged as authors acknowledge children as social actors who are not always amenable and are, at times, recalcitrant and ready to assert their own demands. James R. Kincaid, in his examination of the culture of child-loving in the Victorian period, may argue that this “naughty child” is merely an inverse of the “good child,” responding to “a more subtle semiotics of desire that require [it] to evade the demands that are placed upon it” (Kincaid 246). However, the relationship between adult author and creative children in *A Holiday Romance, Peter Pan*, and similar works in which children exhibit increased narrative agency is neither that of the good child obeying adult desires nor that of the naughty child defiantly, and enticingly, resisting them. Instead, as I will show, adults and children in these texts are in a constant
negotiation that recognizes both the adult’s ability to represent childhood and their misconceptions of the child world, both adults’ kinship with childhood and isolation from it, both how the child responds to the adult’s desires and evades them.

My discussion of literary texts in this chapter and in particular my account of *A Holiday Romance* is influenced by Gubar’s readings, but I depart from her argument by situating these adult-child relationships in two historical contexts: Victorian understandings of the child’s imagination, as outlined in my introduction, as well as the history of education and educational policies, sites where educators’ and school inspectors’ increasing attention to the child’s imagination shifted the balance of power between adults and children. Accounts of the child’s imagination and education are also, necessarily, embedded in adult understandings of the child; however, these discourses begin to make room for alternative understandings of childhood that contradict familiar models of the child’s passivity and vulnerability. In letters, dedications, and prefaces, the authors I discuss express a simultaneous mastery over and subservience to the child’s imagination and, in order to work through this contradiction, turn to a new model of adult-child collaboration, in which the adult writer cedes authority to the creative child. By both surrendering children’s literature to children, handing the pen to the child, and maintaining their roles as authors, these writers accommodate their anxieties by imagining a collaborative relationship that is both cooperative and contentious. Moreover, the troubled relationships these authors build with children outside of their narratives in paratextual materials are replicated inside their stories, in complicated adult-child pairings such as the uneasy alliances between rebellious children and dim-witted adults in Dickens’s *A Holiday Romance* and the epic enmity between Peter and Hook in
Barrie’s play. Collaboration—a mode of composition that showcases simultaneously a seamless, unified text and the myriad of separate voices that contribute to that text’s production and a mode that allows often silenced subjects to speak—is an authorial model particularly suited to express these layers of contradiction.

I. TREMENDOUS TRIVIALITIES

When Dickens’s Boston publishers, Ticknor and Fields, offered the substantial fee of £1000 for four stories to be published in the American children’s periodical Our Young Folks, the author had little experience writing for a child audience.116 He had published only one text written specifically for children: A Child’s History of England, an ambitious project published in Household Words between January 1851 and December 1853 that “has never been popular among children,” according to Gillian Avery, because “it is too complicated for recreational reading . . . and too subversive (and inaccurate) to be prescribed by pedagogues” (Avery xxiv). The Life of Our Lord, which Dickens wrote for his own children in 1848, was not intended for mass circulation and indeed was not published until 1934, long after the author’s death. Judging by his correspondence, however, Dickens agreed to undertake the project for Our Young Folks with enthusiasm. “I shall be happy,” writes Dickens in a March 1867 letter to J. R. Osgood, “to write for the Child’s Magazine published by your house, four little papers expressly designed for

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116 Ticknor and Fields brought out Our Young Folks in 1865 “as part of a more general ambitious expansion into the field of periodical publishing,” responding in part to the growing market in children’s periodicals and the expanding school system. The magazine was a 64-page octavo monthly costing $1.50 per year and featured well-known American and British authors, including not only Dickens but also Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Russell Lowell, Louisa May Alcott, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. After a Boston fire in 1872, James T. Fields ran into financial difficulties and sold the magazine to Scribner, where it was merged with the popular St. Nicholas Magazine. See Kelly, pp. 10–23.
its pages” (Letters 11.343). Conflating the physical size of his child readers with the size of his stories—“four little papers”—Dickens set to producing a narrative “designed” for children, joining the tradition of authors for children, outlined by Gubar, who used child narrators in their fictions. The result was *A Holiday Romance*, published simultaneously in *Our Young Folks* in the United States and *All the Year Round* in England from January through May 1868, during the latter years of Dickens’s 1867–8 American tour. *A Holiday Romance* is a series of stories written in the voices of four children—Willing Tinkling, aged eight, and his bride Nettie Ashford, aged “half-past six,” and Robin Redforth, aged nine, and his bride Alice Rainbird, aged seven (Dickens *AHR* 428). The first tale in the series is a frame story in the voice of Tinkling, who explains that the young friends, disappointed when the fantasies that comprise their make-believe play cannot survive in the adult world, have decided to write a sequence of tales, edited by Tinkling, to “[e]ducate the grown-up people” in the merits of imagination (406). The remaining three parts are stories written by Rainbird, Redforth, and Ashford for this purpose.

*A Holiday Romance* is a minor text in the Dickens canon. The story written in the voice of Alice Rainbird has enjoyed a more lively publishing history than the rest—reprinted in anthologies of Victorian fairy stories and fantasy literature as “The Magic Fish-Bone” and rewritten in more contemporary literature for children—but the stories

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117 Gubar notes that “[o]n the infrequent occasions that literary critics and historians discuss the rise of the child narrator, they generally identify Dickens’s *A Holiday Romance* . . . as the first piece of prose to employ this technique, and then jump directly to Nesbit, who has young Oswald Bastable chronicle *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899) and its sequels” (39). She cites studies by Roger Lancelyn Green, Jacqueline Rose, Lois R. Kuznets, and Jan Susina. Gubar sees her own discussion of child narrators as a recovery project, identifying “a chorus of critically neglected women writers” who “played the biggest role” in developing child narrator (40).

118 The February 1868 number of *Our Young Folks* did not include a segment of *A Holiday Romance*, which was published in four parts.
were not reprinted together until the twentieth century and, as a whole, the sequence has remained decidedly on the margins of Dickens's works and even of children's literature.¹¹⁹ F. J. Harvey Darton, in his influential history of children's literature in England, notes that the narrative is "of no great value to anyone, on its intrinsic merits" (Darton 293). Most Dickens biographers ignore the project altogether, and when it is mentioned, it is usually cited briefly—Ralph Straus, in his 1928 biography, relegates the text to a brief, parenthetical reference (Strauss 275)—or treated with embarrassment. "Was it need, or cupidity, or a sense of duty, or sincere, if ill-judged, artistic adventurousness that induced Dickens in his maturity to write . . . 'A Holiday Romance'"? asks Philip Collins (qtd. in Allingham). Collins's reaction suggests an incongruity between the author's "maturity" and the assumedly infantile tales. However, Collins, like many critics of Dickens's decision to write A Holiday Romance, also focuses on the hefty payment Dickens received for the stories; "need" and "cupidity" obviously refer to the £1000 offered by Ticknor and Fields. Any creative reasons Dickens may have had for undertaking the project are labeled "ill-judged." Some critics identify the more redeeming qualities of this work. Nicole Bacile di Castiglione, for example, calls A Holiday Romance a "final witty ploy in an engaging battle in favour of imagination and of a healthy use of fantasy" (Castiglione 154). However, most approach the work with ambivalence or dislike. Darton notes that "the narrative is not devoid of some vulgar crudeness," although it does contain "the right sort of properties," and that, "though quite

¹¹⁹ In her introduction to the Everyman edition of A Holiday Romance and Other Writings for Children, Avery provides a more comprehensive publishing history of the series, which was reprinted in whole or in part in 1912, 1920, and 1948. See Avery, pp. xxiv–xxv. Molly and the Magic Wishbone (2001) by Barbara McClintock is inspired by Dickens's "The Magic Fish-Bone."
jolly in a sophisticated way,” it “has most of the faults of jocular artifice” (Darton 293).

Anita Moss is not as charitable and calls the stories “silly and contrived” (Moss 89).

Critics’ aversion, in most cases, stems from Dickens’s treatment of children’s voices. His style in his novels for adults is often described as childlike; Peter Hunt notes that the author’s “rapidity of wit, and his talent for exaggeration” has “made his popular writing live on the margins of children’s literature, just as it does on the margins of respectable adult literature” (Hunt 60). However, most critics do not find that Dickens’s childlike voice translates successfully into a text written specifically for children. Darton finds that “[t]he alleged narrators . . . speak too often with a voice and mind like those of Charles Dickens being playful in his fifty-sixth year”—a criticism that again aims at the unsuitability of such playfulness in the author’s maturity—and that Dickens “pretends to take seriously, but laughs a little superciliously at, the tremendous trivialities of make-believe which are so real in childhood” (Darton 293). Moss follows Darton’s example, arguing that “[m]ost readers detect a condescending tone in Dickens’s treatment of the childish cuteness of his narrators; his attempts to render the child voice strike many readers as affected and strained . . . Dickens,” Moss continues, “fails to convey a genuine and spontaneous sense of the child’s voice. Ironically, he succeeds in making his child characters ridiculous” (Moss 91, 88).¹²⁰ Dickens, in fact, greatly respected children’s play. As I mention in Chapter Four, he was a firm supporter of the kindergarten movement, writing in Household Words that Froebel’s pedagogy is successful because it recognizes that the “frolic of childhood is not pure exuberance and waste” (Dickens

¹²⁰ Moss makes an exception for Alice Rainbird, who, according to Moss, “succeeds in creating a coherent and interesting story” (89).
"Infant" 578). These critics, however, argue that this respect does not appear in the author’s writing for children.

Judgments of the success or failure of *A Holiday Romance*, and in particular of Dickens’s ability to write in a child’s voice, are implicated in readers’ interpretations of Dickens’s project—their expectations about what this piece of writing for children should do, what it should look like, and how it should address its readers. Twentieth-century assessments of the text are inflected by an acceptance or even expectation of child narrators in children’s literature; as Gubar notes, “this technique is now so ubiquitous in literature for children and young adults that it is difficult to imagine a time when it was not utterly conventional” (Gubar 39). The voices of Dickens’s young writers were perhaps received with more mirth in the Victorian period. Little evidence remains regarding Dickens’s contemporaries’ reactions to the stories; however, Dickens, in a letter to a friend, quotes John Forster as praising the tales, calling them “the quaintest, wisest, most charming, most comical, in all ways most delightful, things I have ever read” (*Letters* 11.410). Even Forster’s praise betrays the uneven treatment of the child’s voice in Dickens’s stories. The word “quaintest” and the phrase “most comical” suggest the condescension Darton and Moss argue permeates the text, and yet Foster’s characterization of the text as “wise” suggests the true merit of the children’s adventures in their own terms. Foster’s more forgiving assessment of Dickens’s stories may stem from the still relative novelty of child narrators.

In writing his stories in the voices of children, attempting to re-access and reinhabit the child’s world of play, Dickens employs the model of adult-child collaboration in which the adult author surrenders his textual authority to a child.
Notably, however, Dickens grants narrative authority not to real children outside the text, such as the child audience reading *A Holiday Romance* in *Our Young Folks*, but instead to the four fictional children who “author” and arrange the tales for him. These children are obviously Dickens’s creations, and reading them as collaborators strains any definition of that term. However, in the frame story of the tales—the “introductory romance” written by Tinkling, which describes the children’s project to compose stories on the powers of the imagination—Dickens represents his young characters as authors themselves, struggling with the demands of authorship. He can therefore stage, through the unique dynamic of metafiction, a sort of collaboration with his characters, who work out the dynamics of story as he, the author outside the text, does the same. As Linda Hutcheon argues, metafiction “constitutes its own first critical commentary,” and this commentary asks the reader to recognize simultaneously the fictional nature of the text and his or her role in imaginatively co-creating it (6–7). The seamless fictional world of the text is ruptured, revealed for its constructedness. Because metafiction so often comments on the process of composition, this mode of writing directs the reader’s attention to the permeability of the category “author”—the different voices that contribute to what is often presented as a sole author. The author becomes not a figure but a category, what Michel Foucault calls an author-function, which “can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects—positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals” (Foucault 896). Writing in a metafictional mode,

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121 Judging by the correspondence columns in *Our Young Folks*, which do not contain any references to *A Holiday Romance*, readers did not directly interact with or influence the story as it was published.

122 If an author can collaborate with his or her characters, could all texts then be considered collaborations? Barbara Tomlinson, in her article “Characters Are Coauthors,” notes that many authors describe their writing process as dominated by the wills of their characters, who become, in a sense, collaborators. Imagining characters as coauthors, Tomlinson notes, is a means to explore the internal conflicts and concessions necessarily involved in the writing process. While Tomlinson sees these conflicts as internal, however, I argue that they are also external, resulting from the demands of the emerging genre.
Dickens draws attention to the fractures in his own authority. Even if his readers are unwilling to accept the textual authority of Tinkling, Rainbird, Redforth, and Ashford, they are led to contemplate the possible multiplicity of voices that comprise the author of *A Holiday Romance*. The unique self-consciousness of metafiction makes this strategy particularly suitable for exploring collaboration.

Through Dickens's metafiction, the writing children experience the mental and physical realities of authorship. They children struggle not only with “difficult narrative and rhetorical choices as they create their stories” as Moss notes (80)—decisions regarding setting, character, plot, and other elements of story—but also with the negotiations and compromises that surround the writing process before, during, and after composition. These negotiations begin on the first pages of the tale. “I am Editor,” avows Tinkling on page one. “Bob Redforth . . . wanted to be the Editor of it, but I said he shouldn’t because he couldn’t. *He* has no idea of being an editor” (399). To spite the self-proclaimed editor, Redforth disturbs Tinkling’s comments in a manner that underscores the physical trials of authorship: he “shak[es] the table on purpose” (399), causing Tinkling to scrawl unevenly across the page. Later, Rainbird, while describing in her own tale the startled faces of a gaggle of infant princes and princesses, notes that “they stared with their twice seventeen are thirty-four put down four and carry three eyes,” a humorous tangential description that makes her presence as a writer, calculating the details of her romance, immediate (412). Drawing attention to how these children adopt the language, roles, and behaviors associated with authorship—and by saturating these behaviors with childlike arrogance, malice, and naiveté—Dickens creates a multilayered illusion that these children are indeed in charge and that Dickens is merely
lending his name to their creation. Taking these details into account, Tinkling’s first sentence—“This beginning-part is not made out of anybody’s head you know”—reads not only as a differentiation of his own introductory materials from the stories that follow but also a proclamation that these children are not creations of Dickens’s imagination, not “made of out anybody’s head” (399). Instead, they exist separately as authoring forces with whom Dickens must contend and to whom he must, sometimes, submit.

Yet Dickens’s attempts to represent these children as viable authors are at odds with those moments when he undermines their authority—when he, in the words of Darton, “laughs a little superciliously” at the “tremendous trivialities” of Tinkling and his cohort. There are a number of moments in the stories when the reader can identify a perceivable distance between the way the children who inhabit the story perceive their imaginative play and the way the implied reader is led to understand their adventures. For example, Tinkling describes his joint expedition with Redforth to rescue their child-brides from Miss Grimmer’s school for girls with gravity and a childlike spirit of adventure. “A vow was entered into between the Colonel and myself that we would cut them out on the following Wednesday,” explains Tinkling (399). Later, he notes, “[t]he enemy appeared—approached” (400). In these moments before the boys execute their mission, the seriousness of their adventure, the solemnity of their “vow” and the ruthlessness of their “enemy,” go unquestioned. Yet the introductory tale is also inflected by an adult voice chuckling over Tinkling’s shoulder. Redforth is “lightly armed with a paper-knife buttoned up under his jacket” and waves “the dreaded black flag at the end of a cane” (400). Their plan of attack, “rolled up around a hoop-stick,” is a rough pictogram that leads Tinkling to concede that his “real ears don’t stick out so horizontal” (400).
Tinkling’s introduction simultaneously represents a childlike commitment to abstract play—the dismissal of the real, perceptible world in favor of make-believe that, as described in my introduction, writers like William Caldwell Roscoe and Robert Louis Stevenson admire—and undermines that vivid imagination by reminding us that the boys’ play necessarily is surrounded by an adult, rational world that does not participate in their adventures. Redforth’s weapon is only a paper-knife, and the black flag and scrolled plan of attack are makeshift stand-ins, everyday objects.

This first section of *A Holiday Romance*, then, is a constant negotiation between the perspective of Tinkling, whose youthful energy invests his actions with import and consequence, and an adult perspective—not attributed to any character in the narrative but perhaps originating in Dickens himself—that cannot escape what Robert Higbie calls a “normal adult tendency to grant authenticity mainly to reality” (10). The tension between these two points of view manifests in the story in the contentious relationships between adults and children—in, for example, the ill will between Redforth and one of the matrons keeping Nettie and Alice captive, Miss Drowvey, who “muffle[s] the Colonel’s head in his outlawed banner” (405). Moss and Darton assume that in *A Holiday Romance* the mocking adult voice smothers the imaginative child voice, much as Drowvey smothers Redforth with his own flag. These readings, however, underestimate the power of the child’s voice as it exists both in this introduction and as it emerges with even more force in the subsequent stories, in which the derisive adult perspective is largely absent. It is more useful to read *A Holiday Romance* as a text that is simultaneously aware of both children’s and adults’ voices and how they coexist and interact. This “cross-writing”—what U. C. Knoepflmacher and Mitzi Myers define as “a
dialogic mix of older and younger voices”—“occurs in texts too often read as univocal.” These voices, they argue, are neither unconscious nor necessarily riven by strife” but can be an instance of “creative cooperation” (Knoepflmacher and Myers vii). The unstable balance of authority between children and adults in *A Holiday Romance* is not a flaw in the text but an intentional device to put adults’ and children’s voices in conversation, a move to determine if the two can work together in the “creative cooperation” or if they are inherently opposed, “riven by strife.” Even Dickens, in his correspondence, noted the presence of both adults’ and children’s voices in the tales. In a July 1869 letter to J. T. Fields, Dickens is confident that he has replicated the child voice. “I hope the Americans will see the joke of ‘Holiday Romance,’” he writes. “The writing seems to me so like Childrens’, that dull folks (on any side of any water) might perhaps rate it accordingly!” (*Letters* 11.403). However, in a letter to Forster less than a month previous, Dickens had written, “I hope [A Holiday Romance] is droll, and very child-like; though the joke is a grown-up one besides” (*Letters* 11.387).

Thinking about Tinkling’s introduction as an instance of cross-writing suggests that, as readers, we are meant to feel in this first story the discrepancy between the vivid and, appropriately, romantic lives of Tinkling, Redforth, and their brides and the mundane world that not only surrounds them but also laughs at them. It is, after all, this ridicule that, at the end of Tinkling’s introduction, motivates Alice to propose the project that comprises the remaining parts of the text. According to Alice, “the grown-up people . . . have changed the times,” and the expectation that the young men could valiantly rescue their brides from tyrannical schoolmistresses—and be taken seriously—is gone.

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123 Dickens’s use of cross-writing is fitting for *A Holiday Romance*, which, as noted above, was published for the *All the Year Round*, a periodical with a general readership that included both adults and children, and *Our Young Folks*, a periodical undoubtedly read by both children and their parents.
Adults are no longer willing participants in the game; they “WON’T do what they ought to do, and WILL put [the children] out” (404). Alice’s position assumes that there was a moment when the adult-child relationship was not so strained—a moment of “creative cooperation” that can possibly be recaptured through careful instruction. “We must educate, we must pretend in a new manner, we must wait,” Alice prescribes to her friends. “Let us . . . throw our thoughts into something educational for the grown-up people, hinting to them how things ought to be” (406). The “something educational” composed by the children, the three stories that comprise the remainder of *A Holiday Romance*, stage fictional struggles between adults and children. The introduction presents a problem—the antagonism between rationality and imagination that was often troped as the antagonism between youth and age—and three episodes act as test cases, experiments in adult-child interaction that will determine if intergenerational amity forged over a mutual understanding of the merits of the imagination is possible.

The three remaining narrators vary in their confidence that “educating” the grown-ups can restore adult-child kinship. The romance “From the Pen of Miss Alice Rainbird” is the first of the three. Alice narrates a fairy tale in which the bumbling King Watkins I is advised by the feisty Good Fairy Grandmarina to give his daughter, Princess Alicia, a magic fish-bone from a recently purchased salmon. Alicia, modeled after Alice Rainbird herself, is the family’s primary caretaker, guiding her parents and eighteen siblings through the troubles and poverty that persist despite their royalty.124 The princess wisely forbears using the powers of the fish-bone until the family has tried every possible means of helping themselves. When the time is ripe—when the king insists that

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124 Alice and her double Princess Alicia may also derive their names in part from Lewis Carroll’s Alice, who appeared three years earlier and whose adventures in Wonderland similarly lead her through a world of clever children and helpless, obstinate, or foolish adults.
he has “tried very hard” and “tried all ways”—she rubs the bone and transforms the family’s circumstances from penury to luxury (415). Moss argues that only Alice “succeeds in creating a coherent and interesting story” and that therefore “Alice, the fictional child author, resembles in some respects the historical author, Dickens.” Both Alice and Dickens, Moss argues, believe that “fairy tales are the best of all possible stories for children” (Moss 89). Indeed, in “Frauds on the Fairies” (1853), Dickens praises how these stories can lead the child’s imagination, if left to its own devices, to virtue. “Forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force,” writes Dickens, “many such good things have been first nourished in the child’s heart by [the fairy story’s] powerful aid” (Dickens “Frauds” 56). In aligning Alice’s views on fairy tales with those of Dickens, Moss suggests that the child narrator and the “historical author” have achieved that synthesis of adults’ and children’s imaginations. The cultural education children receive from fairy stories, according to Dickens, and the imaginative education adults receive from the young, according to Rainbird, intersect, and for a moment adults “walk with children, sharing their delights” (Dickens “Frauds” 27).

However, the adult-child kinship that Moss detects, which straddles Dickens’s world outside *A Holiday Romance* and the world of the narrating children within the stories, is at odds with the adult-child relationships inside the tale. While Alice’s romance does, initially, hold out hope that adults and children can collaborate as equals—that the rational impulses of the former can coexist or even intertwine with the imaginative impulses of the latter—this hope quickly fades. The tale is peopled by childlike adults, characters who express in their very bodies the possibility of
synthesizing the adult and the child; and yet these characters do not fuse the powerful attributes of young and old—the appeal of imagination and the force of reason—but instead exaggerate the flaws of each and collapse into comic and ineffective caricatures.\(^{125}\) King Watkins, for example, is childlike only in his vulnerability, powerlessness, and poutiness, and adult only in stature. The Good Fairy Grandmarina, who is both an “old lady” and an advocate for the imaginative child, reads not as an adult at all but instead as a child playing dress-up, dressing down adults in a voice that sounds suspiciously like Alice’s, scolding the king, “Don’t be greedy” and “Don’t be impatient” (409). It turns out that Grandmarina has little in common with adults and scorns their rationality as much as the next child. “The reason for this, the reason for that, indeed!” she squawks at the king. “You are always wanting the reason. No reason. There! Hoity Toity me! I am sick of your grown-up reasons!” (409).

These characters do not achieve cooperation between adult’s and children’s voices but instead emphasize just how poorly adults understand the imaginative world of children, and the story acts as an expansion of the complaint Alice voices in Tinkling’s introductory: that “grown-up people . . . understand [children] so badly” (406). The misunderstanding, according to Alice’s story, grows from adults’ misjudgment of play. While the adults in the story “think . . . children never have a reason or meaning,” it becomes evident over the course of the fairy tale that fantasy has its own logic—an order more valuable and innovative than adult rationality (411).\(^{126}\) Alicia uses her imaginative

\(^{125}\) These characters recall other childlike adults in Dickens’s novels for adults, some of whom—such as Mr. Skimpole of *Bleak House*, who insists throughout his treachery that he is “but a child”—are similarly failures in the juxtapositions of adult rationality and child fancy. Mr. Dick in *David Copperfield* may be a notable exception.

\(^{126}\) In another essay on the imagination, “The Fantastic Imagination” (1893), MacDonald insists that imaginative worlds obey their own laws and maintain their own order, no matter how different from reality that order may be. “To be able to live a moment in an imagined world,” he writes, “we must see the laws
ability to see everyday objects as full of possibility; in the words of Thomas E. Jordan, she can “reconstruct the elements of daily living into forms and meanings adults do not share” to solve problems in the everyday world (Jordan 195). When her younger brother cuts his hand on a broken pane of glass, for example, Alicia sets to “snipping stitching cutting contriving” a bandage fashioned from the “Royal rag-bag” (412). Later, when Alicia’s mother is in bed with a headache and the cook has run off with “a very tall but very tipsy soldier,” the princess is faced with the task of feeding her multitude of brothers and sisters. To solve the problem, she invents a game of make-believe; under Alicia’s instruction, the children make cooks’ caps out of old newspapers and divide the kitchen tasks. “[T]hey were all cooks, and all running about at work” (413). Pretending to be chefs, the children not only prepare dinner but also cheer up the baby, whose cries threaten to wake the queen.

The only adult in the story, aside from the childlike Grandmarina, who appreciates Alicia’s efforts is the Duchess, a doll. While many characters, most likely foolish adults such as King Watkins, think the Duchess to be only a doll, Alicia recognizes the Duchess as a real person, a woman worthy of respect and admiration. Alicia and her doll share the secret of the practical possibilities of the childlike imagination. Each time Alicia creatively resolves a problem, she runs upstairs to where the Duchess reclines on her bed and whispers to the doll, the two rejoicing in their shared knowledge of the usefulness of play. For example, as Watkins grows petulant during his wife’s illness and implicitly accuses Alicia of failing to employ the fish-bone, Alicia runs up-stairs, “whisper[ing] the secret to the Duchess over again . . . ‘They think we children of its existence obeyed. Those broke, we fall out of it. The imagination in us . . . immediately, with the disappearance of Law, ceased to act’ (MacDonald “Fantastic” 315).
never have a reason or a meaning!” And the Duchess, though the most fashionable Duchess that ever was heard of, wink[s] her eye” (411). The Duchess is a quasi-adult character who defends Alicia’s actions, respects her creativity, and detects the “reason” and “meaning” behind behaviors that to others appear merely fanciful or childish. Later in the tale, the reader learns exactly what Alicia has been whispering to the doll—that “the right time . . . for asking help of others” is only when “we have done our very best . . . and that is not enough,” and “when we have tried very hard, and tried all ways” (415). “This was the very secret connected with the magic fish-bone,” notes the narrator, “which she had found out for herself from the good fairy Grandmarina’s words, and which she had so often whispered to her beautiful and fashionable friend the Duchess” (415). What the Duchess and Alicia know, and what King Watkins does not understand, is that imaginative solutions are a viable means of negotiating the “real,” rational world.  

In his illustrations to the American publication of A Holiday Romance in Our Young Folks, John Gilbert chose to depict one of Alicia’s imaginative solutions, portraying the moment when the young princess pours out the rich broth to the delight of her brothers and sisters, who are pictured wearing their improvised toques.  

Philip V. Allingham, in his analysis of the illustrations to A Holiday Romance, contends that the scene “has far less potential for illustration” than many other scenes, such as the appearances of Grandmarina. “Though the fire-irons, bowls, and cooks’ caps made of old newspapers are well drawn, these domestic details hardly excite the interest (let alone

127 Alicia’s story in many ways recalls Dickens’s Our Mutual Friend. Alicia resembles Jenny Wren, the dolls’ dressmaker, who similarly resorts to “snipping stitching cutting contriving” to negotiate the larger world around her. Moreover, Alicia’s doll, the Duchess, is related to one of Jenny’s creations, the Honourable Mrs. T. For a detailed discussion of the imaginative agency Jenny exerts through her dolls, see Smith.

128 All the Year Round did not include the illustrations in its publication of A Holiday Romance. For a detailed account of these illustrations, see Allingham.
the imagination) of the young viewer: the broth, after all, is far less miraculous than the fish-bone for which this installment of *A Holiday Romance* is usually named" (Allingham).

Yet it is the "cooks’ caps made of old newspapers" that demonstrate most effectively how the child’s imagination can transform the mundane world to answer everyday needs in a manner a rational, "grown-up" approach cannot. This illustration depicts how Alicia combines at least three of the models of children’s imaginations circulating in the nineteenth century. Her imagination is, in a sense, dependent, relying on the objects of the adult world—newspapers and rag-bags. It is also a girl’s domestic imagination, working in service of childcare and cookery. However, both these modes of imaginative play are animated by the child’s vivid powers of fancy as described by Roscoe, for Alicia, in her make-believe, “triumphs over reason and the senses” (Roscoe 25). The imaginative Alicia addresses practical responsibilities more efficiently than the adults in the story, who are ill, irresponsible, or incapable. When she finally resorts to the fish-bone, the fantasy it fulfills similarly demonstrates the practical benefits of imagination. Her siblings, “no longer grown out of their clothes, came in newly fitted out from top to toe, *with tucks in everything to admit of its being let out*” (416, emphasis added).

It is scenes such as this one that also emphasize the rift between adult rationality and the child’s imagination—a rift that persists despite Alice’s hope that adults and children can collaborate. Children such as Alicia can see the imaginative potential in commonplace objects, but adults are unwilling to see what is useful in the imagination. Each time Alicia creatively solves a household dilemma, her father hovers in the doorway, asking “What have you been doing, Alicia?” (413). When she assures him that she has been “contriving” imaginative solutions to the very real problems her family
faces, the king rehearses a plaintive refrain: “Where is the magic fish-bone, Alicia?” he inquires. “In my pocket, Papa,” replies Alicia. “I thought you had lost it?” he hints. “Oh no, Papa.” “Or forgotten it?” he prods. “No indeed, Papa” (415). This exchange, repeated three times throughout the story—an example of the ways Alice is appropriating fairy tale conventions, such as repetition, to create her own story—underscores Alicia’s persistence in remaining in control of the narrative, championing her imaginative yet practical solutions against the quick-fix solutions her father tentatively suggests, and even against Dickens, who aligns himself with the Princess Alicia’s father when, in a September 1867 letter to Charles Kent, he calls the narrators of *A Holiday Romance* “my children” (*Letters* 11.420). While Dickens collaborates with Alice in that he lends her his pen and renown to publish her story, their partnership is not a cooperation between equals. Dickens needs the child’s voice to write *A Holiday Romance*—he needs the access to an imaginative world that the child narrator suggests—but Alice, in a sense, dominates their relationship, creating in the character of Alicia a child who seizes narrative agency from adults and monopolizes it, upholding the value of imagination in the face of an adult world that does not understand or respect her creativity. The end of Alice’s story may suggest that such cooperation is possible in the future. Alicia marries a young gentleman who resembles Redforth, and Grandmarina promises the couple thirty-five children, an overwhelming family that fulfills a hope Rainbird expressed in Tinkling’s introductory: “We will wait... And then the fairies will send us children, and we will help them out, poor pretty little creatures, if they pretend ever so much” (406). This new generation may carry forward Alicia’s imaginative spirit, but we never learn of the fate of Alicia’s imagination as she grows up herself.
This lingering hope fades in the second tale, which is told in the voice of the young Robin Redforth. Redforth, in his introduction, is the child most opposed to the rational adult world. Called “the Pirate” even in the metafictional introduction, Redforth refuses to concede that his attack on Miss Grimmer’s school is an act of make-believe and belligerently refers to “the grown-up people” as “tyrants” (404, 405). Redforth channels this violent energy into a sea adventure story. A playful precedent of Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1881–2) or Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, Redforth’s story is born out of a child’s imagination that is both gendered male—rife with assumptions of “bravery and perilous exploration,” as essayist Maltus Questell Holyoake would contend—and vivid, ready to lash out at the adult world like a “young monster” threatening the “real in the world,” as writer George MacDonald would fear (Holyoake 408, MacDonald “Imagination” 26). The story follows the adventures of Captain Boldheart (Redforth himself) on his adventures aboard his schooner, the Beauty, as he harpoons a whale, stifles an impending mutiny, defeats the dreaded Latin-Grammar-Master, and encounters a tribe of savage cannibals. While critics have praised Alice’s fairy tale as the most compelling tale in *A Holiday Romance*, it is Redforth’s pirate adventure that truly enamored Dickens, who singled out this story in his letters. “You must try to like the pirate story,” writes Dickens to Forster, “for I am very fond of it” (*Letters* 11.387). He expressed similar favoritism to Fields: “I should like to be beside you when you read . . . the Pirate’s story. It made me laugh to that extent that my people thought I was out of my wits, until I gave it to them to read—when they did likewise” (*Letters* 11.403). In the twentieth century, Darton deems Redforth’s tale as particularly entertaining, citing the

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129 Interestingly, the first number of *A Holiday Romance* in *All the Year Round* appears directly after an anonymous poem entitled “Tyranny.”
"excellent anthem" of the cannibals: "Choo a choo a choo tooth, / Muntch, muntch. Nicey!" (293).

If Dickens's aim was to represent the vivacity of the child fancy, his partiality for this tale seems natural. Of the three stories in *A Holiday Romance*, critics have deemed the pirate adventure as the most successful in its commitment to the child's imagination, and Redforth's account of Boldheart's adventures is almost completely absent of the adult perspective that characterizes the frame story. When Redforth explains the pirate captain's circumstances, there is no suggestion that we should doubt his earnestness. "It seems that our hero, considering himself spited by a Latin-Grammar-Master, demanded the satisfaction due from one man of honour to another," Redforth writes. "Not getting it, he privately withdrew his haughty spirit from such low company, bought a second-hand pocket-pistol, folded up some sandwiches in a paper bag, made a bottle of Spanish liquorice-water, and entered on a career of valour" (418). Boldheart commandeers his schooner, the *Beauty*, to the China Seas. While the melodramatic manner of Boldheart suggests the exaggerated, broad strokes of child's play, the reality of this landscape is never put into question. Boldheart's ship remains a noble vessel and never reverts to a packing case; his pocket-pistol remains a deadly weapon and does not reveal itself to be a walking-stick or pointed finger; the China Seas do not dissolve into an everyday drawing-room. There are moments when Redforth's childish ignorance reveals itself. For example, he notes a particularly tense moment aboard the *Beauty* when "some murmuring, in which the expressions, 'Aye, aye, sir,' 'Union Jack,' 'Avast,' 'Starboard,' 'Port,' 'Bowsprit,' and similar indications of a mutinous undercurrent, though subdued, were audible" (419). Here, Redforth displays the extent of his nautical vocabulary;
unfortunately, none of the mumbled atrocities of the pirate crew are mutinous in the least. However, this moment is rare in a tale that truly immerses the reader in the “disproportionately vivid” child imagination, a tale that wholly belongs to Redforth and his pirate double, Boldheart. We take Boldheart at his word when he shouts, “This adventure belongs to me . . . Let no man follow’” (419, emphasis added).

Indeed, Boldheart rules over the adult world without mercy. Mutineer William Boozey has the enormous form of a giant, “but he quailed under the captain’s eye,” and Boldheart “found it necessary with one blow of his cutlass to kill the Cook” (420, 422). The most heated conflict in the story is between Boldheart and the Latin-Grammar-Master, whose pedagogical authority over young boys and commitment to the dry order of Latin exercises makes him the natural enemy of the daring Boldheart. When Boldheart finds his former instructor “in a hamper with his head shaved,” ready to be cooked alive by a tribe of cannibals, Boldheart convinces the savages to allow the man to “remain raw” only on two conditions: “[t]hat he should never under any circumstances presume to teach any boy anything any more,” and “[t]hat, if taken back to England, he should pass his life in traveling to find out boys who wanted their exercises done, and should do their exercises for those boys for nothing, and never say a word about it” (424–5). Boldheart subverts the pedagogue’s tyranny over the adventurous child by making him a slave to the fantasies of the student and forces the professor to admit that adults have nothing to teach children (and that to pretend otherwise is presumptuous). He attempts to maintain the decorum of a respectable captain, giving the Grammar-Master a chance to redeem his ways, but unfortunately the professor is, in the end, incorrigible. When the pirate captain’s parents—aboard, naturally, a ship called the Family, flying
"the flag from the mast in the back garden at home" (425)—visit the Beauty to reclaim their son, the Grammar-Master negotiates with them to end Boldheart’s adventures and send him back to the world of adult authority. “It was in the course of the night that the captain discovered the hopelessness of reclaiming the Latin-Grammar-Master,” records Redforth. “That thankless traitor was found out . . . He was hanged at the yard-arm the first thing in the morning” (426).

As this adventure tale demonstrates, adults only figure in Redforth’s imagination to reinforce the strength of his fantasy. The ship flies the garden banner as their standard, reminding Boldheart of the domestic order of home—in which child submits to adult, son to father, pupil to professor—and yet his parents do not insist upon reclaiming Boldheart and instead sustain the game, bringing Boldheart greens and fresh meat, touring the Beauty, expressing the proper amazement at the might of its cannons, and obediently following his orders to sail away. In Alice’s tale, the imaginative world of children and the rational world of adults are similarly irreconcilable, but this discord is figured in a harmless and comical manner. Adults are fools, outsmarted by children. Redforth’s Boldheart may be an exaggerated and, to some, a humorous figure, but his adventures suggest something much more ominous about adult-child collaboration: that one cannot coexist with the other, that they are natural enemies. Adults in Redforth’s tale must abide by the rules of the child’s imagination, collaborating (or colluding) with the young not to build a rapport between imagination and reason, make-believe and reality, but instead to shore up the powers of the imagination to shut out the “real” world. Adults who fail to submit to the powerful force of the child suffer the fate of the Grammar-Master. Boldheart’s careless violence anticipates the playful piracy of Jim Hawkins in
*Treasure Island,* who defeats the mutinous Israel Hands in a duel that he calls "such a game as I had often played at home about the rocks of Black Hill Cove" (Stevenson *TI* 157) and unceremoniously dumps the body overboard. Both Jim and Boldheart exhibit the violent potential of children’s imaginations.

Nettie Ashford’s story, while not as violent as Redforth’s, paints perhaps the bleakest picture of adult-child relationships. Her tale is part child fantasy, part ethnography. “There is a country, which I will show you when I get into Maps,” she begins, “where the children have everything their own way. It is a most delightful country to live in. The grown-up people are obliged to obey the children” (428).

Ashford’s story is one of a spate of texts featuring adult-child role reversal plots published to great popularity in the latter half of the century, including William Brighty Rands’s well received poetry collection for children, *Lilliput Levee* (1864), in which “the Children, clever bold folks / Have turned the tables upon the Old Folks!” (Rands *LL* 1) and F. Anstey’s novel *Vice Versa: A Lesson to Fathers* (1882), ostensibly written for adults but enjoyed by children, in which Paul Bultitude and his son Dick exchange bodies with the aid of a magic stone from India.130 The children in Ashford’s story—Mrs. Orange, Mrs. Lemon, Mrs. Alicumpaine, and their respective husbands—are playing house, although, as in Redforth’s tale, their play is presented with seriousness, rarely interrupted by the cynical adult world that would destroy the credibility of their make-believe. There are scattered references to child’s play throughout the story—for example,

130 Rands, although rarely read today, was an extremely prolific writer of children’s literature and the originator of *The Boys’ Own Paper.* He was often called the “laureate of the nursery” and wrote fiction, plays, verse, and essays for children. His 1866 essay on children’s books recommended treating children as “equals in a noble friendship” (Rands “Children” 465). Anstey’s *Vice Versa* has inspired role-reversal fictions into the twentieth century, most notably Mary Rodgers’s novel for children, *Freaky Friday* (1972), and the numerous film adaptations that followed its publication.
Mrs. Orange and Mrs. Lemon, while visiting, set their infant children, one “a very fine one, and real wax all over” and the other “leather and bran,” side by side on the mantelpiece—but the girls nevertheless seem to inhabit real and well-ordered households (429). They employ servants, make calls, discuss their husbands’ employment, and order meals—“jelly and marmalade, and tarts and pies and puddings and all manner of pastry” that they demand to be made by their parents, who are their “children” (429). The activities of these make-believe mothers are described with a deadpan gravity while the formalities of adult life, represented in the exploits of the parent-children, are described as ridiculous. “What with their tempers, what with their quarrels, what with their never knowing what’s good for them, and what with their always wanting to domineer, deliver me from these unreasonable children!” pleads Mrs. Lemon to Mrs. Orange (431).

Ashford’s tale is, perhaps, the most literal interpretation of “educating the grown-ups.” Her tale places adults in the classroom, under the tutelage of children. When Mrs. Orange decides that her parents, who “required a great deal of looking-after” and who “had connexions and companions who were scarcely ever out of mischief,” are too unruly, she enrolls them in Mrs. Lemon’s “Preparatory Establishment” (429). It immediately becomes apparent that the project of educating adults is a failure. When Mrs. Orange tours Mrs. Lemon’s school, she does not encounter any “good” adults but only “naughty” grown-ups who are punished for decidedly adult crimes. They encounter a “pale bald child with red whiskers, in disgrace” named White, doing penance for horse-betting. They scold a “vicious boy,” a gouty adult named Brown, who “[n]ever knows when he has had enough,” and they are appalled at a woman named Mrs. Black who “is always at play . . . gadding about and spoiling her clothes” (431). These adult children
are stubborn and unremorseful. The horse-betting White is “[s]orry to lose, but shouldn’t be sorry to win,” and the “flouncing minx” Black notes that she “[d]on’t expect to improve” and “[d]on’t want to” (431). These children persist in their misbehavior at a party hosted by Mrs. Alicumpaine, where four tiresome fat boys “would stand in the doorway and talk about the newspapers” while another herd of “trying children . . . wouldn’t sing when they were asked, and then, when everyone fully believed they wouldn’t, they would” (433, 435). At the end of the evening, Mrs. Orange is delighted to find that her children are “playing at Parliament,” a game which involves raucous shouting of “Hear, hear hear . . . and all sorts of nonsense that ever you heard.” The game soon grows tiresome, however, and Mrs. Alicumpaine warns the adults that “Parliament gets tiresome after a little while, and it’s time you let off” (436).

Ashford’s story suggests that the manners and behaviors of the adult world—their vanity and show, their politics and habits—are equally ridiculous as those of children, if not more so. Playing at house or pirates is no more comedic than playing at Parliament, and yet adults fail to recognize, in the world outside Nettie’s romance, the parallels in the ways the young and the old make meaning of the world around them. The two generations are separated by a gulf of misunderstanding, and no amount of education can reconcile their positions. And Nettie has the last word in A Holiday Romance. This final story is not followed by a metafictional conclusion, and readers are left with the breakdown of the stories’ educational project. At the end of Nettie’s story, after Mrs. Orange has a serious discussion with her husband, the couple decides to pay Mrs. Lemon to keep their children under her tutelage indefinitely. “This was what brought that country to such perfection, and made it such a delightful place to live in” writes Nettie in
the final paragraph of her romance. Adults “soon left off being allowed any holidays . . . and the children kept them at school as long as ever they lived, and made them do whatever they were told” (437).

While the stories that comprise A Holiday Romance certainly represent (usually failed) adult-child collaborations, the children, as authors participating in larger literary conventions, are also collaborating with authors of established modes of children’s literature. As Gubar notes, “[t]he boys borrow the high-flown rhetoric of adventure stories in order to characterize their clashes with real-life authority figures as epic battles . . . while the girls playfully recycle the conventions of the fairy tale and the domestic romance. [A] Holiday Romance thus characterizes authorship as a collaborative act not only by having four separate child characters contribute material but also by stressing how indebted these offerings are to preexisting texts.” Gubar contends that Dickens’s work “represents the combined effort on the part of the children to turn the tables on their elders by appropriating for themselves the role of sneakily didactic author . . . Since adults have already established their primacy and power as the producers of fiction, the children must use the tools of the master to dismantle the master’s house” (Gubar 51).

Gubar does not note, however, that many of the genres the child narrators of these stories appropriate—the fairy tale, the adventure story, and the school story—are specifically subgenres of children’s literature, suggesting that fiction for the young in particular is a place where such negotiations can, and will, take place. It is a genre that already necessarily takes into consideration both adults’ and children’s perspectives and how and if the old and young can imagine together. The intertextuality Gubar outlines also mirrors the way in which authors for children borrow from the energy of children’s
II. EDUCATION AND IMAGINATION

The fate of the adult characters at the end of *A Holiday Romance*, their future as perpetual disobedient students, registers Dickens's uncertainty about adults' ability to re-access the child's imagination. While Alice, in her domestic fairy tale, is hopeful that adults can be brought to understand once more the merits of the imagination—and in particular how it can make use of and animate the rational, practical world—Nettie's tale locks adults in a perpetual state of schooling, always failing to learn, always petulant toward their child teachers. The failure of Dickens's young authors to educate their elders resonates with what Dickens and others considered a failure of the educational system outside the world of *A Holiday Romance*. The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed substantial changes in the way Victorians and in particular those government institutions overseeing education for working-class and poor students understood and measured the success of their schools. While essays about literature for children, and children's literature itself, often acknowledged the power and value of children's imaginations, mid-century educational policies and legislation created a school system that notoriously stifled youthful creativity in England's classrooms. In the 1840s and 1850s, education for the working class and the poor was carried out primarily by church and charitable schools and only loosely regulated by the Privy Council Committee on
Education, established in 1839 to administer government grants. Rote learning was the typical method of instruction largely because, according to Lionel Rose, "the monitory system in the British and National schools had long necessitated this method as a way of teaching large numbers on the cheap" (Rose 129).

Dickens had satirized the forced memorization of useless information in *Hard Times* (1855), a novel that, through the characters of Thomas Gradgrind and Mr. McChoakumchild, emphasizes the far-reaching consequences of an education that does not recognize the critical role of imagination in the mental development of children. However, in the years between the publication of *Hard Times*, in which the robotic young Bitzer produces his well-memorized, precise definition of a horse, and the publication of *A Holiday Romance*, in which Captain Boldheart strings up that traitorous representation of dry memorization, the Latin-Grammar-Master, the method of rote learning had not only continued but also been institutionalized through the Revised Code of 1862. In this section, I will provide some background information on the state of the educational system and in particular on the ways inspectors evaluated students’ success in the latter half of the nineteenth century, paying attention to how England’s schools responded to the shifting and multiple ideas about children’s imaginations that were frequently addressed in literature for children, such as Dickens’s *A Holiday Romance*. Using Matthew Arnold’s reports on elementary education as a guide, I will demonstrate how Her Majesty’s Inspectors, or HMIs, registered the tensions between, on the one hand, formalized curricula and methods of evaluation and, on the other, new constructions of childhood. Arnold, I contend, does not organize his recommendations according to a strict dyad between reason and imagination; instead, he suggests a complex and almost
symbiotic relationship between fact and fancy. He also recommends, notably, that the conflicts between students' needs and governmental expectations that he observed in his tenure as an HMI could be addressed most effectively through creative, intergenerational partnerships between instructors and students.

The Revised Code was introduced by Robert Lowe, the Vice President of the Committee of the Council of Education. The Code standardized the manner in which HMIs assessed and reported on the state of school buildings and facilities, teacher performance and training, and especially student attendance and performance on standardized examinations of reading, writing, and arithmetic. While HMIs were responsible for inspecting schools before the Revised Code, their methods of doing so varied and were subject to the judgment and expertise of the inspector. The new code, however, established a payment-by-results system, in which government grant money allotted for building new schools and maintaining established institutions directly corresponded to schools' performance in highly regulated inspections. Each student absence or attendance was assigned a monetary value; for example, the code notes that managers of schools may claim the "sum of 4s. per scholar according to the average number in attendance throughout the year at the morning and afternoon meetings of their school, and 2s. 6d. per scholar according to the average number in attendance throughout the year at the evening meetings of their school" (Code qtd. in Arnold 339, emphasis in original). Assessments of pupil attendance were followed by testing according to Standards, or cohorts of students determined not by level of achievement but by age. The

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131 Attaching critical government funding to attendance was particularly trying in the 1860s, because attendance would not even begin to become compulsory until the Elementary Education Act of 1870. Therefore, many students whose work or income was necessary for their family's survival attended school only sporadically.
expectations for these examinations were spelled out in a rubric; seven-year-old Standard
I scholars, for example, must read a “narrative in monosyllables” while twelve-year-old
Standard VI students must read “a short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other
modern narrative” (Code qtd. in Arnold 340–1). Failure to attain these requisites meant a
forfeiture of a portion of the school’s funding.

Lowe devised the code in response to the monetary concerns of a Parliament
anxious to ensure the efficient use of those funds allotted to education. In this respect,
the Code was at least partially a success, for it did, in the words of W. B. Stephens, “end
a system under which government was faced with an open-ended, ever-expanding
obligation to fund schools over whose standards of instruction it had limited control”
(Stephens 7). In establishing the code, Lowe was representing a Parliament that was
“seeking evidence of good use of their money” with hopes, perhaps, that new standards
would encourage more stringent attention in schools to unsatisfactory attendance and
failing students (Pratt 27). However, as educational historians such as Lionel Rose and
Pamela Horn have demonstrated, the practical consequences of the code in the classroom
were disastrous. Teachers did not pay more attention to students falling behind the
curriculum. Instead, these students were ignored as teachers invested their time in
students more likely to succeed in the inspectors’ examinations. Subjects excluded from
the examination, such as history and geography, were almost entirely neglected. Teachers devised ways of “beating” the exams, saddling pupils with information they
could repeat, texts they could read, and sums they could solve without comprehension.

132 The government had begun funding education in the 1830s. Prior to this funding, schools operated on
donations and voluntary support. See Tollers, p. 108.
133 Additional subjects were added to examinations in subsequent codes. From 1867, for example, subjects
like geography and history were included (Rose Erosion 119).
“Schools became high-pressure examination factories,” writes Lionel Rose, and “all teaching was geared to the annual descent from Olympus by the awesome inspector” (Rose 119). As Horn notes, “the daily routine became an unremitting grind in the three Rs,” and “[i]ndividual initiative was crushed” (Horn Schoolchild 5). Held to such stringent standards, teachers were unable to pursue more creative methods.

In the 1860s, the multiple paradigms of the child’s imagination I outlined in my introduction—as dependent on raw material from the adult world, as a creative impulse best left to its own devices, as a vivid or even subversive force—were observed and theorized in relationship to these policy changes. While individual students were assessed according to the unbending expectations of Standards, the child’s imagination was evaluated according to how it aided or hindered the national project of education, and the debates sparked by the Revised Code are implicated in how the child’s imagination should figure in the education system. Most constructions of the imaginative child did not coexist easily with the payment-by-results system and, in fact, under the Revised Code and the inspection procedures it dictated, the imaginative child largely disappears. According to the code, children’s imaginations are not merely under the sway of adults but completely stifled by an adult authority that is, at times, openly hostile.134 On a practical level, these debates about the implementation of the code pose critical questions about adult-child power dynamics in the classroom. Proponents of the code understand the dynamic of the classroom as adult authority exerted over the child, who is a passive recipient of information—children who are, in the language of Dickens’s Gradgrindian classroom, “little vessels” waiting to be filled (Dickens HT 6). Education

134 Lionel Rose, for example, explains at length “the absurdities inflicted by the worst kind of inspectors, who seemed to enjoy catching children out,” noting in particular an inspector in the 1880s who “dictated to infants a passage beginning ‘While Hugh was culling yew, his ewes...’” (Rose 124).
in this model is univocal, a lecture, a one-way transmission of information from instructor to students. Children only speak to repeat.

Opposition to rote memorization and the code that formalized this method appeared in many contexts—periodicals, published essays, the yearly reports of HMIs, and children’s literature, for example.\(^{135}\) As early as 1838, J. S. Mill contended that what is important is not “what a boy or girl can repeat by rote” but instead “what they have learnt to love and admire, is what forms their character” (Mill 309). Hartley Coleridge, in “A Nursery Lecture by an Old Bachelor” (1851), ventriloquizes the voice of a witty old man—an interesting inversion of the child narrator—to protest against the “unquiet innovations of your all-in-all educationists who would make your little ones read before they can well speak, spoiling their dear lisp with abominable words; which, poor things, they can pronounce so right, it is heart-breaking to hear them.” Coleridge’s essay expresses contempt for methods of “cramming” children with “the theory of animal mechanics, when they should be feeling their life in every limb” (Coleridge 305).\(^{136}\) The Reverend John Eagles raves against “this perpetual cramming of fact upon fact, and nothing but fact, into the brain of man, woman and child—fact good and fact bad, without discrimination” (qtd. in Jacox 619). The subsequent new code of 1890 substantially abandoned the examination procedures of the Revised Code, but concern about the mechanical character of pedagogy persisted into the early twentieth century. J.

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\(^{135}\) Many HMIs were opposed to the code, and they were particularly angry that Lowe did not take into account their experiences in the schools in formulating his policy. See Horn, “Robert Lowe and the HM Inspectorate.”

\(^{136}\) Coleridge’s comment recalls Edgar Taylor’s preface to *German Popular Stories*. In that preface, he argues for admitting fairy tales into children’s nurseries that have, under the influence of reason, produced “lisping chemists and leading-string mathematicians” (Taylor *GPS* iv).
H. Whitehouse, in *Problems of Boy Life* (1912), felt it necessary to insist that “hard, machine-like methods” be “thrown on one side” in elementary schools (Whitehouse 8).

Charles Kingsley includes a critical parody of the payment-by-results system established under the Revised Code in his famous book for children, *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* (1862–3), which was serialized in *Macmillan’s Magazine* when the code was implemented and began to take effect. While *The Water-Babies* is remembered today for its representation of the plight of the chimneysweep, the book also addresses the ill effects of overburdening children with facts and figures, in particular when the hero Tom visits the Isle of Tomtoddies, “all heads and no bodies,” inhabited by students transformed to turnips, radishes, and other vegetables (Kingsley 299). The Tomtoddies are an exaggeration of what happens to children under the education system formalized by the code. They live in constant fear of the Examiner-of-all-Examiners and sing a song day and night to “their great idol Examination,” a repeated refrain of “I can’t learn my lessons: the examiner’s coming!” (Kingsley 299). They beg Tom to supply them with useless information that they immediately forget: “Can you tell me the name of a place nobody ever heard of,” begs one, “where nothing ever happened, in a country which has not been discovered yet?” (Kingsley 300). The Isle of the Tomtoddies is described just like one of the “high-pressure examination factories” discussed by Lionel Rose; the turnip children, hassled by relentless parents who beat them for stupidity and paralyzed by the fear of failing their examinations, literally explode, having “crammed

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137 Valentine Cunningham, in “Soiled Fairy: *The Water-Babies* in its Time,” contends that the “exceedingly curious, over-determined, heavy-laden, oddly multivalent text” of *The Water-Babies* reflects “the impulsive, hot-headed, manic-depressive, often nearly hysterical charging about from cause to cause, issue to issue, of its author,” who “was undoubtedly an irredeemably secondhand alarmist in the matter of social problems, always coming belatedly” to the scandals he addresses in his writing (Cunningham 121, 122). However, while Kingsley may be late in addressing the ills of rote learning, in serializing *The Water-Babies* in 1862–3, he is very timely in addressing how those practices were formalized in the Revised Code.
themselves so fast to be ready for the Examiner that they burst and popped by the dozens” (Kingsley 305).

Kingsley’s text, I contend—when read against the multiple ways Victorians represented and invested in childlike play and imagination—suggests that it is not only the relentless inculcation of useless information that is harmful to children schooled under the code but also the subsequent neglect of every other element of a child’s development. The Isle of Tomtoddies is overshadowed by a sign that reads “Playthings not allowed here,” and when Tom, horrified by the plight of these turnip children, suggests that they be provided with “tops, and balls, and marbles, and ninepins,” an authoritative-looking wooden rod replies, “They can’t play now, if they tried,” because while they were once “as pretty little children . . . as you could wish to see,” their parents “kept them at lessons” instead of allowing them to exercise their bodies and their imaginations by picking flowers, making dirt-pies, fetching birds’ nests, and dancing around the gooseberry bush, “as little children should” (Kingsley 242, 303–4). Those adults in charge of nurturing the Tomtoddies value the teaching methods that, in the end, destroy them; Tom watches, for example, as the proud parents of a turnip that has burst with useless information “put a long inscription over his tomb about his wonderful talents, early development, and unparalleled precocity” (Kingsley 302). However, they neglect and in fact despise the playful and imaginative impulses that make children what they are; these parents “fetch the rod when they ought to fetch a new toy” (Kingsley 302). The violence on the Isle of Tomtoddies ultimately seems to stem from a fundamental

138 The bursting Tomtoddies anticipates the panic in the 1880s that working-class children were dying of overpressure from the stress of their studies. See Galbraith’s chapter 7, “Overpressure in London’s Board Schools, 1883–1884.” The parallel becomes even more apparent in the epitaph one of the fairies in The Water-Babies composes for a burst Tomtoddy: “Instruction sore long time I bore, / And cramming was in vain; / Till heaven did please my woes to cease, / With water on the brain” (Kingsley 305).
misunderstanding between youth and age—very similar to the isolation between the children in *A Holiday Romance* and the adults who "understand [them] so badly." In *The Water-Babies*, the discrepancy between adults' expectations and children's needs is epitomized in a "wretched little radish" whose parents beat it for "sullenness and obstinacy and wilful stupidity" because it "couldn't learn or hardly even speak." These parents are unaware that the radish suffers from "a great worm inside it eating out all its brains" (Kingsley 302). These parents are, quite literally, ignorant of the way of their child's mind works (or fails to).

Kingsley couched his disapproval of the code's school examinations in a novel for children, hoping adults reading the tale alone or to their children would understand the import of the Isle of Tomtoddies, another notable instance of cross-writing. However, some of the most scathing criticisms of the code are included, I contend, in official reports on elementary schools written by HMIs. Arnold, who worked as a school inspector from 1851 to 1886, witnessed the inception of the Revised Code and its consequences and used his reports to take a firm stand against it. In his 1862 report on elementary schools to the Department of Education, Arnold argues that the old inspection methods were imperfect but that such loose standards did provide inspectors with the flexibility "to test and quicken the intellectual life of the school." The single, standardized test procedure mandated by the code, however, "does not make a call . . . upon [the inspector's] spirit and inventiveness" and ensures that "[s]cholars and teachers have their thoughts directed straight upon the new examination" (Arnold 95, 94). The

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139 The payment-by-results program gradually lost its force toward the end of the nineteenth century, but Arnold did not live to see its complete termination, which did not occur until 1897.
reservations Arnold expresses in 1862 continue throughout his career as an HMI. In his 1867 report, he writes:

The mode of teaching in the primary schools has certainly fallen off in intelligence, spirit, and inventiveness during the four or five years which have elapsed since my last report. It could not well be otherwise. In a country where everyone is prone to rely too much on mechanical processes, and too little on intelligence, a change in the Education Department’s regulations, which by making two-thirds of the government grant depend upon a mechanical examination, inevitably gives a mechanical turn to the school teaching, a mechanical turn to the inspection, is and must be trying to the intellectual life of a school.

(Arnold 113, emphasis added)

This passage, which repeats the word “mechanical” four times, connects the culture of the Industrial Revolution, a world in which “everyone is prone to rely too much on mechanical processes,” to the deteriorating “intellectual life” of schools, institutions Arnold frequently described as bastions of a humanizing influence on England’s children. The report recalls Dickens’s “Frauds on the Fairies,” in which that author contends that it is particularly important to preserve fairy tales and the culture of imagination they inspire the “utilitarian age” of the 1850s (Dickens “Frauds” 57). If, as Higbie argues, the Industrial Revolution, the theories of Charles Darwin, and other cultural circumstances alienated imagination from reason in Victorian thought, then the similar forces of the purportedly rational and practical code, Arnold suggests, not only divided the forces of reason from those of imagination in the Victorian schoolroom but also favored the former and all but abolished the latter.

It is particularly noteworthy that Arnold uses terms that suggest not the supremacy of make-believe but instead words that evoke the cooperation or coexistence of reason and imagination; he wishes for “inventiveness” and “intelligence”— for England’s schoolchildren and for the inspectors—and these are faculties that require both
an understanding of the rational world and the ability to think beyond it. Similarly, in an 1874 report, he finds most wanting in elementary students “[t]he animation of mind, the multiplying of ideas, the promptness to connect, in the thoughts, one thing with another, and to illustrate one thing by another” (Arnold 156), all of these skills and abilities MacDonald attributes to the imagination, a faculty that synthesizes and organizes facts, “vitally combining” information (MacDonald “Imagination” 22). Imagination and reason, Arnold suggests in these reports, should not be disarticulated. As Princess Alicia’s creative household management in A Holiday Romance suggests, these faculties, in the best of circumstances, work in tandem, feeding off one another. It is the dismissal of creativity and imagination in the classroom precipitated by the code, not the presence of facts and figures, that ultimately troubles Arnold. In his inspections, he does not look for evidence of knowledge acquisition but instead for evidence of an active and imaginative mental life in the child: a mental life that can both display knowledge and discern meaning and order in the dry facts that are, inevitably, part of education. As Linda Ray Pratt notes, Arnold advocated an education that would “form’ the intellect, imagination, and morality of the students” and was more “concerned with their mental engagement than in their mastery of a particular curriculum” (Pratt 30). It is this vital term “imagination,” I argue, that is at the center of Arnold’s objections to the educational system.

In 1882, in his last report—written when he had been battling the “mechanical turn” of the code for twenty years—Arnold considers how to achieve the “mental engagement” that a true education should encourage. He advises that the schools invest
in “the sense of pleasurable activity and of creation,” which can relieve “the strain of mental effort.” He continues,

Of course a great deal of the work in elementary schools must necessarily be of a mechanical kind. But whatever introduces any sort of creative activity to relieve the passive reception of knowledge is valuable . . . People talk contemptuously of ‘learning lines by heart’; but if a child is brought, as he easily can be brought, to throw himself into a piece of poetry, an exercise of creative activity has been set up in him quite different from learning a list of words to spell, or a list of flesh-making and heat-giving foods, or a list of capes and bays, or a list of reigns and battles, and capable of greatly relieving the strain from learning these and affording a lively pleasure.

(Arnold 228–9, emphasis in original)

Here, Arnold concedes that education does consist in part of the communication of certain information, and that, at times, the most efficient method is “mechanical.” However, he is uncomfortable with a system in which the children are perpetually in a state of “passive reception”—a state that suggests the stagnation of the Tomtoddies in Kingsley’s fable—and contends that this passivity should be balanced with activities in which the child is an active, creative agent. If the child is engaged in his or her education, creatively participating in the process, even memorization and repetition—and in particular Arnold’s pet project of learning poetry by heart140—can be valuable. These exercises must engage the child completely and encourage him to “throw himself into” his learning. This phrase recalls the physical commitment to play celebrated by Stevenson just a year earlier in the essay “Child’s Play,” in which the author admires the child’s tendency to “body out” his fancies. Arnold would similarly admire the child who “leaps . . . runs, and sets the blood agog over all his body” (Stevenson “Play” 177).

Arnold encourages teachers to turn to children in deciding which materials and methods

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140 In his report in 1872, Arnold argues that recitation “is the special subject which produces at present . . . the most good.” For Arnold’s position on the benefit of recitation, see pp. 147–8.
successfully promote the “creative activity.” He notes that “it is well to remember that
the recipient for this instruction, the child, remains as to age, capacity, and school time,
what he was before, and that his age, capacity, and school time, must in the end govern
our proceedings” (Arnold 226, emphasis added). While the curriculum is in the hands of
the instructor—and the evaluation of those elements of education in the hands of the
inspectorate—children should guide adults or, to use Arnold’s even stronger language,
“govern” their teachers.

Arnold’s reports demonstrate, I contend, not only how debates about elementary
education in the nineteenth century were implicated in a larger conversation about the
nature of children’s imaginations but also how opponents of the code, such as Arnold, re-
imagine adult-child relationships in the classroom. Those arguing against the code grant
children a more active role in their own instruction, acknowledging that the young have
unique needs outside of those required by the authority of the inspectors and sometimes
even admitting that educators must rely upon children, and not a governmental authority,
to learn about those needs and how to fulfill them. Education according to this model is
polyvocal, a discussion, a collaborative exercise between teacher and pupil. It resembles
the storytelling moments I describe in Chapter One of this project, which frame children
listening to a story, purportedly passive, as active collaborators, deliberately and
creatively transforming their linguistic environments.

The attention to the needs of children exhibited in reactions against the Revised
Code of 1862 recurs in the formulation and implementation of the Elementary Education
Act of 1870, also known as the Forster Act. The 1870 act sought to provide “for every
school district a sufficient amount of accommodation in public elementary schools

141 The Education Act of 1870 was written by William Forster, Matthew Arnold’s brother-in-law.
available for all children resident in such district” (EEA Sec. 5, qtd. in Rich 89). The voluntary and religious societies that sponsored the majority of schools throughout England in the early nineteenth century were given six months to supply the “deficiency in school places” before a school board would be established to build board schools in their district (Rich 90). The boards were comprised of members elected by ratepayers, and their size corresponded to the size of the district. The board schools established by the 1870 act did not provide free education, because Forster was adamant that “the enormous majority” of parents were “able, and will continue to be able, to pay” school fees (qtd. in Rich 91). Arnold similarly preached the merits of requiring parents to pay for their children’s education, noting that “people value more highly, and use more respectfully, what they pay a price for” (Arnold 220). Board schools charged fees up to 9d. per week. However, while there would not be any provision for free education until the Free Education Act in 1891, school boards were granted the authority to reduce or subsidize the school fees of children whose families were unable to pay.

Stringent attention to the cost of education was necessary because the 1870 act included a policy of compulsory attendance. This policy is detailed in section 74:

Section 74. Every school board may make bye laws . . . requiring the parents of children of such age, not less than five years nor more than thirteen years as may be fixed by the bye-laws, to cause such children (unless there is some reasonable excuse) to attend school:

Any of the following reasons shall by reasonable excuse, namely,
1. That the child is under efficient instruction in some other manner:
2. That the child has been prevented from attending school by sickness or any unavoidable cause:
3. That there is no public elementary school . . . within . . . three miles.
Provided that any bye-law under this section shall provide for the total or partial exemption of such child [between 10 and 13 years of age] from the obligation to attend school if one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors certifies that such child has reached a standard of education specified in such bye-law.

(qtd. in Rich 93)
As the language of this section of the act suggests, these were, in the words of Eric E. Rich, quite “permissive powers of compulsion” (Rich 93). School boards were not required to formulate bylaws requiring attendance, and if they did, such requirements could neither override the balance of work and half-time schooling mandated by the Factory Acts nor, assumedly, trump family obligations, such as girls’ responsibilities to watch younger siblings. Many argued for adjusting the ages stated in compulsory education policies so children would be required to stay in school longer; however, the Earl of Shaftesbury amended the bill to allow the partial exemption even of children over the age of ten who achieved a certain standard of education. “Thus,” notes Rich, “after the age of ten, education was subordinated to the demands of employers and the needs of parents for their children’s wages” (Rich 94). While this attendance policy may seem permissive, “this was by design,” argues Nigel Middleton, “for Forster had framed a deceptively mild measure, so that he could introduce the tip of the wedge of universal compulsory education” (Middleton 172). Complete compulsory education in England would be established in 1880.

The official reforms made by the act were accompanied by other, more diverse emendations to the school system that focused on the well-being of students, both pertaining to and outside of their academic needs. It launched a number of projects initiated by local school boards, which were “empowered to pay administrators, attendance officers, and teachers; build and equip schools; set and remit student fees.” The boards “controlled teacher appointments and set curriculums, within the limits of the Education Code requirements” (Galbraith 88). Some board schools incorporated a wider range of subjects in their curricula such as history, geography, and grammar, and others
drastically changed school environments for younger students to include "reading sheets, alphabet boxes, and kindergarten toys . . . diagrams and illustrations" (Galbraith 97). Committees on methods of teaching reading recommended poetry to cultivate the imaginations and improve the vocabularies of students, while other board members called for "the kindergarten 'spirit' to permeate the Infant department, because kindergarten recognized play as the business of a child's life," employing the "systematic use of toys" and formulating curricula suited for the "Infant mind" (Galbraith 127–8). In 1904, the Fabian political and social reformer Sidney Webb stressed how schools had changed since the 1870 Act. Instead of "'frowsy, dark, and insanitary rooms' in which the teachers 'ground the minimum of the three Rs required by the wooden old code into the heads of their scanty pupils,' there were 'well-lighted and admirably decorated school buildings' with "pianos, school libraries, extensive playgrounds . . . served by a staff of trained professional teachers'" (qtd. in Horn *Schoolchild* 23–5). When taken together, the mandates of the Forster Act and the reforms enacted by school boards comprise an education system guided by children, a system in which their needs—physical, mental, and emotional—direct educators' attention.

Most scholars who examine the history, formation, and enactment of the Forster Act understand it as a negotiation between government interests, religious societies, charitable and child labor organizations, and parents. This is true. Religious communities banded together against board schools, fearing the secularization of education, and parents railed against a government that was, from their perspective, infringing on their authority over their children. However, few accounts of these policies take into account the role of children at the center of these debates. Education legislation
in the mid-nineteenth century works to make room for the child voice and considers how children can speak in the classroom.\footnote{Middleton's article on the Forster Act and the concept of the modern child is the closest approximation of this perspective. He writes that "by the end of the century the position of the child had radically altered, from being the least privileged member of society, towards a position of privilege which allowed a safer passage through immaturity and gave facilities to prepare for life" (Middleton 179). The progression Middleton notes here is similar to that drawn by Ariès: the gradual differentiation of childhood as a separate and privileged phase of life that necessitates, in part, increased interest in the physiological and moral life of the young (Ariès 131).} It is useful to consider the heated reaction against the Revised Code and the growth of kindergarten programs that catered to the "Infant mind" as attempts to grant children a say in the transformation of England's schools. It would be an overstatement to suggest that adults ceded authority to children in their reconsideration of the operations of the school system, but multiple models of the child's imagination circulating in the mid-nineteenth century served as guides to those who were in authority. In this way, children were powerful collaborators in these policies.

III. J. M. BARRIE AND THE FIVE

The educational policies promoted by Arnold demonstrate how adults in authority can take cues from the imaginative child. J. M. Barrie, an author with a perhaps more complicated relationship to the fantasies of childhood, surrenders all authority over his play Peter Pan to children. Barrie exhibited an uneasiness about the authorship of Peter Pan from the start; early drafts are entitled "Anon," and the program to the first 1904 production of Peter lists Ela Q. May—an actress portraying Liza, the housemaid—as the author (Rose Case 76). This anxiety culminates in the dedication to the 1928 printed version of the play. Barrie explains, in the first sentence of this dedication, that some "disquieting confessions must be made in printing at last the play of Peter Pan, among
them this, that I have no recollection of having written it” (Barrie *PP* 75). Barrie proposes a number of possible authors, including a “depressed man in overalls” who wanders the theater where the play is rehearsed holding “a mug of tea or a paint-pot” and expressing a “hopelessness [that] is what all dramatists are said to feel at such times” (Barrie *PP* 77). He also considers “a large number of children” he has seen “playing Peter in their homes with careless mastership, constantly putting in better words,” who could have “thrown [the play] off with ease” (Barrie *PP* 77). These children are “careless” masters and superior wordsmiths, blasé young writers who seem to run (or fly) circles around Barrie, who only faintly recalls the “long job” of writing *Peter Pan*, an arduous task that perhaps he has forgotten because it was so difficult (Barrie *PP* 76).

Barrie notes how the children mimicking Peter’s adventures at home have the power to influence the very content of the play. “It was for such as they,” writes Barrie, “that after the first production I had to add something to the play at the request of parents . . . about no one being able to fly until the fairy dust had been blown on him; so many children having gone home and tried it from their beds and needed surgical attention” (Barrie *PP* 77).

Peter Hollindale reads this renouncement of authorship as one of a series of “disingenuous hide-and-seek games of an author who was never able to conceal himself,” a “mock self-abnegation” that ultimately fails, as Barrie “remains a strong, ostensibly self-denying, but actually conspicuous intermediate persona between his creations and their audience” (Hollindale xviii). This explanation interprets Barrie’s denial of

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143 Barrie uses the phrase “at last” here because *Peter Pan*, while first performed onstage in 1904, was not printed in play form until 1928. Barrie wrote the story in novel form as *Peter and Wendy*, which was published in 1911. For a concise textual history of the Peter Pan story, see Peter Hollindale’s introduction, pp. x–xiii.
authorship as an authorial stunt or eccentricity, a function of his self-effacing personality that nevertheless cannot counteract the unmistakable stamp of Barrie’s authorship—what a *Times* review called “whimsical, sentimental, profound, ridiculous, Barrie-ness” (qtd. in Birkin 95). Hollindale’s explanation, however, fails to account completely for how this element of the dedication illuminates Barrie’s complex relationship to his own text.

Jacqueline Rose offers a more nuanced reading, suggesting that Barrie’s reticence to claim his play could be seen both as symptomatic of “a writer chary of his craft and his creation” and as a nod to “*Peter Pan*’s own ephemeral nature and to the impossibility of pinning him down” (Rose 76). However, Rose argues that Barrie’s ambivalence means that “it is virtually impossible to place Barrie in relation to his text,” as he either appears as “a disturbance of intention and voice” or is displaced by the force of the legendary character he creates (Rose 76). This argument denies the force of Barrie’s presence that, while complicated, is registered in reviews like those quoted above and in the play itself.

The most fertile reading of Barrie’s denial of authorship, as I will show, takes into account both the biographical and textual history of *Peter Pan* and the specific demands and challenges of children’s literature as a genre. Barrie’s alleged forgetfulness is his attempt to work through his relationship as an author to the Llewelyn Davies boys—George, Jack, Peter, Michael, and Nico—who are referred to throughout the dedication as Nos. 1 through 5 and characterized as “the Five without whom [Peter] never would have existed” (Barrie *PP* 75). Barrie knew the boys all their lives, eventually becoming their guardian upon the death of their parents. His experiences with them as together they

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144 Barrie’s transcription of the will of Sylvia Davies, the boys’ mother, for Sylvia’s sister Emma du Maurier reads: “What I would like would be if Jimmy would come to Mary [Hodgson, the nanny], and that the two together would be looking after the boys and the house and helping each other” (qtd. in Birkin 194). The will, however, appears to read “Jenny,” not “Jimmy,” and Sylvia therefore most likely meant to
acted out pirate and shipwreck stories on the shores of Black Lake are the kernel of the adventures of Peter Pan. I will demonstrate in this section how, in the “Dedication, To the Five” that precedes Peter Pan and throughout the play, Barrie rehearses his discomfort with claiming a text so indebted to the make-believe play of the young brothers, an anxiety that grows out of changing ideas about the relationship between the adult’s and child’s imaginations. To do justice to the import of Barrie’s denial of authorship, then, it is useful, for a moment, to do what literary criticism on Barrie has, thus far, failed to do: to take him at his word and consider carefully his difficulty of claiming the authorship of Peter.

One may attribute Barrie’s confusion regarding his role in Peter Pan in part, I contend, to his years at Edinburgh University. There, Barrie was a student in one of the first psychology courses offered in Scotland, headed by Professor Campbell Fraser, a philosopher noted for his views on the fragility of identity (Jack). Barrie recalls his experiences with Fraser in his series of sketches An Edinburgh Eleven (1888), in which he characterizes his professor as a man whose mere presence sets Barrie “wondering if [he] existed strictly so-called” (Barrie Edinburgh 218). While Barrie characterizes himself as an mediocre metaphysician at best, he describes Fraser’s class with enthusiasm and seems fascinated by his professor’s ability to maintain such fundamental doubts about human existence. Barrie notes that his textbook for Fraser’s course was “scribbled over with posers about dualism and primal realities” and explains how he practiced Fraser’s theories even outside the classroom. “There was once a medical student who came up to my rooms early in the season,” Barrie writes, “and I proved to him in half an

leave her boys in the guardianship of Mary and her sister, Jenny Hodgson. “The mistranscription was no doubt unintentional,” writes Birkin, “although the word ‘Jenny’ is clear enough” (Birkin 194).
hour he did not exist” (Barrie *Edinburgh* 223). R. D. S. Jack briefly mentions that Fraser’s ideas “had a lasting influence on a young man conscious of the many roles that he played in his own life” (Jack). Indeed, it seems that Barrie’s study under Fraser supplied him with the language, which I will examine throughout this section, that the playwright would employ to describe his relationship to *Peter Pan*. Fraser’s lectures, which made students “pinch themselves to see if they are still there” (Barrie *Edinburgh* 219), provide Barrie with a vocabulary to articulate the “dualism” of his identity and the vividness of an imagined existence as opposed to physical being.

Barrie’s preoccupation with the permeable boundaries of individual identity, which very likely inspired his meditations on the similarly permeable category of authorship, was reinforced by a much more practical matter: the messiness that necessarily arises from a creative effort composed by more than one hand. *Peter Pan*, more than any of Barrie’s other plays, was subject to constant revisions and emendations, both by Barrie and at the suggestion of the cast and crew. Leonée Ormond calls Barrie an “inveterate attender at rehearsals” who “was always prepared to listen to the actors, and, if appropriate, to change his mind. A Barrie play was a collaboration between cast, director and playwright: never finally completed, the texts were always open to revision” (qtd. in Hollindale x). Collaboration of any sort complicates assignations of authorship and often produces texts that “belong to no one individual” (Leonard and Wharton 33). However, Barrie was familiar with the dynamics of collaboration. Much of his early work, in particular the *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888), were indebted to the stories his mother would tell him of her girlhood experiences. As a successful playwright even before the premier of *Peter*, Barrie was experienced in the dramatist’s necessary cooperation with
actors and actresses, theater managers, set and costume designers, and any number of creative figures that participated in bringing his writing to the stage. In 1891, he collaborated with Marriott Watson in the composition of the drama Richard Savage.145 Critics have noted Barrie’s aptitude at collaboration; Hollindale, for example, notes that “Barrie was a highly professional dramatist, for whom the collaborative nature of theatrical performance was one of the attractions which drew him to it from the novel” (Hollindale x).

The blurry claims of authorial ownership that accompany the collaborative creative process of theater do not alone account for Barrie’s anxieties regarding Peter Pan as expressed in the dedication and elsewhere. Barrie does not seem to struggle with the authorship of his other plays as he does with Peter Pan. His popular dramas—such as The Admirable Crichton (1902), What Every Woman Knows (1908), Dear Brutus (1917), and Mary Rose (1920)—are not prefaced by such elaborate and unusual expressions of authorial confusion. In the dedication to Peter, Barrie himself marvels at this inconsistency. He notes that the composition of his earlier plays—his first piece, Ibsen’s Ghost, and “that noble mouthful, Bandelero the Bandit”—remain vivid in his memory despite their general dismissal by the public. “I can haul back to mind the writing of almost every other assay of mine, however forgotten by the pretty public,” notes Barrie, “but this play of Peter, no . . . How odd, too, that these trifles should adhere to the mind that cannot remember the long job of writing Peter” (Barrie PP 76). Barrie’s earlier works are uncompromisingly material in this passage and will not leave him; they either weigh depressingly on his memory, hauled back as evidence, or—despite their shallow or short-lived successes—tenaciously “adhere” to his mind. Peter Pan, in

145 This is not one of Barrie’s well remembered works. It was performed only once.
contrast, is something desirable but immaterial, much like the play’s title character. *Ibsen’s Ghost* and *Bandelero the Bandit* are texts surrounded by collaborators: producers, actresses, and managers. Bandelero’s name even suggests a puckish nature similar to Peter’s. However, it seems that Barrie felt *Peter Pan* to be a widely different production, requiring a more circumspect consideration of the relationship between inspiration, composition, and production that other works do not require. What is the difference between *Bandelero* and *Peter*, and why does Barrie claim to remember the composition of one and not the other?

The most basic difference between these dramas is audience; *Peter Pan* was Barrie’s first play written for children. While Hollindale and Jacqueline Rose identify a number of reasons for Barrie’s ambivalence about *Peter*, I contend that it was the demands of children’s literature—the growing imperative to respond to the imaginative needs of the child and the characterization of authors for children as childlike themselves—that truly informed how the playwright understood his relationship to *Peter Pan*. Barrie’s disavowal of the authorship registers an awareness on Barrie’s part that, as an adult isolated from the world of imaginative play, he cannot write *Peter Pan* alone; he requires the guidance of child collaborators, the Llewelyn Davies brothers, who are still steeped in the codes and behaviors of play. It is true that Barrie is the subject of a critical tradition that celebrates his childlike spirit; a 1905 review of *Peter Pan* written by Max Beerbohm in *The Saturday Review*, entitled “The Child Barrie,” calls Barrie “a child who, by some divine grace, can express through an artistic medium the childishness that

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146 *The Little White Bird*, a novel for adults, in fact includes a series of chapters that encapsulate the story of *Peter Pan*. The first production of *Peter Pan* was, ironically, attended almost exclusively by adults. As Andrew Birkin notes, the audience was “the élite of London’s society, with few children among them” (Birkin 116). In successive years, however, *Peter Pan* was reproduced each Christmastime as a pantomime for children.
is in him” (Beerbohm 13). However, despite a widespread celebration of Barrie’s youthful nature, there is evidence that he felt keenly a separation from his own boyhood and youth in general. A number of elements of Barrie’s biography contribute to this sense of isolation. Much has been made of the early death of Barrie’s brother, David, at the age of thirteen. David is an early inspiration for the character of Peter Pan, and many of Barrie’s works can be read as an attempt to recapture the boyhood of David, who became increasingly distant as Barrie aged. Barrie’s desire for child companionship was thwarted by his childless marriage, and he tried to reconnect with the child world by intruding upon the Llewelyn Davies family. These personal circumstances were exacerbated by a culture that often insisted upon the isolation of the adult’s imagination from the child’s.

Critics have long noted how Barrie’s works are variations upon this theme of lost childhood. Kincaid argues that Peter Pan is “usually received as a bittersweet piece of nostalgia, a self-protective lament for the remoteness of the child that creates that very distance” (Kincaid 279). Hollindale argues that “the impossibility of second chances” is a characteristic concern of Barrie’s work, appearing sometimes as a preoccupation with the impossibility of returning to idyllic childhood days. Barrie is one of a number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers for children whose work is understood as an attempt to preserve childhood in the face of its transience; Barrie himself acknowledges that he may have composed the play as “a last desperate throw to retain the five [Llewelyn Davies boys] for a little longer” (Barrie PP 76). Andrew Birkin argues that the distress of growing up past the vivid and creative world of childhood play that is so central to Peter Pan was anticipated in Barrie’s novel Tommy and Grizel (1900). By the time

147 For a further discussion of David’s death, see Birkin, Chapter 1.
Barrie began composing this novel, Birkin argues, he “had begun to fear that he might have lost his touch with children” (Birkin 125). The title character Tommy grows up into a father who laments the loss of his boyhood imagination when he “could not find [the] golden ladder” leading to his childhood fortress in the woods (Birkin 125, Barrie *Tommy* 96). It is only when Tommy partners with his son that he can relocate his childhood haunts. “Take my hand, father,” says the boy. “I have found the way long ago for myself” (Barrie *Tommy* 96).

These accounts, I argue, ignore that Barrie articulates his isolation from childhood not only through themes of lost youth but also through his ideas about the act of writing. Take, for example, his thoughts on his own schoolboy penmanship: “In my schooldays I wrote the most beautiful copperplate,” he notes. “[S]ometimes of an evening I still gaze at it with proud bewilderment. It went, I think, not gradually with over-writing, but suddenly like my smile” (Barrie *Letters* vi). Barrie includes this good-humored anecdote in a letter to a friend; he is poking fun at his nearly illegible adult scrawl. However, this moment of defamiliarization Barrie experiences while contemplating his childhood handwriting is a particularly apt description of the troubles he will face as an author for children. In *Peter Pan* and other writings for and about children, Barrie takes on a genre that asks him to write, essentially, as a child—in a manner that pleases a child, that demonstrates his understanding of child life, on topics that capture a child’s imagination—and yet he is a man who finds his own child writing more foreign than

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148 Charles Turley Smith once wrote to Barrie, “I am always glad to see your writing tho’ I cannot read it.” Apparently, Barrie frequently chuckled at his own horrible penmanship; in a 1918 letter to his godson Peter Scott, Barrie jokes, “Your mother thinks I do not write clearly, but I expect this is jealousy” (Barrie *Letters* 67, 50). His description of his childhood copperplate resembles, notably, his description of the notations he scribbled in his text for Fraser’s metaphysics class. “Some of the comments are in shorthand,” he writes, “which I must at one time have been able to read, but all are equally unintelligible now” (Barrie *Edinburgh* 221).
familiar. The ability to write like a child has passed from him as suddenly and irrevocably as childhood passes from Wendy in his play, and Barrie becomes increasingly preoccupied with how his authorship is shaped by his alienation from youth. To overcome the obstacle of his age, Barrie collaborates with children who, in a sense, can write for him.

In some cases, the presence of a close child-friend as an aid to composition suffices; the relationships between Barrie and various children, like the connection between Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver in Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, can generate narrative possibilities. While writing his novel *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), which relies extensively on Barrie’s boyhood memories, Barrie found that “the companionship with a real boy,” in this case friend Arthur Quiller-Couch’s son Bevil, “helped to bring the memories swinging back” (Birkin 32). Later, in 1903, Barrie drew up a contract with Jack Llewlyn Davies, recognizing the boy’s contribution of a one-line joke in the play *Little Mary* and granting him a halfpenny share in each night’s earnings; this contract shows how even at this moment, a year before the first performance of *Peter Pan*, Barrie could recognize his indebtedness, literal and figurative, to a child’s imagination while maintaining his own role as author.149 However, by the time Barrie was transcribing *Peter* for publication in the late 1920s, childhood companionship was no longer an aid to composition, an exterior inspiration to reconnect with interior memories and resources, but instead a necessity, a prerequisite for writing for and about children.

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149 Birkin reproduces this contact on p. 99 of *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, and Barrie references it in his dedication: “You watched . . . my next play with peeled eyes, not for entertainment but lest it contained some chance witticism of yours that could be challenged as collaboration; indeed I believe there still exists a legal document, full of the Aforesaid and Henceforward to be called Part-Author, in which for some such snatching I was tied down to pay No. 2 one halfpenny daily throughout the run of the piece” (Barrie PP 77).
There are moments in the dedication when Barrie seems prepared to acknowledge *Peter Pan* as a joint effort between himself and the Llewelyn Davies boys. He uses the possessive pronoun “we” throughout the first paragraph of the dedication to indicate the collective action of adult and children: “We first brought Peter down, didn’t we, with a blunt-headed arrow in Kensington Gardens,” he reminisces shortly before noting, “[w]e had good sport of him before we clipped him small to make him fit the boards” (Barrie *PP* 75). Nonetheless, the more persistent note throughout the dedication, and the more striking position Barrie takes, is his insistence that his role in imagining Peter is ultimately negligible. “You had played [Peter] until you tired of it,” confesses Barrie, “and tossed it in the air and gored it and left it derelict in the mud and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed some of the gory fragments together with a pen-nib” (Barrie *PP* 76). The play is pilfered moments from the boys’ adventure play—particularly boyish adventures, obviously fed by constructions of the masculine imagination discussed in my introduction—and these moments are unaltered by Barrie aside from his ability to sew them together with his “pen-nib.” Here, Barrie is drawing a pointed contrast between the sphere of childhood imagination, in which the boys can put on and take off roles like costumes, changing directions and “songs” intuitively and without forethought or consequence, with the adult world of creativity, which operates according to certain rules and is tainted by contact with the marketplace. At one point, Barrie characterizes his transcription of the Llewelyn Davies’s boyhood adventures as “merely a cold decision to turn you into bread and butter,” a turn of phrase that appropriates the transformations of childhood make-believe for adult, financial ends. The alienation Barrie feels from his own creation, an outgrowth of his alienation from
boyhood itself, becomes particularly troubling when Barrie considers the “cold rights” of the play, trying to determine who owns Peter. “I talk of dedicating the play to you, but how can I prove it is mine?” asks Barrie. “Any one of you five brothers has a better claim to the authorship than most, and I would not fight you for it” (Barrie PP 77).

Of course, Barrie contributed more to Peter Pan than the use of his pen-nib, and quite early on in the dedication he does claim authorship to some degree. “I think I wrote Peter,” he surrenders, “and if so it must have been in the usual inky way” (Barrie PP 77). Having forfeited the point, he sets to proving himself author, presenting two key pieces of evidence. First, he builds a case of authorship based on the Wordsworthian idea that the child is father of the man. He describes his young self, a child whose early playacting and passion for “wrecked islands” and adventure stories represent him as, while not perhaps the definite author of Peter Pan, “a likely person” (Barrie PP 79). The washing-house where he staged his first dramas with “his fellow-conspirator Robb” not only demonstrates his proclivity for the stage but also “has a still closer connection with Peter” as “the original of the little house the Lost Boys built in the Never Land for Wendy” (Barrie PP 78). His habit of reading “sanguinary tales” that he purchased “surreptitiously in penny numbers” eventually led him to hover over the page, as an older gentleman, “wondering whether they could stand one more island” (Barrie PP 78–9). In order to make this particular argument for authorship plausible, Barrie goes to significant lengths to establish a direct relationship between the young Barrie, whose boyish imagination

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150 In 1929, Barrie donated the rights of Peter Pan to London’s Great Ormond Street Hospital, which holds them and benefits from the popularity of the play to date. In 1987, fifty years after Barrie’s death, the copyright expired, but former Prime Minister Lord Callaghan amended the Copyright Designs and Patents Act of 1988 to grant Peter Pan a unique, extended copyright in perpetuity. In the US, the play is under copyright until 2023. For more information, see the hospital’s information about the Peter Pan copyright: http://www.gosh.org/about_us/peterpan/.
anticipates the adventures of the Davies boys and who “addressed the spell-bound audience” in the original of Wendy’s house, and the older, writing adult (Barrie PP 79).

This is complicated logic for Barrie. It requires reconciling the adult alienation from childhood understood on a cultural and personal level with the intimate relationship he senses between his childhood exploits and adult character. Yet, in service to his claims of authorship, he attempts to resolve this tension, offering the image of a house with many rooms:

Some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives, changing not through effort of will, which is a brave affair, but in the easy course of nature every ten years or so. I suppose this theory might explain my present struggle, but I don’t hold with it; I think one remains the same person throughout, merely passing, as it were, in these lapses of time from one room to another, but all in the same house. If we unlock the rooms of the far past we can peer in and see ourselves, busily occupied in beginning to become you and me.

(Barrie PP 78)

Here, Barrie rejects the notion that he is completely alienated from his childhood self, transformed into a new person entirely. (In doing so, he also refuses to allow his readers to “explain” away his “present struggle” to claim authorship by reading his amnesia metaphorically as a statement that he is no longer the same person he was when he wrote his most famous play.) He may be cut off from his childhood by a series of doors, but he can travel imaginatively through these rooms to observe himself. It is impossible for Barrie to re-inhabit his youth; he will always see his child self as a double—a kinder twin, perhaps, than Stevenson’s Hyde, yet bodily separate from and perpetually absorbed in his own concerns and activities. However, these rooms, each representing a new phase of life, are “all in the same house,” comprising the same structure of existence. There is a consistency, albeit an incomplete one, between childhood and adulthood. Eventually,
Barrie’s discomfort with claiming such an intimate connection between adult and child
selves folds in upon itself. “Of course this is over-charged. Perhaps we do change,” he
concedes. But even in this moment, he clings to his childhood tenaciously, claiming that
there survives in the adult “a little something in us which is no larger than a mote in the
eye, and that, like it, dances in front of us beguiling us all our days. I cannot cut the hair
by which it hangs” (Barrie PP 79). The image of the “mote in the eye,” the “little
something in us” that remains as our consistent, essential being, resonates with a
description of Peter himself found in the stage directions of Peter Pan, during the final
battle with Hook in act 5, scene 1. Hook, befuddled by Peter’s swordsmanship and even
more so by his seeming immateriality, muses that Peter is “less like a boy than a mote of
dust dancing in the sun” (V.i.145).151 The image appears again in Peter and Wendy
(1911), the prose version of Peter Pan, in which a grown-up Wendy considers Peter “no
more than . . . a little dust in the box in which she kept her toys” (Barrie PW 220).

The part of Barrie that remains constant, then, could be read as the equivalent of
Peter, the representation of the undying spirit of youth, childhood itself.152 Barrie also
notes, as he watches himself as a young man burying his “wrecked island” stories in
shame after reading a “fulmination” against “such literature” in the “high-class
magazine,” Chatterbox, “I follow [my young self] like his shadow, as indeed I am”
(Barrie PP 78). This echoes one of the most famous moments in the play, when Peter,

151 References to Peter Pan are taken from the Hollindale edition, cited parenthetically by act, scene, and
page.
152 Carolyn Steedman, in Strange Dislocations, discusses the cultural currency of the child figure as
representative of the smallest self. “Long established associations between littleness and interiority and
between history and childhood were theorized in emergent psychoanalysis between about 1895 and 1920,”
writes Steedman. “In establishing psychoanalysis as a body of theory and as a cognitive form, Sigmund
Freud worked with the imaginative legacy of cell theory, that is to say with notions of littleness, of entities
composed of smaller parts, and with the idea of the smallest possible entity as the birthplace, or progenitor,
of memory and consciousness of time” (Steedman 77).
upon entering the Darling nursery mid-way through the first act, searches for his shadow, "confident that he and it will join like drops of water" (I.i.97). The separation of self and shadow and their reunion is not merely a fantasy that exists in the world of Peter Pan. Borrowing from the theories he learned while studying under Fraser, Barrie describes his authorship and his relationship to his own childhood in terms of "dualism and primal realities," ideas that articulate the conflict he feels when he recognizes his boy self simultaneously as his double, a separate person, and as his most basic and fundamental reality. He assigns authorship of Peter Pan to the small essential part of himself that has remained constant throughout his life—the dust mote, the shadow that follows him, the child that lurks in a corner room of his house—and this essential childlike self is epitomized in Peter, who can unfold, like an accordion, to represent all boys, all children.

While the correspondences Barrie draws between his adult and child selves are fraught, perhaps, with his personal discomfort with his own childhood, his characterization of writing for children as crossing the boundary between adulthood and childhood through memory is a common trope in nineteenth-century discussions of children’s literature. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Geraldine Jewsbury refers to her own childhood memories in the preface to her 1852 book The History of an Adopted Child, writing, "I do not think children are so happy as it is the fashion to represent them. I recollect so well all my own unhappiness . . . that I have written this history" (Jewsbury v–vi). Barrie’s sentiments are anticipated most strikingly, perhaps, by Mary Louisa Molesworth, who, in her 1893 essay "On the Art of Writing Fiction for Children," both praises the merits of childhood memories for children’s authors and the difficult task of remembering as an adult. "Remembrances of one’s own childhood . . . of one’s own
inner childish life, one’s ways of looking at things, one’s queer perplexities and little suspected intensities of feeling, it is well to recall and dwell much upon,” she writes, although “as time goes on, and we grow away from our child selves” which “cannot but to some extent be lost” (Molesworth 345–6). Barrie’s simultaneous sense of isolation and his insistence that he is, in fact, the young boy whom he follows like a shadow, then, is not unusual and in fact partly participates in the rhetorical patterns of children’s literature scholarship of his time.

According to Barrie, however, it is not his own childhood memories that act as “the strongest evidence that [he is] the author” of Peter Pan but instead the privately printed photo-essay The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island, Being a Record of the Terrible Adventures of Three Brothers in the Summer of 1901, Faithfully Set Forth by No. 3 (Barrie PP 79). The volume, comprised of a preface and a series of photographs accompanied by explanatory chapter titles and captions, chronicles the make-believe adventures of George, Jack, and Peter Llewelyn Davies when they set out in the Anna Pink “to be wrecked” on the shores of Black Lake (Barrie PP 80). Barrie seems much more certain about his authorship of this text, which he claims forms the foundation of the later adventures of Peter Pan; he is especially proud of the photographs, “all . . . taken by myself” (Barrie PP 81). Yet his claim over this text seems similarly tenuous. The boys were the primary contributors of material, at times resisting the photographer’s wishes. Barrie notes of his photographs that “some of them [were] indeed of phenomena that had to be invented afterwards, for [the boys] were always off doing the wrong things when I pressed the button” (Barrie PP 81). In addition, the book “is supposed to be

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153 Boy Castaways records the adventures of only three brothers: George, Jack, and Peter, Nos. 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Michael, No. 4, is quite young in the summer of 1901—having been born in June 1900—and No. 5, Nico, was not born until 1903.
edited by the youngest’ of the boys, who also provides “a long preface” (Barrie PP 80).

While Barrie took the photographs, the boys are the true authors. To assert their authority, they imaginatively kill off Barrie, who acts the part of Captain Swarthy, the precursor to Hook, in a few comically violent photographs (Barrie PP 82). “The pirate captain’s end was not in the mouth of a crocodile,” notes Barrie, “though we had crocodiles on the spot. I think our captain had diverse deaths owing to unseemly competition among you, each wanting to slay him single-handed” (Barrie PP 82).

If, in his first argument for authorship, in which he calls on his own childhood adventures as precursors to Peter Pan, Barrie represents his essential self as Peter Pan, then in this second piece of evidence, Barrie becomes Hook, the pirate captain whose presence in Neverland both makes the make-believe adventures of Peter and the Lost Boys possible and whose death is always demanded by that crew of orphan boys. Again, Barrie’s place in relationship to his play is multiple, a relationship of great identification with the imaginative element of the play and unavoidably separate from it. In negotiating his relationship to Peter Pan, Barrie has become both the essence of childhood and its nemesis. His renouncement of authorship is itself a form of play, both imaginative and theatrical, a series of make-believe scenes and poses he adopts in order to tease out the unique adult-child relationships that comprise the collaborative authorship of Peter Pan. The evidence he supplies speaks to his understanding of children’s literature as a genre in which the adult observes and records in as genuine a mode as possible the imaginative play of the child, the intended audience. While readers or audiences of Peter Pan may assume that Barrie is the “responsible person”—a role he recognizes and owns, although hesitantly—he is more comfortable understanding himself as only the transcriber, an
adult amanuensis for the boys, who are the primary movers of the tale (Barrie *PP* 77). Barrie can claim to be the author of *Peter Pan* only because he can prove either that he *is* a child, a young boy feverishly reading pirate stories, or that he is decidedly *not* a child but an adult who is powerless, strung up by a ragtag crew of boys dressed as castaways. By offering these alternatives simultaneously, Barrie is characterizing the relationship between creative child and writing adult as ambivalent—a relationship of both great intimacy and great violence, of love and hatred.

Barrie can insist upon his indebtedness to the Llewlyn Davies brothers, but he cannot escape the fact of his own authorship. He was, after all, the individual whose name appears on the title page to *Peter Pan* today, who set pen to paper, who attended the yearly rehearsals of the staging of *Peter*, and who was held accountable by parents whose children jumped off their beds, hoping to fly. While *Peter*, like much literature for children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is indebted to the child’s imagination, it is inevitable that the child must, at some point, relinquish the text to the adult publishing world, to the man with the pen-nib. In the pages of his play, however, Barrie creates in Neverland a fictional world where the imaginative child need not share narrative authority and can, in fact, wage war against the world of the literate adult. As Barrie reveals in *Peter and Wendy*, Neverland *is* the child’s imagination. A map of a child’s mind, notes the narrator, *is* Neverland, “always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there” (Barrie *PW* 73). While the child’s mind is

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154 In the 1920s, Barrie suffered an attack of writer’s cramp and was forced to write with his left hand. “At all events, we scarcely know the right hand nowadays,” Barrie writes to Patrick Campbell in 1921. “We pass the time of day and so on, but nothing more. At first the left was but an amanuensis. I dictated to it, but I had to think down my right arm. But now my left is my staff. Also I find the person who writes with his left is quite another pair of shoes from the one who employs his right; he has other standards, sleeps differently, has novel views on the ontology of being, and is a more sinister character” (Barrie *Letters* 38). The sense of alienation from his own texts, then—his indebtedness to “quite another” person—was a recurrent theme in Barrie’s writing about authorship.
littered with the relics of adult oppression—needlework, for example, and "verbs that take the dative"—its geography is almost identical to Peter's Neverland, including a lagoon, a rocky shore, and Peter himself (Barrie PW 73–4).

One can infer that the band of pirates and their captain who terrorize Neverland were imagined by the child as an exciting enemy created only to be defeated. Therefore, Hook—a man who possesses "elegance of diction" and who is, in the words of Irene Hsiao, "an obsessively literate character"—is predictably outsmarted and outdone by Peter, a figure whose inexhaustible resources for play and imagination act as the nucleus of the story (II.i.108, Hsiao 156). Adults such as Hook have no authority in Neverland, a world of play, and the children versed in the rules of make-believe recognize him for the nonentity he is. "No little children love me," sighs Hook. "I am told they play at Peter Pan, and that the strongest always chooses to be Peter. They would rather be a Twin than Hook; they force the baby to be Hook. The baby! that is where the canker gnaws" (V.i.139). When Hook attempts to engage Peter, his schemes are ineffective, childish instead of childlike. His first plot to kill Peter involves tempting him with "a large rich cake," because "having no mother, they don't know how dangerous 'tis to eat rich damp cake" (II.i.110). Like King Watkins in A Holiday Romance, Hook is imagined by a child to be defeated by a child and possesses the silliness of childhood without its imaginative power.

155 While this passage in a sense positions Hook as a child, being a baby, in Barrie's world, is not to enjoy the imaginative world of childhood but instead to miss out on much of the fun. Barrie notes that Michael, being quite young when Barrie and the boys photographed The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island, "is in surprisingly few of the pictures" because the nursemaid "used to pluck him from our midst for his siesta at 12 o'clock, which was the hour that best suited the camera." During many of the adventures, Peter was "in a humdrum house kicking on the sofa" (Barrie PP 82).
Peter, on the other hand, thrives in Neverland, and his very body is an instrument of play. He is immaterial, a dust mote, a boy who refuses to be touched for fear that a hand would pass through him (I.i.98). While Fraser’s students balked at their professor’s question if they “existed strictly so-called,” Peter delights in this indeterminism. When Hook demands that his pirates “cleave [Peter] to the brisket,” the captain “has a sinking that this boy has no brisket” (V.i.144). This immateriality lends itself to constant transformation; if Peter is nothing in particular, than he can be everything at once, taking on any form to accommodate his adventures. It is easy for Peter, in the words of Stevenson, to “make abstraction of whatever does not fit into his fable” (Stevenson “Play” 174). For Peter, nothing, not even the physical world, is fixed. It is this adaptability that foils Hook again and again. For example, when the crew of Hook’s ship, the Jolly Roger, takes Tiger Lily captive, Peter, in hiding, can disguise his youthful voice and imitate Hook’s habits and inflections of speech so perfectly that he deceives pirates Smee and Starkey and even Hook himself:

HOOK (gripping the stave for support) Who are you, stranger, speak.  
PETER: (who is only too ready to speak) I am Jas Hook, Captain of the Jolly Roger.  
HOOK: (now white to the gills) No, no, you are not.  
PETER: Brimstone and gall, say that again and I’ll cast anchor in you.  
HOOK: If you are Hook, come tell me, who am I?  
PETER: A codfish, only a codfish.  
HOOK: (aghast) A codfish?  
SMEE: (drawing back from him) Have we been captained all this time by a codfish?  
STARKEY: It’s lowering our pride.  

(III.i.103–13)

Peter’s refusal to be touched was, as Hollindale notes, an addition Barrie made to the play for its 1928 publication.
Peter can imitate any sound he desires—the splash of a mermaid’s tail, the chirping of a bird, the ticking of a clock lodged in a crocodile’s belly—but in imitating Hook’s signature brogue, Peter displaces Hook’s authority over his crew and even over his own history as a feared buccaneer. Peter can erase Hook and rewrite him as anything he pleases. The boy’s assertion that he is “Jas Hook, Captain of the Jolly Roger”—a lark in the boy’s game of make-believe—is more convincing evidence than the flesh-and-blood Hook standing beside Smee and Starky, and, as the stage directions note, “even the author has a dizzy feeling that at times [Peter] really was Hook” (III.i.49–50, emphasis in original). Peter’s vivid and sometimes subversive imagination does indeed, in the words of MacDonald, threaten “all that is real in the world,” blithely ignoring the boundary between fictional world and author’s reality.

Barrie particularly expresses Peter’s imaginative authority, and the authority of children’s imaginations in general, during the climax of the play: the battle between the Lost Boys and the pirates aboard the Jolly Roger. The boys dominate the fray—the pirates “are unnerved by the suddenness of the onslaught and they scatter”—but it is the match between Pan and Hook that decides who prevails in the antagonism between adult and child (V.i.144).  

157 As the two cross daggers, Hook has “a damp feeling that this boy is the weapon which is to strike him from the lists of man,” and yet it is not Peter’s bravery in battle that ultimately defeats Hook. Instead, it is his youthful ability to

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157 In 1920, a few years before publishing Peter Pan, Barrie expressed a similar sentiment of the enmity between generations in the notes for an address to the students of St. Andrews University, where he had been elected rector. He suggests not only the natural enmity between the young and the old—“Age & Youth the two great enemies”—but also the defeat of the old by the young. “Age (wisdom) failed—Now let us see what youth (audacity) can do,” notes Barrie. “Youth already knows nearly as much as Old & feel far more” (qtd. in Birkin 286–7). This in part grows out of a lament for the “lost generation” of young men who died in World War I, and the folly of Age is very much attached to their role in sending England’s boys to war. “Old advising young with advice rather a mockery just after War which young men died for,” he writes (qtd. in Birkin 287). Barrie personally experienced the toll of WWI when George, the eldest of the Llewlyn Davies boys, died in the war on March 15, 1915.
abandon this game for the next and, like the Llewlyn Davies boys, go on “singing other songs.” When Hook, caught in the fray, notices that Pan has “forgotten the recent doings” and, blind to the chaos around him, “is sitting on a barrel playing upon his pipes,” the pirate captain’s “great heart” breaks, and he tosses himself overboard into the jaws of a crocodile (V.i.146). This is the final victory of the imaginative child over the adult world, and Peter’s triumph is signaled by his definitive appropriation of Hook’s command. The battle ends, and “[t]he curtain rises to show Peter a very Napoleon on his ship,” notes the stage directions. “It must not rise again lest we see him on the poop in Hook’s hat and cigars, with a small iron claw” (V.i.226–8). While these are hesitant stage directions, they are disingenuous, and many performances and film adaptations have staged this scene, despite the narrator’s instructions to hide Peter’s transformation. In fact, in Peter and Wendy, Peter’s metamorphosis into Hook is much more extensive. Peter asks Wendy to make him a set of clothes “out of some of Hook’s wickedest garments,” and it is rumored that Peter “sat long in the cabin with Hook’s cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which he bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook.” The Lost Boys become pirates. “They all donned pirate clothes cut off at the knee, shaved smartly, and tumbled up, with the true nautical roll and hitching their trousers” (Barrie PW 206–7).

This tableau is so often staged in theatrical productions of Peter Pan and expanded upon in Peter and Wendy, I argue, because it is crucial, emphasizing visually that Peter is the true captain of the tale and Hook is the harmless pirate Peter dubs a codfish; the poor plotter baking a moist cake that will never be eaten; the true baby of the

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158 In Peter and Wendy, the narrator notes that Peter “was fond of variety, and the sport that engrossed him one moment would suddenly cease to engage him” (Barrie PW 103).
play. The final battle between Hook and Peter and the scene that follows underscore how Barrie understands his role as an adult author writing for children. He recognizes the power of the youthful imagination and, subsequently, is defeated by the creative child. Barrie surrenders (or at least attempts to surrender) the command of his play to the Llewelyn Davies brothers and, in turn, Hook surrenders the command of his ship to Peter. Just as Barrie suggests that as a professional playwright he is both an essential player in bringing the publication of Peter Pan to fruition and a negligible force in its composition, Hook is both central and peripheral to Peter’s adventures. While Peter and the Lost Boys lead the reader to suspect that Hook is a farce, a weak man unnecessary to the vivid life of Neverland, the pirate captain is, of course, an essential element in Peter’s play. Hook enables Peter’s adventures, taking on the role of the persistent but bumbling rival. Peter is always calling for Hook’s defeat, but the boy also makes plain that the pirates must remain worthy opponents, and he “has a perplexing way of changing sides if he is winning too easily” (III.i.123). Hook and Peter, then, like Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies boys, participate in an uneasy collaboration. Barrie, an aged Hook with a Peter past, recognizes that as an author for children after the genre’s turn to fancy, he must surrender to the creative child over and over again, ceding his authority to his own crew of Lost Boys, whose adventures he not only records but makes possible.

IV. VULNERABLE SUBJECTS

To explain the authorship of Peter Pan, Barrie introduces a number of ideas about authorship—and a number of authors. As the previous discussion demonstrates, the
oppositions Barrie develops between these author figures are an expression of the
difficulties of writing for children. The tensions Barrie registers in his role of author are
also crucial to understanding why he chose to represent the authorship of his most famous
drama as a collaboration, a move that has as much to do with the way multiple authorship
works as it has to do with the distance between the adult and child imagination. By
paying attention to the unique character of collaboration, we can begin to understand why
Barrie and other authors for children find multiple authorship appealing. Take, for
example, the way James S. Leonard and Christine E. Wharton express the nature of
collaborative writing:

In collaborational [sic] writing, original singleness of vision is neither possible
nor sought. A certain achievement of “unitary thought” is worked out: a
relatively seamless fabric of textual logic, the effect of a single voice speaking.
But significantly, here the effect is professedly a simulated one. It cannot be
imagined otherwise without denying the collaborative process altogether. Voice
and logical structure are experienced as products of negotiation within an
essentially interactive language context.

(Leonard and Wharton 32–3)

As Leonard and Wharton suggest, collaborative writing is not the opposite of sole
authorship but instead a mode of composition that attempts both to maintain polyvalence
and achieve the unity of a single-author text. Collaborative texts exhibit not seamlessness
but a “notion of seamlessness,” not a portrait of a single writing individual but a “holistic
blending of personalities and expression” (Schrage 19–20). Multiple authorship, in other
words, simultaneously recognizes two opposing textual states—a harmony of voices and
their discord. Collaborative partnerships differ in the degree to which they allow the
discord to exist alongside the cohesive, unified text. For example, the mode of
collaboration Dickens and Barrie employ is what Andrea A. Lunsford and Lisa Ede call
“dialogic collaboration,” a mode of multiple authorship that is “loosely structured,” in which “one person may occupy multiple and shifting roles as a project progresses.” In dialogic collaboration, “those participating . . . generally value the creative tension inherent in multivoiced and multivalent ventures” (Lunsford and Ede 133). Dialogic collaboration resists the complete absorption of multiple voices into the whole, integrated text; this is the goal of a different model of collaboration, a “hierarchical mode” in which “the realities of multiple voices and shifting authority are seen as difficulties to be overcome or resolved” (Lunsford and Ede 133, emphasis in original). Dialogic collaboration “can in some circumstances be deeply subversive” because the voices of vulnerable subjects such as women, children, or the economically and socially disadvantaged—subjects who may be silenced or overwhelmed by the unifying forces of the text—are permitted and even encouraged to remain audible even when (perhaps especially when) those voices create contradictions or tensions within the text (Lunsford and Ede 133).

It is the flexibility and multivalence of dialogic collaboration that make it an apt model to accommodate the multiple conflicts and anxieties experienced by writers for children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By creating a seemingly unified text in partnership with a child, by approximating the effect of a single voice speaking, authors such as Dickens and Barrie express their intimacy with childhood. The child and the adult comprise one continuous text. However, the unity of the writing adult

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159 While Lunsford and Ede describe dialogic and hierarchical collaboration in oppositional terms—the unstructured dialogic versus the structured hierarchical, the feminine dialogic versus the masculine hierarchical, etc.—they insist that a binary opposition between the two “is both harmfully reductive in its over-simplification and false to our own experience as writers and teachers of writing” (Lunsford and Ede 134). Hierarchical collaborations are not always oppressive, and dialogic collaborations are not always subversive. However, the basic structure of this opposition is useful here if only to underscore the manner in which dialogic collaboration differs from traditional understandings of multiple authorship.
and the creative child constantly threatens to break down, and it is this disjunction that can prove subversive. In this space of conflict, authors for children register both their separation from childhood and the antagonism they understand to exist between generations. At times, they recognize authorial domination of a child’s voice that, in the realities of the literary market, would never be granted such narrative agency. Because this mode of collaboration values rather than stifles “creative tension,” the voices of children and adults can perpetually clash, and, despite the author’s best efforts to conceal their discord, the child’s voice will speak against the adult author. These authors for children chose collaborative models of authorship not only because these models allowed them to partner with an imaginative child, which is a striking way to answer the call for childlike and fanciful literature, but also because collaboration is a mode of authorship that, in its assumptions and processes, recognizes the simultaneous sensation of unity and disunity that is central to many texts for children.

While these writers working in partnership with children find collaboration a model of composition particularly amenable to the way they understand their own position as authors of children’s literature, they also face a set of challenges unique to their genre. Adult-child collaborations are always, to use Lillian Nayder’s phrase, unequal partnerships. The authoring adult and creative child possess radically different and frequently shifting degrees of agency in the composition and publication of the collaborative text. Of course, unequal partnerships are not unusual. Collaborators in any genre operate under certain assumptions about what each partner can contribute to the project. An illustrator collaborating with a writer, for example, may respond to a text that the writer provides; the images the illustrator produces can support or undermine the
author’s message, but the illustrator is inescapably in a responsive role. The balance of power between adult and child, however, is particularly volatile in the mid-nineteenth century. As I have already argued, traditional ways of understanding the power dynamic between adults and children—familiar models such as teacher and pupil or parent and child—while still influential, were increasingly contested by models in which the child can challenge or inform adult authority. This unstable dynamic was particularly significant for adult authors of children’s literature. Adults have access to the literary market, a facility with language, and a broader vocabulary than the child. Children, on the other hand, are a source of imagination and fancy. Authors collaborating with children, then, attempt to create a sense of “unitary thought” with a figure that both answers to and bucks adult authority, a figure that the adult author leads and follows. The child occupies not one but multiple positions, and each different iteration of the collaborating child requires the adult to reconsider and refigure his own role as author. In other words, an adult author collaborating with a child attempts to account for many and sometimes divergent configurations of collaboration, and therefore dialogic collaboration, in which “one person may occupy multiple and shifting roles as the project progresses,” is a particularly useful mode of authorship.

This multiplicity compels these authors to reiterate inside their texts the give-and-take relationship between adults and children, creating fictions that are commentaries on the creative negotiations that produced them. I have noted how Dickens reproduces the difficult balance of adult and child voices he expresses in his correspondence regarding A Holiday Romance inside those stories in the relationships between his child narrators and their adult counterparts, and I have explored how the simultaneous sensation of intimacy

\(^{160}\) For a more extensive discussion of author-illustrator partnerships, see Chapter Four.
and enmity Barrie feels between the young and the old expressed in his dedication is restated in the relationship between Peter and Hook, which is in turn performed over and over again on stage. Other authors for children similarly reproduce their collaboration with children in the pages of their texts. A particularly striking example is Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, who worked with child friends Nora and Alice—whom she calls her “coadjutors”—to compose an almanac-style collection of poems and prose for children entitled *Our Year: A Child's Book, in Prose and Verse* (1860). Craik expresses her distance from childhood when she characterizes the “three people” who author the text: she notes that “some [are] still little more than children, some of us—not exactly so” (Craik 14). Yet she attempts to cohere the generations into a seamless whole, enacting in her text the “our” of her title and deeming it unnecessary “to particularize what each one has remembered or communicated” of the adventures recorded in the book because “the general ‘we’ includes all three” (Craik 14–5). The difference between generations as well as the author’s desire to obscure that difference recurs in the first scene Craik describes in the “January” portion of the book: the construction of a snowman. “His manufacture requires . . . above all general agreement,” she writes, “for it takes more than one person to construct a snow-man,” and the finished product cannot conform to what “everybody’s whim suggests” (Craik 16). The snowman is a collaboration, a work of many hands, but its existence is threatened by the disparate desires of those who constructed it. It is an “achievement of ‘unitary thought’” but “professedly a simulated one.”

These examples demonstrate that, in the genre of children’s literature, the series of negotiations that characterize all collaborative works is not confined to the act of
composition but instead exceeds it, re-emerging throughout the “inside” of the work. Moreover, after a text is published, these negotiations continue in a critical tradition that parses out the place of the child voice in children’s literature as a force that sometimes submits to, sometimes inspires, and sometimes informs the direction of the genre. This duplication of the negotiations of authorship suggests first a degree of skepticism regarding the feasibility of a seamless text authored by adult and child. The work of reconciling adult-child voices dodges resolution. It is ongoing, unfinished, and perhaps impossible. Furthermore, the reiteration of adult-child negotiations inside the text gives authors for children the opportunity to represent in a fictional world like Neverland a model of multiple authorship that cannot exist within the structures and norms of the literary market. While the adult-child dynamic that recurs in paratextual materials often represents an uneasy see-saw between the authoritative and submissive child, the imposing and retreating adult, the adult-child relationships that reiterate this relationship inside the text are less ambiguous. The adult is the dupe of the creative child. Outside the text, the child does not have access to the professional world of authorship without adult mediation. However, authors who recognize the critical role of the child in the composition of children’s literature overcome this obstacle by creating inside their texts a creative child free from the constraints of the market who can defeat the rational, literate adult again and again. Captain Boldheart, who abandons his studies for a life of imagination, can string up the Latin-Grammar-Master. Peter, who “was the only boy on the island who could neither write nor spell, not the smallest word” can defeat Hook, the wordsmith, the Eton man, the “raconteur of repute” (Barrie PW 137, 115).
V. CONCLUSION

As Dickens’s *A Holiday Romance* and Barrie’s *Peter Pan* demonstrate, collaboration transforms not only how stories are told but also who tells them—whose voice contributes to a text and whose voice challenges the dominant, unified narrative. I have explored how authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries respond to the demands of fanciful and imaginative juvenile literature by ceding their narrative authority to the creative child, who they consider is not only a collaborator but also the primary creative force in the text, able to displace and even eradicate the writing adult. These authors partner with children neither as coauthors seeking equal creative partnerships nor as storytellers interacting with young audiences, as discussed in previous chapters of this project, but as professionals in the literary market who transcribe the make-believe adventures of children. This model of collaboration accommodates the various and conflicting roles of the professional author for children, suggesting an intimacy between the writing adult and the creative child while registering the adult’s alienation from the elasticity and vividness of the child’s mental life. Moreover, the adult author’s surrender of narrative authority works in collusion with multiple models of the child’s imagination in both the literary market and the education system to challenge traditional ideas about children as passive, obedient to adult authority and desires. Instead, children emerge as figures with great imaginative agency, participating in a larger cultural dialogue about the place of the child’s voice in those texts and institutions that seek to define it.
Barrie—anticipating the dedication to *Peter Pan*, in which he minutely scrutinizes the nature of multiple authorship—sums up this new figure of the child as active, imaginative collaborator in one, brief passage in *The Little White Bird*. In this novel, children are, quite literally, different creatures from adults altogether; they are "birds before they [are] human," and only in growing up do their memories of wings and flights out of the nursery and up the chimney begin to fade (Barrie *LWB* 132). The narrator—an aging, slightly ridiculous man lonely for child companionship—describes how he tries to lure the precocious boy David away from his mother by telling him stories. These are imaginative narratives that require not only David’s attention but also his collaboration, his input as a child whose connections to play and fancy remain intact, not yet hampered by the concerns of adulthood. David can still remember his avian origins, and it is his child spirit that perfects and, ultimately, completely transforms the tale of *Peter in Kensington Gardens*, the precursor to *Peter Pan*. The narrator explains:

[T]he following is our way with a story: First, I tell it to [David], and then he tells it to me, the understanding being that it is quite a different story; and then I retell it to him with his additions, and so we go on until no one could say whether it is more his story or mine. In this story of *Peter Pan*, for instance, the bald narrative and most of the moral reflections are mine, though not all, for this boy can be a stern moralist, but the interesting bits about the ways of babies in the bird-stage are mostly reminiscences of David’s, recalled by pressing his hands to his temples and thinking hard.

(Barrie *LWB* 132–3)

The collaboration between adult and child here, which resembles many of the teller-listener collaborations I outlined in Chapter One, elicits the muddled borders of authorship that usually accompany collaboration—the sense that "no one could say whether it is more his story or mine.” However, it becomes increasingly clear that the adult’s role in telling the tale is subordinate to the child’s. The adult storyteller’s
contributions provide a sort of outline—the “bald narrative” and “moral reflections”—to be filled in by the child. The contributions of the young David are not only more imaginative (the “interesting bits”) but also drawn from personal memories of a phase of youth the adult can no longer access (“the bird-stage” of babyhood) and experienced in a much more physical manner that resembles the child’s complete commitment to play (“recalled by pressing his hands to his temples”). While the narrator can tell and retell the story, only David has the ability to make it “quite a different” tale. David determines the tale of Peter like Captain Boldheart determines the fate of the Latin-Grammar-Master; guides the narrator through toward Kensington Gardens like the nineteenth-century schoolchild guides school inspectors and policymakers through the child imagination; leads the adult author to his own self-destruction like Peter leads Hook to the hungry, ticking crocodile.
In the winter of 1882–83, Italian art critic Corrado Ricci was caught in a sudden downpour in Bologna and sought shelter in a small cave. While waiting out the storm, he made an unexpected discovery:

I had not known that under this arch was to be found a permanent exhibition, both literary and artistic, possessing little aesthetic merit perhaps, and hardly what could be considered chaste. The verses and drawings were all inspired by an extremely crude realism . . . The works of the youngest artists, those occurring, naturally, lowest down on the wall, showed themselves least technical and logical; they were, nevertheless, characterized by greater decency, and the poetical effusions notably diminished.

The sadness of the day, of the place, of my mind, quite out of unison with the brutal and obscene epigrams higher up on the wall, reconciled me to the art of the little ones and suggested to me the present study.

(Ricci 302)

The “present study” Ricci refers to is his 1887 book *L'arte dei bambini*. In this short volume, Ricci outlines a series of conclusions he has made after examining over one thousand drawings by elementary school students. He discusses the general characteristics of children’s drawings and what these early attempts at art production suggest about the nature of childhood and children’s cognitive development. Throughout the pages of *L'arte dei bambini*, Ricci carefully dissects in particular children’s representations of the human form, and the margins of his text are adorned with playful line drawings of human figures with lopsided torsos, with twenty fingers, with eyes floating outside the outlines of their heads. As the first substantial collection and discussion of children’s artwork, Ricci’s study had an immediate influence on American and British discussions of children and art and is still considered a classic for those studying child psychology and creativity.
Ricci’s description of what he understands to be primitive graffiti is saturated with the language and assumptions that characterize nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century discussions of the nature and character of children as artists. Ricci notes that the work of younger artists, found lower on the walls of the cave, is the “least technical and logical,” suggesting that it is imperfect, full of mistakes, and uninformed by experience and education. However, perhaps Ricci is instead implying that the children’s drawings are not bound by the rules and restraints of the adults’ art higher on the wall and are, therefore, fantastic and imaginative, charismatic, communicating a freedom of movement and form. His contention that the children’s drawings were “characterized by greater moral decency” implies that children’s art possesses a purity adults’ art does not. Ricci is most likely referring to a moral or sexual innocence, but the idea of the “innocent eye” of the child artist would gain currency throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, signifying not only a moral innocence but also a simplicity of style resulting in art that is recognizably naïve. Lastly, Ricci’s choice of this moment as an appropriate introduction to a study of children’s art—the evocative setting of the cave, the sense of origins and discovery—speaks to the connection between children’s art and primitive art that was formalized through the theory of recapitulation.  

While ideas about art created by children began to take shape during the fin-de-siècle, new standards and assumptions regarding art created for children connected to the burgeoning market in children’s literature and new printing methods had been developing

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161 Ricci’s decision to begin his examination of child-art with cave drawings may seem characteristic of the end of the nineteenth century, informed by theories of evolution and recapitulation. However, it is interesting to note that twentieth-century scholars of artwork for and by children often make similar decisions. Brian Alderson, for example, begins his book on the English picture book tradition with a chapter on “the urge to illustrate.” He writes that “human nature doesn’t like blank spaces. Set before it a cave-wall, or a hoarding, or a sheet of blotting-paper, and it will get to work with pigments, or spray-cans, or ball-point pens and the offending blankness will be filled” (Alderson Sixpence 13).
since the 1840s. The Victorian period saw the rise of some of the most influential children’s book illustrators and the invention of the modern picture book. If, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, relatively little consideration was given to the quality or sophistication of art included in children’s books or hung in the nursery, this changed radically as new printing technologies and new styles of children’s art emerged. In this chapter, I will put these two developments—interest in art by children and interest in art for children—side by side, contending that some nineteenth-century artists acknowledged the way child art was characterized, in both positive and negative ways, and incorporated those assumptions into their own work. While illustration, as a form of representation implicated in almost every exploration of children’s literature, is discussed throughout the previous chapters—in my readings of frontispieces for *Aunt Judy’s Tales* and *Kit Bam’s Adventures*, for example, or in my discussion of the collaborative treasure created by Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne—illustration and in particular the author-illustrator relationship is the focus of what follows.

I begin with a detailed examination of Victorian ideas about children as artists, parsing out theories of art education from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Friedrich Froebel, as well as the extensive studies of children’s artwork that emerged later in the century, in order to trace two dominant models of understanding children’s art production: the young artist as imitator of adults’ art and as an inventive, creative being. These ideas about children and art, I argue, both recall the shifting models of children’s imaginations discussed in detail in my introductory chapter and materially influenced the perception and reception of art for children. In particular, ideas about the inventiveness of the young and the unique and admirable qualities of their artwork encouraged children’s book
illustrators to turn to the young as creative collaborators. In the second and third sections of this chapter, then, I discuss evidence of adults collaborating with children in author-illustrator pairs, drawing evidence in particular from Robert Browning’s “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” Margaret Gatty’s *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, Edmund Gosse’s memoir *Father and Son*, and Edward Lear’s nonsense illustrations. I conclude by examining Rudyard Kipling’s illustrations for *Just So Stories for Little Children* as images that invite child artists to collaborate with the author, after the publication of his book, situating this text against the emergence of the painting book for children at the end of the century.

I. SCRIBBLE-MINDEDNESS, AND OTHER IDEAS ABOUT YOUNG ARTISTS

In previous chapters, I have emphasized how literary texts for children were shaped and sometimes completely transformed by the creative partnerships adults formed with the young—collaborations founded upon shifting ideas about children’s imaginations. However, illustrations and other visual texts are perhaps particularly relevant to discussions of the imagination, a faculty that has been defined, in the nineteenth century and today, using the language of visual culture. The *OED*, for example, defines the imagination as “[t]he power or capacity to form internal images or ideas of objects and situations not actually present to the senses, including remembered objects and situations, and those constructed by mentally combining or projecting images of previously experienced qualities, objects, and situations” (“Imagination,” emphasis added). When educators, parents, authors, and artists in the nineteenth century debated the character of children’s imaginations, then, they were discussing how children
manipulated and managed the images they formed in their minds. In this section, I will
describe—as context for my discussion of intergenerational, author-illustrator
partnerships—a range of ideas regarding art by children and art for children,
demonstrating how these ideas are informed by or related to the many ways Victorians
understood children's imaginations outlined in my introductory chapter.

The studied consideration of children’s drawings found in L’arte dei bambini is
predated by a similar attention to children’s artwork throughout the nineteenth century,
expressed not in careful analysis of children’s first attempts at representation but instead
in an extensive debates over proper methods of art education. Some of the earliest
published recommendations for training children’s creative impulses can be found in the
writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and in particular in Book II of Émile, or, On Education
(1762), in which Rousseau outlines his fictional pupil’s aesthetic education. Jean-
Jacques, Émile’s tutor, notes that he and his pupil begin by drawing “a man such as lads
draw on walls, a line for each arm, another for each leg, with the fingers longer than the
arm,” a description that anticipates Ricci’s account of cave pictograms (Rousseau 129).
While Émile “will make any number of daubs before he produces anything recognizable”
and “it will be long before he attains to the graceful outline and light touch of the
draughtsman,” his early attempts at representation are the initial stages of a learning
process, a means to the desirable end of “a truer eye, a surer hand, a knowledge of the
real relations of form and size between animals, plants, and natural objects, together with
a quicker sense of the effects of perspective” (Rousseau 129). Émile’s drawings are used
to ornament his rooms, arranged in a progression from awkward, early attempts,
displayed in large gilt frames, to his most accomplished work, which requires only a simple black frame because "it needs no other ornament than itself" (Rousseau 130).

While, throughout his treatise, Rousseau emphasizes the importance of recognizing child nature as separate from that of adults, his treatment of art education implies that children's first drawings are not so much artistic objects revealing the unique worldview of the young as they are stepping-stones toward more mature habits of attentive observation and sophisticated draughtsmanship. Certainly there are elements of Émile's art education that, like many of Rousseau's recommendations in his treatise, are radical in their recognition of the particular needs of children's cognitive development. In particular, Rousseau detests the instructional methods prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that set students to copying plates, producing only imitations of the designs of established artists. "I shall take good care not to provide him with a drawing master, who would only set him to copy copies and draw from designs," Rousseau writes. "Nature should be his only teacher, and things his only models" (Rousseau 128).

However, while Rousseau's rejection of the dull practice of slavish copying liberates Émile's artwork from a purely imitative relationship to adults' art, it is apparent that Rousseau "did not appreciate the beauty of child art," as Donna Darling Kelly contends, and instead "saw the importance of representational drawing" as answering a student's "need for visual sensory enhancement" (Kelly 17). Werner Hofman agrees, noting that Rousseau did not recognize "any intrinsic value to the child's first attempts at drawing" (Hofman 5). Valuing children's art as a process toward later perfection rather than a finished product, Rousseau left little room in Émile's curriculum for drawing without models, from the natural world or otherwise. For Rousseau, the ability to create original
images and compositions from the imagination, especially for the child, is a talent unnecessary or inferior to the development of skills such as measurement and observation, learned through studied drawing from nature.

Rousseau’s perspective is reproduced in writings on art education well into the nineteenth century. For example, Johann Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator whose theories were translated into English and widely read in both England and the United States, framed childhood art education as a means to teach measurement and geometry. Mathematics and art education are so interconnected in Pestalozzi’s curriculum that, when George Edourd Biber translated Pestalozzi’s *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* in 1831 for English and American readers, geometry and drawing comprise one chapter. Children’s art education for Pestalozzi has little to do with aesthetics or creativity and instead provides the young with an “alphabet of forms” and a vocabulary of terms to reproduce and describe the outlines of objects that surround them (Biber 334).

John Ruskin, while not particularly interested in children’s art education, addresses the topic in a few paragraphs of the preface to his manual *Elements of Drawing* (1856–7), and while his recommendations are not as rigidly mathematical as Pestalozzi’s, he similarly understands children’s drawings as opportunities to guide the young to accurate and careful representation. Unlike Rousseau, Ruskin endorses the practice of drawing from models—both from natural subjects such as flowers and from a “limited number of good prints”—as a practice that perfects young artists’ placement of line and color (Ruskin viii). Parents and teachers should guide children in “economical and neat habits

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162 Biber’s was one of the earliest and most influential translations of Pestalozzi’s theories. His work includes a partial translation of Pestalozzi’s *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (1801), a biography of Pestalozzi, commentary and criticism of his methods, and further recommendations for putting his theories into practice.
with his colours and paper . . . pointing out where a line is too short or too long, or too crooked, when compared with the copy; *accuracy* being the first and last thing they look for" (Ruskin viii, emphasis in original). These ideas about the place of art in children's education imply an understanding of children's art as imitative of the processes and norms of adult art. Early drawings are therefore judged as inept, clumsy, and flawed, necessary awkward scrawls preceding later mastery.

The methods of art education recommended by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Ruskin also suggest a particular understanding of children's imaginations, specifically the paradigm of the "dependent" imagination, described in my introductory chapter, which contends that children require information and ideas from the rational, adult world as raw material for make-believe. William Caldwell Roscoe argues, for example, that a child's power of fancy "is dependent rather than creative; it requires to have an object brought before it" (Roscoe 25). Models of the dependent imagination imply adults' authority, and responsibility, to guide the fantasies of the young toward what George MacDonald calls "true visions" and "noble dreams" (MacDonald "Function" 26, 30). Similarly, these methods of art education require the intervention of adults, or at the very least models of adults' artwork, to provide young artists with the tools to develop a sophisticated creative faculty. According to Pestalozzi, children cannot understand the play of lines, light, and color in the visual world—they cannot form an image in the mind's eye and translate that image into a work of art—until they are taught an artistic vocabulary, an "alphabet of forms." Rousseau, Ruskin, and Pestalozzi value not spontaneous children's art but instead forms of representation that, like language, must be acquired through education. "Nature gives no lines, but only objects to the child," Pestalozzi explains, and therefore
“the lines must be given to the child, that he may view objects *correctly*” (Biber 205, emphasis added). This idea of the uninformed state of children’s imaginations is similarly described by Alexander Hay Japp, who writes that the child’s “mental eye is uncouched,” unequipped to negotiate systems of representation (Japp 197).

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, art critics and educators began to articulate new approaches to children’s artwork. The imperfect landscapes and disproportionate human figures that Rousseau and Ruskin considered inaccurate first attempts by unskilled young artists were reinterpreted as aesthetic productions possessing admirable artistic qualities and valuable windows into children’s minds. According to these new paradigms, children’s art was judged independently of adults’ art and according to different standards of quality, beauty, and accuracy. Children’s drawings, in other words, could instruct adults, not only in child nature but also in new and imaginative ways of producing art. These two approaches to children’s artwork—understanding children’s drawings as imitative of adult work and therefore imperfect, on the one hand, and understanding them as admirable and somehow precocious, on the other—were not always mutually exclusive. There are suggestions that Pestalozzi and especially Ruskin acknowledge and appreciate a childlike aesthetic separate from the norms of adult art. For example, Ruskin recommends that, aside from advising on certain aspects of proportion and accuracy, parents should “give themselves no trouble in instructing” the child in artistic matters. He acknowledges that some children have a “talent for inventing or grouping figures” and advises parents to let their children scribble on every available scrap of paper (Ruskin viii), a recommendation that gives children license to exercise their artistic imaginations unsupervised.
Later in Ruskin’s manual, in an explanatory footnote, Ruskin implicitly appreciates children’s artistic imaginations when he characterizes the creative impulse of successful adult artists as childlike. “The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the innocence of the eye,” writes Ruskin, “that is to say, a sort of childish perception of . . . flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify . . . [A] highly accomplished artist has always reduced himself as nearly as possible to this condition of infantine sight” (Ruskin 22–3, emphasis in original). Here, Ruskin employs the figure of the child, or the childlike, to describe a certain mode of observation free from the restraints of experience and education that he feels often obstruct an artist’s true vision. He asks his adult readers to abandon methods of visual representation taught in formal art schools—which understand the use of color as a method to capture realistic effects of light and shade—and instead use “flat stains of colour” as a child would. While Ruskin does not explicitly recommend that his students paint like children, his description of the innocent eye participates in an emerging respect for the imaginative, as opposed to the imitative, elements of children’s artwork and, here in particular, a respect for childlike modes of observation and perception that may either be truer to the reality of a scene or indicative of an original mode of representation.

This growing appreciation for intuitive and uneducated young artists, who can supposedly abandon accepted styles of visual representation, is part of a larger revaluation, explored throughout this project, of children’s imaginations. Children’s

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163 Werner Hofman points out that a similar position is articulated in the eighteenth century, by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his third discourse on art (Hofman 6). Reynolds argues that artists “must have recourse to the Ancients as instructors. It is from a careful study of their works that you will be enabled to attain to the real simplicity of nature . . . And, indeed, I cannot help suspecting, that in this instance the Ancients had an easier task than the moderns. They had, probably, little or nothing to unlearn, as their manners were nearly approaching to this desirable simplicity; while the modern artist, before he can see the truth of things, is obliged to remove a veil, with which the fashion of the times has thought proper to cover her” (Reynolds 49).
artwork, like their particular habits of fancy, is not only fundamentally different from adults’ ways of seeing and representing the world but also worthy of adults’ attention and appreciation. In other words, while Pestalozzi’s “alphabet of forms” implies that children must learn from the adult art world—using prescribed lines, curves, and colors to achieve the correct way of seeing—a growing appreciation for children’s artwork suggests instead that adults can learn from the unstructured lines and colors produced by young artists. This shift recalls a similar movement in nineteenth-century educational theories, described in Chapter Three, and in particular Matthew Arnold’s recognition of the importance of children’s imaginations as powerful forces in Victorian classrooms. Arnold’s contention, in 1882, that “the child . . . must in the end govern our proceedings”—and the greater scheme of reforms that, by the end of the century, comprised an educational system informed by the needs of children—echo Ruskin’s theory of the innocent eye in *Elements of Drawing* in its respect for children’s unique, imaginative worldview (Arnold 226). These theories of children’s art also recall models of children’s language acquisition forwarded by the fin-de-siècle child study movement, a precursor to developmental and educational psychology that marshaled methods of psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, biologists, educators, and parents, among others to build a complete portrait of all aspects of child life, discussed at the end of Chapter One. Child study scholars such as Alexander F. Chamberlain argued that children do not simply mimic the language of adults—just as young artists do not simply ape the artistic habits of their art instructors—and that the sounds and lines they produce independently are interesting and inventive (Chamberlain 140). These examples assume a model of the child’s imagination, described in my introductory chapter, as a creative impulse that
should be left at liberty, free from adult intervention. Writers such as Ruskin, Arnold, and Chamberlain betray a delight in child’s play that is at the center of this model. They value children’s play, as Matthew Kaiser theorizes, as both “self-enabling,” a way that children “learn, adapt, and develop,” and as a “defense against mechanization . . . a declaration of uniqueness, a sign of aliveness” (Kaiser 115, 113). Charles Dickens and Ruskin himself ascribed to this model of the child’s imagination in their defense of children’s literature, and in particular fairy tales, in the mid-nineteenth century.

This shift in ideas about children’s art has its roots in the work of Friedrich Froebel and the kindergarten movement, established in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Recalling Romantic constructions of childhood as closer to God or even MacDonald’s theories of the imagination as a faculty that brings man closer to the divine, Froebel writes that man, “even in childhood, proves himself by his creative activity . . . to be like his Original Cause in that he is a creating, creative being” (Froebel 58, emphasis added). Froebel expresses great respect for children’s creativity—which he contends is an impulse natural to children, the desire to make “that what is hidden within . . . also outwardly exist”—and he recognizes all outlets and materials children discover to aid this outward manifestation of the self (Froebel 59). In practice, Froebel’s methods are at times more rigid than his theories suggest. His system of gifts and occupations stratify the tools, toys, and activities meant to aid the creative impulses of kindergartners into quite specific patterns and developmental stages, and the artistic activities Froebel

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164 This “aliveness” is registered in discussions of children’s art and creativity, I think, in the frequency with which writers describe children’s art and movements as “spontaneous.”

165 As Kelly notes, the term kindergarten “was first used in 1840, but the idea had long been established at Burgdorf in 1835 and in 1837 at Blankenburg, where [Froebel] first founded an infant school” (Kelly 29).

166 Compare this to MacDonald’s statement, in “Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture” (1867), that the imagination is “that faculty in man which is likest to the prime operation of the power of God, and has, therefore, been called the creative faculty, and its exercise creation. Poet means maker” (2).
designs for his students are not an exception. While he encourages “painting, drawing, clay modeling, sand modeling,” and other hands-on and unstructured creative activities, he particularly promotes occupations such as “stick plaiting,” “stick laying,” and “pea work,” which limit the materials children use to express themselves to pre-formed straight lines and curves, much like Pestalozzi’s “alphabet of forms.”

Froebel insists, however, that children be left to their own instincts while drawing, asserting that teachers “must not disturb the child” (Froebel 65); Richard Carline, in his history of art education, notes that Froebel’s model argued that “development is brought about by activity such as art . . . that this must be spontaneous,” and that the teacher’s role “should be passive and protective, not prescriptive or categorical” (Carline 132). However, Froebel includes the caveat that children’s “power of creating by drawing should not exactly be freely used to produce indefinite images, but should be developed according to the laws of cultivation inherent in its nature” (Froebel 85). Froebel’s writings on education celebrate children’s sense of play and imagination, but when his theories are read alongside the practical elements of his methodology, he seems both to respect the unique qualities of children’s art and to reign in or control its impulses.

Despite these contradictions, Froebel’s legacy in the nineteenth century was, in the words of Kelly, “the installation of ‘creativity’ into the early education of children” (Kelly 28). By 1855, Dickens was writing in Household Words that kindergarten methods are successful because the “frolic of childhood is not pure exuberance and waste. ‘There is often a high meaning in childish play,’ said Froebel. Let us study it, and act upon hints—or more than hints—that nature gives. They fall into a fatal error who

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167 In his list of occupations, Froebel explains that in “pea work” students use “[s]mall pointed sticks” to join “soaked and softened peas, to form skeleton three-dimensional constructions” (qtd. in Woodham-Smith 239).
despise all that a child does, as frivolous. Nothing is trifling that forms part of a child’s life” (Dickens 578). Dickens admires Froebel’s acceptance of “all that a child does,” on his or her own terms, free from judgment by adults who may find such pastimes “trifling.” He recognizes that Froebel harbors a genuine respect for children’s modes of expression and that this respect is at the center of Froebel’s ideas of education and palpable in his ideas about children’s art. “The cultivation of the child for creative (that is, independent, inventive) drawing,” writes Froebel, is “the starting point, and the spring, as well as . . . the point to which all true, satisfying education refers. Just in this cultivation of the child for creative drawing consists the nature of the kindergarten” (Froebel 88). According to Froebel, the creative and inventive play of children, including their scribbles and their five-legged cats, is valuable not because it suggests the beginnings of a future adult artist but because it develops the creative energies of children, their ability to invent rather than to imitate.

The influence of Froebel on English art education is perhaps most apparent in the proceedings of the International Conference on Education, held in London in 1884, and in particular in a session on “Teaching of Drawing and Colouring.” The panel was tasked with discussing art education “as a preparation for Designing and Decorative Work,” focusing on older students preparing for the manufacturing industry (Cooke 65). However, all the panelists address early art education, a testament to a growing interest in the ways young children express themselves. The presenters included J. Sparkes, from the School of Art at South Kensington, A. F. Brophy, from Finsbury Technical College, and T. R. Ablett, the Superintendent of Drawing of the School Board for London, and the points of disagreement among the three speakers underscore the tensions between
methods of art education that construct children as inept imitators of adults' art and newer methods that understand them as imaginative inventors.\textsuperscript{168} Ebenezer Cooke, a student of Ruskin, summarizes and comments upon the discussion of this panel in an article entitled “Our Art Teaching and Child Nature,” in which he applauds methods presented by the panel that foster the inventiveness of young artists and demands that his colleagues abandon practices that rely on monotonous, geometric exercises. Cooke praises Ablett, for example, who insists that children “not copy merely, but originate, invent,” for there is little pleasure “in such ‘dreary discipline,’ without invention” (Cooke 67). He also admires the theories of Brophy, who argues that educators must give the student “an opportunity of exercising his invention,” but chastises him for failing to follow through on these “good words,” as the “invention” Brophy recommends “is limited to filling in outline forms copied with some colour according to taste” (Brophy 214, Cooke 72–3). Cooke attacks in particular Sparkes, who contends that the ideal art education follows a “geometrical plan” in which students “analyse and dissect” ornamental figures (Sparkes 201), a curriculum that recalls the educational scheme of Pestalozzi. Cooke claims these exercises teach only “accuracy absolute” and “drag the child through all the interminable routine, copying lines only, and exercising only its fingers . . . with no gleam of joyful invention, no stimulating discovery” (Cooke 75). Throughout his commentary, Cooke calls upon the practices of Froebel, using kindergarten methods to justify his insistence on imagination’s precedence over accuracy and form. “Imagination some teachers consider their enemy. Accuracy is ever opposed to it,” writes Cooke. “This wide-reaching faculty, which enters into various mental operations, Froebel desires to exercise; and design or inventive drawing is the means, not the end; and though incomplete, his is

\textsuperscript{168} For a summarization of each speaker’s contribution, see Kelly, Chapter 7 and Carline, Chapter 11.
probably the only system existing of teaching elementary design founded both on the
elements of the subject, and the nature of the child" (Cooke 73–4).

While educators such as Froebel and Cooke were extolling the virtues of curricula
that fired young artists’ imaginations rather than wearying their fingers with carefully-ruled geometric figures, a separate and yet overlapping community of thinkers was re-interpreting children’s drawings as complete aesthetic expressions, valuable *precisely because* they had not been subjected to the interference of education. Children’s artistic expression was a persistent concern of the child study movement, and Cooke, while embroiled in debates on art education, employs language often found in this body of scholarship. Child study scholars conducted extensive reviews of thousands of children’s drawings, analyzing the materials children use, the subjects they represent, and the style of their markings, arguing not only that these drawings are evocative of the inner life of children, providing valuable insight into the way they perceive the world, but also that these works of art are admirable in their simplicity and incisiveness. Ricci’s *L’arte dei bambini* in 1887 is an early example of such treatises, and his work inspired and was followed by a number of others, including *Notes on Children’s Drawings* (1894–5) by Elmer Brown, “The Child as Artist” and “The Little Draughtsman” in James Sully’s *Studies of Childhood* (1895), and “Study of Children’s Drawings in the Early Years” (1896) by Herman T. Lukens. These studies are noteworthy because their goal is, in part, to identify what precise elements of children’s art make it different from that of adults. While child study experts’ explorations of children’s artwork, like their research into children’s language acquisition, do explore what Sully dubs children’s “imitative impulse” (Sully 138), most studies detect something in children’s artwork that transcends
mimicry, just as they located creative impulses in the young’s first attempts to speak. For example, while Brown acknowledges that children imitate others’ drawings, he is eager to trace creativity in these copies, noting that this artwork “is imitation of the freest sort” and “cannot be regarded as a limiting of individuality, but only as a discovering to the child of new possibilities of self-expression” (Brown 68).

Child study experts’ interest in children’s art is attached to their interest in primitivism, and the characteristics of children’s art they identify often align with the artwork of what they consider the “savage” races. These writers analyze children’s art as evidence for the theory of recapitulation, the contention that as children mature they reenact the childhood of the race, and this bias is sometimes evident in the very titles of child study examinations of artwork. Gelett Burgess, for example, calls his short descriptive essay on a series of children’s drawings “Some Phases of Primitive Art,” and Chamberlain includes, in his chapter “The Arts of Childhood,” a section titled “Children’s Drawings and those of Primitive Peoples” (Chamberlain 192). As noted earlier, Ricci moves from cave drawings to the productions of elementary school students without hesitation, taking their relationship for granted. Working within an intellectual framework that demands striking resemblances between the art of children and the art of “savages,” many of these studies draw a series of parallels between the two regarding style and form. According to Brown, for example, such “resemblances are too frequent to be ignored” and include similar stunted ideas about perspective and the creation of drawings that are “pictorial rather than decorative in nature” (Brown 59, 61). To this end, children’s drawings and primitive art are often juxtaposed for easy comparison (Fig. 10).
However, Brown contends that "the differences between . . . children’s work and the art of savage tribes are no less striking than the differences" (Brown 60), and child study experts identify other elements of children’s art less attached to the recapitulation narrative and more attentive to beauty and talent. For example, studies of children’s drawings frequently note the young artists’ freedom and movement of line, and some writers celebrated in poetic language children’s economy of well-placed marks. "The hand moves rapidly," writes Cooke, "producing beautiful curves over the smooth surface, like a skater. To this muscular pleasure, retained and trained, we partly owe Greek and Japanese ornament" (Cooke 83). Cooke implies that drawings by young people possess a sort of grace in their disorder and that the muscular movements associated with scribble are akin to more sophisticated artistic methods. He also notes that the simple and intuitive lines of children’s art, what he calls “curvature free-flowing,” possess a “mathematical exactness” (Cooke 83). Sully similarly pays attention to the movements used by young artists, writing that children’s drawings begin “with a free aimless swinging of the pencil to and fro, which movements produce a chaos of slightly curved..."
lines” (Sully 333). Sully admits that these movements may be imitative, mimicking “the movements of the mother’s pencil,” but he argues that this imitation is “at a considerable distance” from adults’ habits and should be considered “purely spontaneous” (Sully 333). Lukens describes the strokes of child artists with perhaps unprecedented respect.

Children, he contends, use “a few, bold, well-chosen lines . . . with telling effect to suggest action and indicate expression” (Lukens 89). Chamberlain, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, acknowledges and appreciates the distance between the ordered compositions of adult artists and the more chaotic work of the young, noting that children are “scribble-minded and naively artistic in the highest sense” (Chamberlain 198). Child study experts, then, take up the cause of educators who dismiss the geometrical and rigid lessons of Pestalozzi and Sparkes and the respect for spontaneous play demonstrated by Dickens and Ruskin not only demanding children’s right to express themselves in free, curving lines but in fact arguing that this style is natural to childhood, a method they gravitate toward independently and that merits the attention of adult artists.

A quality of children’s artwork critics and scholars find equally valuable, but more difficult to articulate, is young artists’ ability to communicate in an unstudied way the essence of a subject. For example, while Sully notes that children are unable to produce the degree of realism achievable by more experienced adult artists, he contends that their attempts should be understood as artistry rather than incompetence. He writes that “in these rude schemes a nascent sense of values, a selection of what is characteristic” is present, tending “in the direction of true art, which is suggestive rather than literally reproductive” (Sully 396). Child study scholars in the United States express a similar idea. For example, while elements of Henry T. Bailey’s A First Year of
Drawing (1894) recall the narrative of artistic and educational progression present in Rousseau and Pestalozzi—he notes, for example, that a child’s art “is a kind of drawing just as an acorn shoot is a kind of oak, or a restless boy a kind of man” (Bailey 6)—he also admires the stylistic ease of children’s art. “The sketch may be crude, but it may embody ideas, and these will be forcibly expressed. Children have the happy faculty of getting at the ‘true inwardness of things’ without loss of time . . . [They] seize the spirit of things as well as their essential forms” (Bailey 6–7). Burgess contends, along similar lines, that if “the ideal of art is the perfect expression of a thought, is not here [in children’s drawing] a perfect art?—for, crude as are the drawings, they are undoubtedly abreast the child-thought.” He calls children’s drawings “untrammeled expression” (Burgess n.p.).

These passages exemplify the types of sentences child study scholars often use to praise children’s art. Their essays are replete with statements that isolate the typical dismissive reception of children’s art in uneasy clauses—Bailey’s “[t]he sketch may be crude” and Burgess’s “crude as are the drawings”—only to undermine that opinion with an expatiation on the artistry of what appear to be scribbles.

It is important to note that while admirers of children’s art at the end of the nineteenth century take a significantly different perspective regarding children’s art than Rousseau, who saw young Émile’s early drawings as the beginnings of adult artistic sensibilities, these child study experts in fact are deploying the figure of the Child of

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169 John French argues that Burgess’s point of view is unique in the nineteenth century. “In spite of training, first-hand observation and sympathy,” French writes, “most pioneer investigators of children’s art were unable to see it as an art expression. In contrast, the Gelett Burgess article . . . stands out as a landmark of sensitive insight. Burgess seemed able to escape the aesthetic blindfolds of his century” (French 331). Certainly there was a contingent of educators and artists in the nineteenth century who resisted the movement toward examining and appreciating children’s art. Carline notes one educator who chastised educational theories “which would have us allow children to draw unrecognizable daubs without correction . . . We might as well encourage unintelligible and ungrammatical English with the same object” (qtd. Carline 158). However, while Burgess’s praise of children’s art is more enthusiastic than most, I find that he is only part of a growing appreciation for children’s art.
Nature that Rousseau famously uses to describe Émile. One of the reasons children’s drawings are so compelling for these writers is that they are untouched by the artificialities introduced through education. Earlier writers such as Ruskin may have used the figure of the child to describe a naïveté and honesty of style, but child study experts take a more literal approach to preserving childlike qualities of art, suggesting that the best means to achieve innocence of the eye is to maintain that perspective during and beyond childhood. According to Chamberlain, for older children and adults the “delight in drawing which reigned in the earlier years has been suppressed under the weight of method and direction” and the “beautiful curves [the child] has seen in Nature subside before the cube, the square and the triangle, with their uninspiring straight lines” (Chamberlain 210). A healthy respect for children’s art signifies, for Chamberlain, a regard for the purest form of expression that all artists should strive to achieve, and the methods and norms of adults’ art are like Wordsworth’s shades of the prison-house, obscuring what is valuable in children’s drawings. “We ought to aim at preserving the genius for drawing innate in the child,” he writes, “rather than to create another sort of artist by means of instruction during the school years” (Chamberlain 211). Burgess also praises the simplicity natural to children’s art—“Would that we in our larger world could do as much and as simply!”—and mourns the moment when the young artist loses the ease and innocence of line, when “the mind, making for higher ideals, becomes conscious of the medium and its restraints” (Burgess n.p.).

One could argue that much writing about children’s art is about loss. Children are capable artists because they are practiced in what Sully calls “invest[ing] a semblance with something of reality” (Sully 318); in their play, they achieve the correspondence
between representation and reality that is at the center of much art. They imagine a broomstick is a horse, they believe that a bed is a boat, and they can readily accept this transference from reality to representation. While adults “are able to control the illusory tendency and to keep it within the limits of an aesthetic semi-illusion,” the child cannot (Sully 313). Sully’s account suggests that adults have conquered a cognitive slippage that children still are subject to, a seemingly negative quality of children’s minds, but many considerations of children as artists, including Sully’s, betray a nostalgia for this naïve approach to representation, equating the art-impulse with the play-impulse. Brown, for example, detects elements of play in children’s drawing, noting that the child’s aptness for self-expression through art “combine[s] readily with the childish delight in ‘playing’ that this is that” (Brown 61). Chamberlain writes of the “art of drawing in childhood which by its very ‘play’ asserts its kinship with real genius,” both associating children’s artwork with play and implying that it is this playfulness that lends children’s drawings their interest (Chamberlain 210).

The multiple and sometimes conflicting ideas about children’s art circulating throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century resulted in at least two types of adult-child dynamics. The first, a teacher-pupil or master-novice relationship, constructs children as artists-in-progress who need adults to educate them as observers of form and pattern. This education could be circumscribed by exercises reproducing strict lines and geometrical figures, as in Pestalozzi’s model, or it could take into account what was considered the unique nature of childhood and its connection to the natural world, as in Rousseau’s scheme of drawing from nature. Despite these differences in methodology, the teacher-pupil relationship is characterized by a narrative of progression, an
assumption that children grow from imperfection to accomplishment. The second type of relationship these ideas about children’s art imply is characterized by a degree of respect for young artists and the particularly childlike elements of their drawings, such as freedom of line, a pure representation of a central idea, and a commitment to the project of representation grounded in imagination and play. Writers such as Sully, Brown, and Burgess begin to describe this second model in their essays and studies of children’s art, which rely on a model of the child’s imagination as a valuable and self-enabling creative impulse. What is at stake in models of children as artists, as in models of the child’s imagination, is the presumed balance of power and creative authority between adults and children. Does the scribbling of children possess an artistic verve that can overthrow the geometric forms recommended by Pestalozzi, as Peter’s adaptable imagination, described in Chapter Three, finally bests Hook? Because these issues remain unresolved, children’s art is rendered as negotiation between adult influence and artistic independence, between instruction and imagination.

II. VIGNETTES

As I have demonstrated, the categories those debating children’s art education deployed—imitative and inventive, dependent and independent—are grounded in fundamental assumptions about children’s imagination, and these categories are also suggestive in discussions of the artistic impulse in general. For example, they inflect understandings of collaborations between authors and illustrators in the professional literary market, relationships particularly important to the Victorian period, when, as
Richard Maxwell notes, “England and Scotland produced an unprecedented range of illustrated books” (Maxwell xxi, xxv). As authors and their artist-collaborators negotiated the dynamic interplay between text and image, they may not have been burdened by concerns of education, but they did face questions similar to those that troubled adults considering the relationship between children and art. The growing market in illustrated books foregrounded debates about the nature of the artistic imagination and, in particular, whether it depended upon, worked in conjunction with, or transcended the author’s influence. Herbert F. Tucker, in his discussion of literal illustration in the nineteenth century, usefully frames these issues through Roland Barthes, who asks: ‘Does the image duplicate certain of the informations given in the text by a phenomenon of redundancy or does the text add a fresh information to the image?’” “Yes, and yes,” Tucker answers (167).

An uncomplicated relationship between author and illustrator might privilege the writer’s authority. Authors provide text and artists respond by designing images that represent, as directly as possible, the meaning of the words. This dynamic recalls Roscoe’s characterization of children’s imaginations as dependent—his contention that in order for children to imagine, to form pictures in their minds, they must have an object brought before them. However, as scholarship on Victorian book illustration has demonstrated, the role of the artist was always more complicated than this model assumes. The authority of the written text was contested by artists whose influence, bolstered by the rise of the illustrated book, was certainly collaborative with and sometimes subversive to the author’s intent. This suggests that it was the author, and not the artist, who worked according to a derivative model of the imagination. The multiple
and sometimes complicated possibilities of author-illustrator relationships were
articulated throughout nineteenth-century commentary on literature and art. For example,
George du Maurier, in “The Illustration of Books from the Serious Artist’s Point of
View” (1890), contends that illustrators’ depictions of character can outlast authors’
textual descriptions. “Within the limits assigned,” du Maurier writes, character
illustrations “may be as graceful, or grotesque, or humorous, or terrible as people in real
life—indeed, more so, they may continue to haunt the memory when the letterpress they
illustrate is forgotten” (du Maurier 350). Acknowledging but almost dismissing the
assumed dependence of illustrators upon text in the phrase “within the limits assigned,”
du Maurier uses the remainder of his sentence to argue for the inventive rather than
imitative illustrator, an artist whose work persists in viewers’ memories long after text
has faded. Speaking later in the century, in 1889, Walter Crane begins a lecture on book
illustration by describing the imitative artistic imagination of children, contending that
the artwork of the young mimics the crude drawings of primitive cultures; however, he
transforms this discussion into an argument for the precedence of the artist over the
author. “The first impulse in art seems to answer to the primitive imitative impulse in
children,” Crane contends, and this suggests that “the illustrator or picture writer came
first in the order of things, and the book afterwards” (Crane 9). In Crane’s argument, the
child’s imagination—which can only mimic, generation after generation, the artistic
behaviors of primitive cultures—is in fact evidence that it is the imagination of the artist
that drives the illustrated book trade. Tucker concedes that Crane’s comments are “an
admittedly polemical manifesto on behalf of the illustrator’s art” (Tucker 165), but
Crane’s logic, as well as his hybrid term “picture writer,” suggest the tangled and
unpredictable ways commentators on author-illustrator relationships negotiated the
interplay between invention and imitation.

Because discussions of children as artists and the complicated logic of author-
illustrator collaborations address such an overlapping set of questions, it is particularly
interesting to consider how these questions arise in instances of adult-child, author-
illustrator relationships: scenarios when adults take up the pen and children take up the
brush, or vice versa. Evidence of such partnerships is anecdotal, and when they are
referenced in letters, memoirs, or biographies, the illustrated text in question is rarely
published and, more often than not, lost. However, it is useful to look carefully at
those partnerships that have been recorded. In this section, I will discuss collaborations
between Robert Browning and the boy Willie Macready, between the child readers and
adult editors of *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, and between Edmund Gosse, as a child, and his
father. These examples demonstrate how accounts of adult-child partnerships grounded
in the play between the literary and the visual accommodate and often self-consciously
explore the tensions among multiple understandings of children’s artistic imaginations.

Take, for example, the publication and illustration history of Browning’s poem
“The Pied Piper: A Child’s Story.” While Kate Greenaway’s images of the rat-infested
village of Hamelin and the infamous piper dominate how Browning’s poem exists in the
visual imagination, her illustrations were not the first to interpret these verses. Browning

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170 For example, William Thackeray acted as illustrator for his young friend Edith Story, doodling small
pen-and-ink illustrations to accompany the stories she told him as he sat at her bedside. Story
memorialized her collaborations with Thackeray over fifty years later in *Cornhill Magazine*, writing
nostalgically of “the benevolent giant” and his frequent visits, but she dolefully notes that “[t]hose little
drawings were, I deeply regret to say, lost... Only one remains [and the] story has faded from my
memory. Only the quaint little drawing can speak for itself, with the master’s touch and humour” (Story 179).
While the “quaint little drawing” is evocative, the moment of its creation, when narrating girl and
drawing author worked together to create a seamless tale, is forgotten, accessible only through speculating
about its now almost meaningless title, “Zackeray Hubs and his foxtree teapot” (Story 179).
composed “The Pied Piper” decades earlier, in 1842, as inspiration for the pencil of ten-year-old Willie Macready, bedridden with a respiratory illness and in need of entertainment. Willie was the eldest son of William Macready, a noted tragedian and Browning’s friend. Browning remembers in a letter to William Furnival that Willie “had a talent for drawing, and asked me to give him some little thing to illustrate, so I made a bit of a poem out of an old account of the death of the Pope’s legate at the Council of Trent [the poem “The Cardinal and the Dog”]—which he made such clever drawings for, that I tried a more picturesque subject, the Piper” (qtd. in Peterson 27). Willie responded to this second poem with a series of pencil illustrations and a letter:

My dear Mr. Browning

I have finished the rest of the illustration of The Pied Piper, which I hope you will like as well as the others but I am sorry to say that I do not think them so good as the Council chambers or the other one that I did. Hoping they will be as great a success as the others.

I remain your affect. friend
William C. Macready Jun.
May 18th 1842

(qtd. in Herring 3)

Despite the professional tone of Willie’s letter and his concerns about the quality of his images—his sincere wish that the illustrations of the Piper will “be as great a success as the others”—the boy’s drawings of Hamelin would not be published as illustrations of Browning’s verse.\(^{171}\)

The Browning-Macready partnership draws upon multiple models of the child’s artistic imagination. First, Macready’s artwork could be considered derivative, based on ideas of the dependent child’s imagination. Browning provides material he considers

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\(^{171}\) Macready’s illustrations are archived in the Armstrong Browning Library in Waco, Texas and reprinted in that library’s catalogue of its Pied Piper holdings. See Herring.
appropriate for the young artist; the reflective tone of Browning’s letter to Furnival suggests that he considered the movement from “The Cardinal and the Dog” to “The Pied Piper” an instructive one, meant to adapt the tastes and talents of his young friend. However, Macready is also represented here as inventive, the true creative force behind this intergenerational partnership. In Browning’s account, it was Macready who initiated the collaboration, requesting material for illustration. Browning wrote only two poems for children in his lifetime, and therefore “The Pied Piper” is a sort of commissioned project, its form and content driven by the particular needs of Willie as an artist.

Scholarship on “The Pied Piper” often interprets the poem in this way; Mary S. Pollock calls it “a collaboration with Willie,” and David Goslee calls “a written vehicle for William Macready’s pictures” (Pollock 141, Goslee 50). Pollock and Goslee imply that Willie’s images should be privileged above Browning’s text, which is empty, a “vehicle” interesting only when Willie takes up his pencil. This understanding of the Browning-Macready collaboration recalls the interest child study scholars such as Sully and Burgess take in children’s drawings. Perhaps Browning, like Sully, found children’s drawings “true” and “suggestive” (Sully 396).

This reading of the poem is reinforced both by Browning’s representation of his partnership with Macready and by the way the poem appeared when it was published in Browning’s collection *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). In his letter to Furnival, Browning constructs a cause-and-effect relationship between the young artist’s drawings and his own literary efforts. It is because Willie’s drawings of “The Cardinal and the Dog” are so “clever,” because of Willie’s “talent,” that Browning decides to try out a subject that is a little more “picturesque.” While Browning characterizes the first poem he sends Willie
as "some little thing," as "a bit of a poem," the poet’s partnership with the boy gains momentum and leads the author to consider their collaborations more seriously.

Browning registers his respect for Willie’s collaboration in three ways in the published poem. First, he includes a dedication: “Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger.” This is the only dedication in the volume, implying, in the words of Pollock, that Willie “touched the poet’s heart and challenged him as a poet” (Pollock 142).

Second, Browning subtitled the poem “A Child’s Story,” a phrase that certainly informs readers of the intended audience of the poem but also indicates that the verses somehow belong to the Willie rather than the poet who wrote them. Lastly, Browning ends the poem with a quatrain, the moral of the legend, that speaks to the young artist’s influence:

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or mice,
If we’ve promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

(Browning 219)

The phrase “me and you” suggests collective action and, perhaps, control over the course of the tale, whether or not the piper is paid. The final two lines look forward, implying that the partnership is not yet over.

While Willie and Browning’s partnership can be interpreted through these ideas about the child’s artistic imagination, it is also informed by nineteenth-century associations of children with oral culture—constructions of childhood that, as discussed in Chapter One, align the flexible imaginations of children with the adaptable give-and-take of the oral tale. This particular construction of childhood may have led Browning to choose, as Willie’s second project, the story of the Pied Piper, a legend passed from generation to generation since the thirteenth century, recorded pictorially, in a stained
glass window designed for a church in the town of Hamelin and through multiple illustrations, and textually, through both fictional versions and accounts supposed to be factual. Moreover, legends such as the Pied Piper, often narrated in the home or passed from parent to child, may have suggested the possibility of intergenerational affect to the poet. Browning encountered the story in his childhood through Nathaniel Wanley’s *The Wonders of the Little World* (1678), a text that was in the personal library of Robert Browning, Senior. The story was “a favourite with [Browning’s] legend-loving father, who, devoted as he was to children, versified and illustrated the tale with pen and pencil for other small folk than those of his own family” (Griffin 21–2). As Forrest D. Burt notes, Browning “was in many ways reaching back into his own childhood and empathizing with young Willie Macready’s wish” for suitable texts to illustrate (Burt 32). It is reasonable to suspect that Browning chose the piper story not only because it was a “picturesque subject”—suitable for illustrating and, perhaps, possessing a rural or old-fashioned charm that, in the nineteenth century, characterized many texts for children—but also because, as a folktale, it was both assumedly suited to children’s interests and couched in his own imagination as an adaptable tale that could respond to children’s contributions, could build relationships between adult and child.

The Browning-Macready partnership was largely domestic, originating in a father’s narration and illustration and continuing in the sick chamber of the young Willie. As discussed throughout this project, domestic settings were particularly amenable to

172 As Werner Wunderlich notes, the story of the Pied Piper does not have a fixed date of origin. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm recorded two variants of the piper story in their collection *Deutsche Sagen* (1816)—one titled “Der Rattenfänger,” or “The Rat-catcher,” and the other titled “Die Kinder zu Hameln,” or “The Children of Hamelin”—legends that they supposedly first encountered through a visual representation of the story, the stained glass window once installed in the market church of Hamelin. The piper is also recorded in a fifteenth-century Latin codex, which tells of a young man with the power to seduce children with the sound of his flute.
collaboration, and the intergenerational relationships that naturally occur between family members, such as the relationship between Browning and his father, were integral to many creative partnerships among adults and children. This is especially true of the household of Margaret Gatty, whose periodical *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (1866–1885) was, in the words of U. C. Knoepflmacher, “a journal that openly proclaimed its identity as a Gatty family enterprise” (Knoepflmacher AJ 152). The text and illustrations featured in the magazine were contributed by all members of the family, who understood the periodical as “a chance to extend to Victorian families at large the collaborative atmosphere over which Margaret and [her daughter] Juliana had presided” (Knoepflmacher AJ 146). Gatty and her Juliana—the primary contributor to the magazine who, as Juliana Horatia Ewing, would herself earn acclaim as an author for children—worked with friends and family to invent features that would reproduce, in the lives of their young readers, the familial collaboration they found so productive in their own home. Knoepflmacher writes that the editors invited young readers “to respond in letters and to participate in contests and games they could share with their elders” (Knoepflmacher AJ 152). Susan Drain similarly points to features in *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* that encourage not simply partnerships between children and adults but collaborations of mutual respect. Drain singles out a regular element in the periodical called “Nights at the Round Table,” “an occasional feature which presented stories within a family network of teller and listeners” (Drain 14). The round table image, Drain argues, signals equal participation among all members of the family, suggesting that “all children were equally welcome to participate, according to their abilities, in the family activities” (Drain 14).
The “emphasis on collaboration” (Knoepflmacher AJ 152) evident throughout Aunt Judy’s Magazine included not only the partnerships enabled by texts and storytelling but also the collaborative potential of illustration. Gatty introduced a new feature of the magazine in 1869: a series of short narratives called “Nursery Nonsense.” In the first installment, Gatty explains that the scenes are intended to serve a double purpose—to be read to the very little ones . . . and also to give the young artists of a family an opening for the exercise of their talent, while at the same time it is devoted to the use and benefit of the domestic circle. In these days artistic talent of a greater or less extent is by no means uncommon, and wherever it shows itself it is, as a general rule, cultivated. Let some of our young artistic friends, then, turn the accomplishment to the practical use proposed, which will, we are satisfied, win them golden opinions from younger brothers and sisters as well as from papa and mamma.

(Gatty 183)

As an adult narrates the story and younger children listen to the tale, older siblings are instructed to draw or paint illustrations, including at the bottom of their drawings a transcription of the narrative. These initial instructions are followed by a simple story, told in a few short chapters, describing the adventures of a young girl named Barbara, her mother, her nurse, her cousin Charlie, and her Uncle Charles, characters who reappear in later installments. Drain—claiming that “Nursery Nonsense called for various family members to collaborate as reader, listener, and illustrator” (Drain 14)—dubs this feature a particularly apt example of the activities meant to reproduce in Gatty’s readership the familial collaboration that produced the periodical. The parents contribute through narration, the youngest members of the family enjoy a story, and the burgeoning artists illuminate the narrative, creating illustrations that please the entire family.

However, while Gatty’s feature certainly encourages partnerships between herself as editor and the parents, infants and child illustrators who enjoy her magazine, I contend
that she does not recognize the children illustrating Barbara’s adventures as collaborators. Even more so than Browning, Gatty selects for her young artists stories she considers appropriate for their efforts—and “for the use and benefit of the domestic circle”—and her words quite literally form the foundation of their drawings, running beneath their images as transcribed sentences. Gatty is not interested in encouraging the type of art that Burgess admires, the “untrammeled expression” of “child-thought,” but instead in modeling for young artists, though her periodical, the stories that merit their artistic efforts. More importantly, Gatty’s instructions for the activity, pointedly directed to the parents of young artists and not to the family as a whole, frame “Nursery Nonsense” as an opportunity for parents to teach young artists the proper posture for drawing, the correct manner to hold the pencil, and techniques for form and color, using if necessary sample prints that demonstrate “correct” illustrations.

A little study of Fröhlich’s beautiful illustrations of ‘Mdlle. Lili’s Journée,’ will show them the sort of thing that is wanted. Let them try sketches of these scenes either in pencil or colours—either serious or grotesque. One cannot become a Fröhlich at once, but one may charm the nursery spectators, and be crowned with drawing-room laurels for the attempt, however defective.

If mamma or papa are artists too . . . wonders may be done in guiding the first attempts at this sort of designing. The little ones will be charmed to sit at the table or on the floor in the proper positions . . . And thus with the designing may be mixed a little drawing from life.

(Gatty 183)

Gatty does not criticize or condemn the mistakes children make in their artwork but rather dismisses them, claiming that even flawed children’s drawings may “be crowned with drawing-room laurels” simply for “the attempt.” However, it is undeniable that, in the context of “Nursery Nonsense,” any exercise of children’s talents is in service to a greater education. Children’s artwork is part of a creative progression from “defective” to “the sort of thing that is wanted.” Attentive parents are advised to correct the designs
of their children, “guiding the first attempts” of children and ensuring that they’re working “in the proper positions.” These lessons are also moral, as the young artists are set to illustrate stories that typically end with a nugget of scientific information or a moral lesson. The sort of collaboration enabled through “Nursery Nonsense,” then, is limited: Gatty provides a framework for familial partnerships based on the interaction of text and image, but the collaborations enabled through her periodical ultimately prioritize the norms and values of adults’ art and education over any contribution the child could make. “Nursery Nonsense,” at times, suggests respect for the child’s artistic imagination—the “talent” of certain young artists—but Gatty’s instructions and the stories she deems fit for children’s efforts privilege an approach to children’s art that emphasizes imitation and education.

Gatty would have found support of these methods from an unlikely corner. Reflecting upon his own childhood experience with art, Edmund Gosse, in his autobiography *Father and Son* (1907), similarly values the merits of imitation over the possibilities of invention. Gosse praises imitation as “a very healthy form” of intellectual development and expresses his disgust at the “rage for what is called ‘originality,’” which “is pushed to such a length that even children are not considered promising unless they attempt things preposterous and unparalleled” (Gosse 97). Gosse judges his childhood drawings, often unfavorably, against this standard of exact imitation. His early artwork was inspired by his father’s work as a naturalist, and Gosse explains that, as a boy, he was spellbound by his father’s biological monographs, descriptions and paintings of

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One story, however, is a noteworthy exception. The second installment, entitled “Bogy Will Fetch You,” describes very witty and well-planned attempts on the part of Barbara and Charlie to disprove the existence of the Bogy in their cellar, a figure their nurse has been using to threaten the children into submission.
“minute and even . . . microscopic forms of life” (Gosse 89). Gosse notes his father’s careful research, his days spent “producing numerous watercolour drawings . . . executed in the manner of miniature, with an amazing fidelity of form and with a brilliancy of colour” (Gosse 89). This fascination with his father’s work, Gosse notes, was part of a more general “increased activity of [his] intellectual system,” an awakening that manifested itself in “direct imitation” of the scientific efforts of his father (Gosse 96). This “took the form of my preparing little monographs on his seaside creatures, which were arranged, tabulated, and divided as exactly as possible on the pattern of those which my Father was composing for his ‘Actinologia Britannica,’” explains Gosse. “I wrote these upon sheets of paper the same size as his printed page, and I adorned them with water-colour plates, meant to emulate his precise and exquisite illustrations” (Gosse 98).

As an adult, Gosse expresses great distaste for these copies of his father’s work, calling them “ludicrous postiches [sic]” that “wasted an enormous quantity of time.” They were “solemn and ridiculous imitations of Papers read before the Linnaean Society.” They were “parodies rather than imitations,” “grotesque monographs” (Gosse 98, 99). As imitations, he concedes, they fall embarrassingly short.

However, it becomes apparent, as Gosse elaborates upon his artistic efforts, that his self-criticism is disingenuous. His insistence that to “imitate closely and carefully” is a surer sign of genius than “to create new forms of thought and expression” is belied by the way he describes the colorful sea creatures he paints. Gosse concludes that his “extraordinary excursions into science” are imperfect because his illustrations do not realistically represent the organisms his father has fixed under the careful lens of the microscope. Instead, with his “box of colours and tumbler of turbid water,” Gosse
"invented new species with sapphire spots and crimson tentacles and amber bands."

These "were close enough to [my father's] real species to be disconcerting. He came from conscientiously shepherding the flocks of ocean, and I do not wonder that my ring-straked [sic], speckled and spotted varieties put him out of countenance" (Gosse 99, 98).

These productions were anything but incompetent imitations; certainly Gosse did not embark upon his project with perfect mimicry in mind. The hours he spent creating those paintings were obviously a source of entertainment and happiness, a creative project he "indulged to the neglect of other lessons and other pleasures" (Gosse 99).

Philip Gosse, then, was initially his son's unwitting collaborator, unaware that his artistic style and painstaking research were firing the imagination of young Edmund. However, the stern patriarch soon became the active collaborator of an unwilling Edmund. When Philip Gosse, "grieved . . . at the badness of [Edmund's] pictures," tried to teach his son the "system of miniature painting as applied to natural history," the act of drawing, drained of its freedom and creative potential, became a very different endeavor for the young boy. "I was forced, in deep depression of spirits, to turn from my grotesque monographs, and paint under my Father's eye, and from a finished drawing of his, a gorgeous tropical bird in flight. Aided by my habit of imitation, I did at length produce something which might have shown promise, if it had not been wrung out of me, touch by touch, pigment by pigment, under the orders of a task-master" (Gosse 99–100). While Gosse claims to value imitation over invention, the examples he chooses as evidence for his convictions prove the inverse. The very variety of the words he uses to describe his "grotesque monographs" far outshine the language he deploys to describe his copy of Philip Gosse's "tropical bird in flight." The latter is purportedly "gorgeous," but its
texture is achieved “touch by touch,” its hues, described with the generic term “pigment,” copied exactly from his father’s “finished drawing.” The sea creatures, on the other hand, are described in language that reflects the young artist’s artistic investment in them: they are speckled and spotted, sapphire and crimson, products of Gosse’s youthful enthusiasm and “tumbler of turbid water.”

III. Edward Lear’s Apparent Naïveté

Perhaps, as a marine biologist, Philip Gosse considered illustration as a descriptive rather than inventive art form. His miniatures were a means to describe and categorize the observable world, and as a scientist who spent hours “conscientiously shepherding the flocks of ocean,” he did not consider his watercolors as a way to visualize creatures that may exist outside of the natural order of ecosystems and taxonomy. This would account for his reaction to his son’s “grotesque monographs.” Concerned about Edmund’s artistic development, Philip institutes a strict system of education in color and line that emphasizes “fidelity of form” and precise execution. He does not recognize or respond to Edmund’s efforts to collaborate, to build upon and respond to his father’s meticulously rendered sea creatures, and instead enforces more familiar, authoritative relationships—between father and son, art instructor and student—by setting his son to copy rather than create. However, one of Philip Gosse’s contemporaries, Edward Lear, did not detect such conflict between scientific and imaginative representation. An artist and natural historian himself, painting not sea life but birds and mammals, Lear perceived the order and classification of the natural world
as systems that *invited* the inventions, inversions, and even subversions of the child’s imagination—a force that can, as Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, transcend the demands of reality and “make abstraction” of the physical world to build powerful fantasies (Stevenson 174). In this section, I will explore the multiple ways Lear’s nonsense drawings and verses—which he created sometimes alone, sometimes in partnership with young friends, but always inspired by the vivid imagination of childhood—demonstrate how order and chaos, imitation and invention, are not antithetical forces but instead work in concert. First, I contextualize Lear within the history of children’s book illustration, paying attention to how his playful style deviates from the conventions of those artists who dominated the market—such as Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane, and Randolph Caldecott—and how his art was received and reviewed. Next, I examine in detail particular examples of Lear’s nonsense, including his colored bird books, limericks, nonsense botany, and in particular his story “The History of the Seven Families of Lake Pipple-Popple.” In doing so, I describe both the complicated relationships Lear built among multiple ways of imagining and interpreting the world, textually and visually, and how Lear articulated those relationships through partnerships with children and, in particular, through a discourse of discovery—of recognizing new and unexpected objects and ideas in an ordered world—an act he understood as particularly childlike.

Lear’s career as an author-illustrator for children, from the publication of his first nonsense collection in 1846 to his death in 1888, overlaps with what Richard Dalby calls the Golden Age of children’s book illustration. The nineteenth century witnessed the development of new methods of publication and reproduction, in particular refinements in lithography and color printing, and these technologies generated new ideas regarding
the sort of artwork deemed appropriate for children. In particular, publishers and readers began to expect art of higher quality and sophistication in children’s books. Sir Henry Cole describes this new attitude in an announcement for his series *Home Treasury Books* in 1843,\(^{174}\) noting that all the books in the series will be illustrated,

> but not after the usual fashion of children’s books, in which it seems to be assumed that the lowest kind of art is good enough to give first impressions to a child . . . [T]hough the statement may perhaps excite a smile, the illustrations will be selected from the works of Raffaell, Titian, Hans Holbein, and other old masters. Some of the best modern artists have kindly promised their aid in creating a taste for beauty in little children.

(Cole 161)

Cole’s suspicion that his project “may perhaps excite a smile” suggests that selecting classical art for children was a novel idea; however, throughout the nineteenth century, critics increasingly measured the success of artists for children by their ability to elevate children’s book illustration to high art. The late 1800s in particular witnessed the rise of a number of important figures in illustration in general and children’s book illustration in particular, including engravers such as William James Linton and the Dalziel brothers as well as artists such as Richard Doyle, John Tenniel, and the famous triumvirate working under accomplished color printer Edmund Evans: Crane, Greenaway, and Caldecott (Dalby 7).\(^{175}\) Lear was writing “The Owl and the Pussy-cat” and illustrating his second collection of nonsense in the 1860s and 1870s, when Evans published some of his most memorable work, including Crane’s *Sing a Song of Sixpence* (1865), Greenaway’s *Under

\(^{174}\) Cole was a ubiquitous figure in Victorian culture. He founded the Victoria and Albert Museum, helped organize the Great Exhibition of 1851, and published the first Christmas card. See Bonython. As an author for children, Cole published under the pseudonym Felix Summerley, and his books were a response to didactic literature for children created by American author Samuel Griswold Goodrich, who wrote under the pseudonym Peter Parley. Historians of children’s literature often frame the clash between didactic and fantastic modes in the genre through the creative differences of these two authors. See Darton.

\(^{175}\) As Anne Lundin notes, Edmund Evans “is distinguished by many historians as the most celebrated Victorian printer of children’s books in color” (Lundin 7–8).
the Window (1878), and Caldecott’s The House that Jack Built (1878). These three artists are usually considered together, but Victorian readers and critics appreciated their divergent styles. They admired the elaborate interiors of Crane’s illustrations of nursery rhymes and fairy tales. The nostalgic, pre-Industrial childhood represented by Greenaway’s mob-capped and short-jacketed children delighted Ruskin and inspired a fad in popular Queen Anne children’s fashions. Caldecott’s depictions of everyday life in simple drawings earned him the titles “Good Genius of the Nursery” and “Prince of Picture Books” (Henley 212).

By the 1880s, essayists writing on children’s book illustration exulted in the quality and variety of art available to the young. William Henley, in 1880, praised the work of Caldecott by writing that “[u]nder his sway, Art for the nursery has become Art indeed” (Henley 212). In an essay entitled “Art in the Nursery” (1883), an anonymous reviewer wrote that “[n]othing is too pretty or too good for our little ones, as there was nothing too cheap and too bad for the little ones of a century ago. They . . . rejoice in colour-printing that gives their books a claim to be considered as works of art; they are deluged with examples of taste and skill and the genius of production that fairly brighten the places into which they enter” (“Art” 251). The writer goes on to argue that the child “may be said to be something of an art-critic ere he leaves his cradle . . . It is his own fault if he be not; for his aesthetic opportunities are innumerable, and the matter produced for the gratification of his pampered appetite is perhaps the daintiest ever seen” (“Art” 250). In the final decades of the century, art for children was imagined as part of the

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176 For information on the influence of picture books on Georgian style in literature, art, architecture, and dress, among other things, see Girouard.

177 Indeed, illustrated books for children had grown so dainty by the end of the century that many writers questioned whether these texts were truly meant for children. In his survey of children’s book illustration
fine arts world in general, often judged according to standards applied to adults’ art. Notably, children’s book illustration often participated in movements associated with the adult art world. Mark Girouard notes that picture books were “the best advocates for ‘Queen Anne’” styles, and John Barr argues that Crane’s picture books are representative of his “‘aesthetic’ interiors, inhabited by graceful figures in richly printed garments” (Girouard 139, Barr 50).

While these new standards certainly improved the quality of illustrated books for the young, they were to a large extent a reworking, under a new guise, of the didactic tendencies of children’s literature. As the essay “Art in the Nursery” so blithely notes, improved illustrations for children were meant to transform children into educated appreciators of the arts. The right art in the nursery and in children’s books was meant to exert a positive if passive influence on children’s sensibilities, transforming them into “adept[s] in style.” “The picture-books of Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, and Randolph Caldecott were secret persuaders,” writes Girouard, and “dedicated aesthetes . . . fell upon them with delight as a means of conditioning their children” (Girouard 139). The assumed educational value of high art in the nursery suggests that Victorians’ views on appropriate art for children were connected to their views on children as artists. Just as many art educators contended that children needed an artistic education in the norms and values of art production, an education best accomplished through exercises in imitation and line, many Victorians thought that children, as viewers and consumers of art, needed of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, William Feaver offers as an example of elaborate illustrated books James Doyle’s Chronicle of England, which, “in its neo-Domesday Book binding, is an extreme example of the 1860s gift volume, designed to be looked through with clean hands and adult supervision on Sunday afternoon” (Feaver 16). The writer of “Art in the Nursery” notes of Kate Greenaway’s Almanac that “the bookling, which is delightfully printed and produced, is likely to be delivered over to the tiny folk for whose pastime it is made we hesitate to believe. It will probably be locked away in an impregnable hold, and only brought out when children are good; when they may claim with something like assurance some special and peculiar need of benevolence and reward (“Art” 257).
an education in taste. This was best achieved by surrounding children not with art they
might recognize as their own but instead, in the words of Cole, the work of the “old
masters” and the “best modern artists.” Both theories of art education and standards of
children’s book illustrations, then, constructed children as inhabiting a particular stage on
a narrative of artistic accomplishment and sophistication.

Lear is nearly always included in accounts of notable Victorian illustrators for
children. His work, however, is described in language different from the praise lavished
upon his contemporaries. Lear’s drawings are not “Art indeed,” and they are not lauded
for their resemblance to the work of the “old masters.” Dalby, for example, notes that
Lear’s illustrations are “full of movement,” that they have a “childish spontaneity,” and
Herman W. Liebert calls Lear’s style “loose, free, imaginative, unconfined by
perspective, and like the work of a gifted child” (Dalby 19, Liebert 22). John Lehmann
argues that in his nonsense drawings Lear exhibits a “purity of line and free lyricism”
(Lehmann 55). These critics’ appraisals of Lear’s drawings represent him as unique
among a generation of artists who were introducing sophisticated styles into the nursery.
Lear was instead producing artwork with qualities that, later in the century, would be
recognized by Sully, Burgess, Cooke, and their contemporaries as particularly valuable
and creative elements of children’s art: freedom of line and a genuine and imaginative
representation of subject. Praise for Lear’s nonsense tends to recognize its playful
qualities while insisting that the artist’s childlike style is intentional, guided by a deeper
order and a refined artistic skill.178

178 There were, undoubtedly, dissenting voices. In his biography of Lear, Angus Davidson notes that some
of Lear’s contemporaries would not allow their children and grandchildren to look at Lear’s work “for fear
the precious infants’ ‘sense of the beautiful’ might be damaged” (Davidson 187).
the grotesque forms in which he pretends to emulate the awkward scrawls of the schoolboy on his slate" (Strachey 359). A critic in *The Saturday Review* wrote in 1888, the year of Lear’s death, that “the drawings very cunningly combine the clumsy conventions dear to children with the types and expressions that display real artistic knowledge and observation” (Anon, “Lear’s” 361). In his book-length study of nonsense, Emile Cammaerts writes that Lear’s art is “at once childish, deliberately exaggerated and irresistibly funny” and that “no artist or connoisseur will question the intentional character of these ‘mistakes’” (Cammaerts 67). Recent criticism follows the same pattern. Dalby calls Lear’s nonsense drawings “deceptively simple,” and Lisa Ede argues that the illustrations’ “apparent naivety mask an underlying design of great subtlety,” that “it is a sign of his success that his illustrations are often compared to children’s drawings” (Dalby 19, Ede 113). The contention that it takes “real artistic knowledge and observation” to produce drawings that recall “the clumsy conventions dear to children,” would become, in the twentieth century, a benchmark of the modernist movement, when artists such as Paul Klee or Joan Miró attempted to represent through perspective, form, and color a childlike naivety. However, Lear’s adoption of a child’s style in the mid-nineteenth century—or, to be precise, his subtle blend of adults’ and children’s aesthetics—was unusual when considered alongside the work of his contemporaries.

These reviews depict Lear as an illustrator who, even in his work for children, calls upon the skills he developed as a mature artist. While Lear is remembered for his nonsense, he spent his lifetime pursuing a career as a landscape painter—in England and abroad, in Italy and other Mediterranean countries—earning marginal success, studying

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179 For more on the connection between children’s art and the work of modernists like Klee and Miró, see Fineberg.
at the Royal Academy, and for a time painting sweeping horizons under the eye of Pre-
Raphaelites. The "loose, free, [and] imaginative" lines Liebert admires in Lear's
nonsense are absent from the artist's earlier work; while Lear certainly was fond of large-
scale landscapes, his professional portfolio suggests a delight in accurate and minute
detail. Lear began his career illustrating what he calls "morbid disease drawings, for
hospitals and certain doctors of physic" and later earned patrons by producing elaborate
studies of birds, large plates that biographer Peter Levi calls "the biggest and best ever,
except for Audubon's" (Lear Letters xxvii, Levi 28). For his 1830 Illustrations of the
Family of Psittacidae (Parrots)—which, although never completed, was meant to include
fourteen numbers—Lear spent hours in the parrot house of the London Zoo, attentive to
his birds as Philip Gosse was to his sea creatures, "taking measurements and making
sketches and color notes" (Byrom 5). Lear's earliest work, then, employed a mode of
representation that not only rooted firmly within the realm of the possible—more
precisely the observable—but also replicated that world with precision. The
ornithological study in particular, while demanding considerable skill and innovation on
the part of the artist, is essentially imitative rather than inventive, dependent on visual
referents in the natural world.

Despite Lear's careful attention to the particular feather patterns of parrots and his
reproduction of precise play of light and shade in his landscapes, however, he shared with
the young Edmund Gosse a love for imaginative creatures in bright colors. He thanked a
generous patron, for example, with a drawing of a "fire-crested, red-breasted, black-
spotted, white-bellied, magpie-tailed, corvine-beaked, wood-peckering starling, in a

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180 For more on Lear's relationship to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, see Levi, pp. 126–137. Lear also
was, briefly, a drawing-master for Queen Victoria. See Davidson, pp. 35–9.
slightly sketched realistic landscape with a fern” (Levi 24). This nonsense bird is a trifling but telling example of a larger trend in Lear’s career: the complex relationship he built between his experience as a professional artist and his nonsense. Vivien Noakes has noted the many ways Lear’s landscapes and natural history artwork influence his nonsense and vice versa, noting that “the various threads of his life and creativity interweave and overlap” and that the “approach to life which gave rise to the Nonsense was part of Lear’s whole personality, and not restricted to his Nonsense writing” (Noakes 189). As Noakes’ metaphor suggests, Lear’s multiple creative modes are woven together, comprising one fabric, and, in fact, many of Lear’s nonsense drawings and their accompanying verses are meta-commentaries on the relationship between the two dominant discourses in his creative life, the two different ways of imagining and representing the world around him. Lear dramatizes a collaboration between the rational and irrational, between the scientific and the fantastic, and between the ordered conventions Victorians used to understand the natural world and the elements of childlike creativity that flout such conventions.\(^{181}\) In doing so, he betrays the disregard for order characteristic of the imagination at play, as described by authors such as Dickens and Stevenson. Put another way, Lear’s nonsense is a negotiation between, on the one hand, the imitation inherent in, for example, the generic conventions of his ornithological studies and, on the other, the invention, the power of creating something new and original, that derives but departs from the known world, troped as childlike.

Lear’s drawings of birds are a productive place to begin dissecting this interplay between artistic order and chaos, as they recall some of Lear’s most vibrant nonsense: his

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\(^{181}\) Lear was knowledgeable about biological organization and classification, which he parodied in his nonsense botany, discussed later in this chapter. He expressed his interest in the relationship between species when, as Levi notes, “he made fifty plates at least for the Voyage of the Beagle” (Levi 27).
colored bird books. When the wife of Lear’s friend Lord Cromer “expressed a wish” that her three-year-old son “should acquire some knowledge of colour,” Lear, “with his usual kindness, at once sent twenty drawings of birds of various colours” (qtd. in Noakes 183). These simple watercolors—line drawings of wide-eyed birds in bright hues on a white ground—were published in 1911, after Lear’s death, as part of *Queery Leary Nonsense* and on their own as *The Lear Coloured Bird Book for Children* (1912). Lear had made similar sets of colored birds in 1863 for Mary de Vere, a young girl who had delighted Lear “with her merriment and prattle” during a boat ride to Corfu (Lear *Letters* 256), and another in 1880 for “the little Fentons” (Noakes 183). Thomas Byrom calls these books “some of Lear’s most delightful works—half-cartoons, half-formal” (Byrom 41). The hybridity Byrom detects here is particularly striking when these watercolors are examined next to Lear’s professional bird monographs. While the monographs are exponentially more refined than his colored birds, some of the informal images are certainly informed by an artist’s hand practiced in avian forms. The “Dark Blue Bird” published in *Queery Leary Nonsense* is a simplified mirror image of the *Hyacinthe Macaw* Lear painted for his series of parrots (Figs. 11 and 12), and a “Pink Bird” Lear drew in 1880 for Charles Geffrard Pirouet looks like a distant cousin of Lear’s depiction of Leadbetter’s Cockatoo.

Noakes encourages such comparisons both by arranging Lear’s colored birds and his scientific studies on facing pages and by placing small thumbnails of his colored birds on pages of masterfully painted parrots. However, while even Lear’s simple drawings of birds for children are inflected by his hours of study at the London Zoo, he is mindful to include, among the relatively accurate birds in the *Coloured Bird Book*, more exotic
varieties. The “Spotty Bird” and the “Stripy Bird” challenge the norms of plumage, and the “Scroobious” and “Runcible” birds defy not only the colors of nature but also artistic norms of form and perspective (Figs. 13 and 14). Noakes argues that Lear’s nonsense birds are “a demonstration perhaps that not all things in life can be described with convenient certainty . . . These birds are an example of the way in which Lear instructed children with fun and without patronising them” (Noakes 183). Lear builds a series of correspondences between his colored birds and the carefully categorized birds of his ornithological studies, then, but this is a pattern to be broken. He invents species that encourage viewers to recognize the limits of the systems organizing the way we understand and represent the world, lampooning artistic, etymological, and biological modes of classification. For Lear, only the bright washes of color and imprecise lines of children’s art can accommodate the possibility that these systems are insufficient.

Ann Colley similarly argues that Lear uses his nonsense art to articulate modes of imagining only implied in his more formal work. She argues that readers should “regard Lear’s limericks not only as antitheses of the serious pieces but also as inversions of them. It is as if Lear, when composing his limericks, took his daily ‘academic’ work and turned it upside down and inside out” (Colley 285). Colley’s argument recognizes both great discord between Lear’s two modes of art production and the profound connections between them; Lear’s nonsense and his nature studies are, in a sense, the same, only the subject matter is viewed through different lenses. To illustrate her point, Colley examines together Lear’s Spectacled Owl, a watercolor painted in 1836, and the ways he transported the same owl figure into his limericks (Figs. 15 and 16). The watercolor,
Fig. 11: “The Dark Blue Bird” from Queery Leary Nonsense; rpt. on the Edward Lear homepage, <http://www.nonsenselit.org/lear> 22 February 2010.

Fig. 12: Lear, Hyacinthe Macaw, Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae (Parrots); rpt. on the Edward Lear homepage, <http://www.nonsenselit.org/lear> 22 February 2010.


Colley notes, “meticulously depicts every feather and mark of the owl,” and this circumspect representation reveals a “human quality [that] lurks within the bird’s face”; however, “that [human] element is hastily swept aside by the measured particulars of the painting.” When the spectacled owl appears in Lear’s limericks,—which it often does—the “carefully rendered details recede into approximation and gather into simplified lines,” resulting in a nonsense image that accommodates the owlish humanity, or humanoid owlishness, only suggested by the polished study (Colley 288–9). The “half-human appearance” of the central figure in the nonsense illustration, Colley argues, “confirms and, thus, makes literal the humanity implied in the painting.” This play between careful rendering and simple sketch, Colley contends, is in fact a function of much of Lear’s nonsense: to “explicate[e] the implicit” (289). Lear’s nonsense, then, relies both on the order and appearance of the rational world—in this case, the detailed layers of feather and precise angle of eye that make a spectacled owl appear as a man—and the childlike simplicity and play that allow Lear to underscore what is only suggested in complex, adult art. Lear’s nonsense rendering of his spectacled owl, like his Scroobious and Runcible birds, encourages viewers to acknowledge the both the limits of the imitative art and the possibilities of the inventive imagination, which can reorder and expand upon the observable world to communicate a larger truth.

I contend that Lear not only inverts his serious art in his nonsense drawings, as Colley argues, but also that in his nonsense he reverses accepted norms regarding appropriate modes of illustration for children. Publishing loose, childlike drawings rather than refined artwork, Lear reverses the narrative of creative education—the movement from simplistic and flawed to sophisticated and polished—that informed nineteenth-
The limerick that accompanies Figure 7 reads: “There was an Old Person of Crowle, / Who lived in the nest of an owl; / When they screamed in the nest, he screamed out with the rest, / That depressing Old Person of Crowle” (Lear CN 369).
century ideas about children’s art. He privileged childlike aesthetics decades before figures such as Cooke and Burgess. At times, Lear articulates this perspective in private commentaries on his art. For example, Lear questions the correspondence between reality and representation often used to judge the quality of art in a playful autobiographical poem, “But ah! (the Landscape painter said),” included as a postscript to an 1861 letter to friend George Grove. The poem is accompanied by an illustration of a cartoon Lear working at an easel (Lear CN 156). The “real” world in this illustration, the world outside the painting propped on the easel, is warped by the distortions of form and perspective characteristic of children’s artwork. A “perfectly spherical” Lear balances precariously on pointed feet, floating above the edge of his painter’s bench, while a watching bird’s legs are improbably long (Lear CN 429). However, the canvas the rotund Lear paints, supposedly only a representation of reality, appears to conform to more “adult” standards of artistic creativity and could be a miniature replica of one of Lear’s landscapes (Fig. 17). In this illustration, children’s art does not imperfectly represent the world. Instead, the world bends to a child’s artistic perspective. This image implies that

Fig. 17: Lear, illus. for “But ah! (the Landscape painter said),” postscript to letter to Grove, 16 November 1861; rpt. in Noakes, Edward Lear: The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense, p. 156.
the supposed flaws of children’s art, the incorrect but evocative inconsistencies in perspective and composition, represent the world as it is, while the studious attempt of a professional landscape painter, such as Lear, is a flat reproduction of a reality that is animated, exaggerated, and alive. In the accompanying poem, Lear’s work is interrupted by a “brutal fly” that insists on tickling his bald pate: the vibrant world, personified, interfering with the staid conventions of landscape art (Lear CN 156). Similarly, in a January 1850 letter to Chichester Fortescue announcing Lear’s acceptance into the Royal Academy, Lear depicts adult artistic conventions as unsatisfactory compared to the adaptable and playful child’s imagination. Lear tells Fortescue that he goes “with a large book and piece of chalk to school every day like a good little boy,” but in the accompanying illustration, Lear crouches forlornly on a stool while unruly children—drawn in the simplistic and sometimes chaotic lines of a child artist—stand on their heads, clamber up his easel, play badminton, and relentlessly bully the crying Lear (Fig. 18). Lear’s efforts at fine art in the sophisticated and highly ordered system of the Royal Academy are lost in this image amid the ceaseless energy of childhood (Lear CN 150).

Elsewhere, in his published work, Lear more explicitly privileges less refined but more imaginative modes of illustration. While capable of producing polished illustrations—images perhaps similar to other children’s book illustration of the mid-nineteenth century—Lear chooses to produce drawings that are childlike. He often underscores this choice in his illustrations for his limericks by including, alongside crazily sketched nonsense figures, carefully rendered elements that recall his work as an artist of birds and other wildlife. The clumsily rendered “Old Person of Hyde” and his bride, for example—included in Lear’s 1872 volume More Nonsense—are menaced by a
crab that, while certainly out of proportion with the figures he threatens, is nevertheless meticulously drafted, the segments of his legs and the ridges of his back rendered in few but clear, precise lines (Lear CN 363, Fig. 19). This reversal of artistic values is reinforced by a number of Lear’s limericks that portray unruly children punishing adult figures. The “Old Person of Chester” was pestered by “several small children” throwing
"large stones, which broke most of his bones" (Lear CN 74), and the “Old Man of the East” delights his children with a feast only to be murdered by them (Lear CN 99). The imaginative inversion of adult-child authority in these limericks, reinforced by the childlike lines of the illustrations that accompany them, suggests in humorous language the sort of violent reversals enabled by children’s imaginations. The young figures in these verses, impish and unforgiving, appear as embodiments of the monstrous, youthful imagination described, for example, by MacDonald. They are gamboling tricksters, like Stevenson’s Brownies, that Kaiser would identify as representative of Victorians’ fascination with subversive play.

Lear, it seems, was not merely fascinated with this sort of play but intent on participating in it, inhabiting that youthful position once more through his art and nonsense. R. E. D. Sketchley notes in a 1902 essay on children’s book illustration that Lear is among a select number of artists—including Robert Barnes, Helen Allingham, and T. Pym—“who devised, so far back as the seventies, the naïve and sympathetic style of illustration” (Sketchley 261, emphasis added). As Sketchley suggests, Lear’s imaginative style is perhaps built upon a desire to empathize with children, representing their world as they saw it and, assumedly, as they would represent it themselves. His work is what Peter Hunt would call “childist” in nature: bypassing, as far as possible, the practices, conclusions, and assumptions that inform adults’ perspectives (Hunt 45). It is not surprising, then, that nearly all of Lear’s nonsense, published and unpublished, was created with a particular child, and perhaps a particular child’s perspective, in mind. In addition to his personalized colored bird books, hand-tinted for individual children, Lear’s first Book of Nonsense, published in 1846 under the pseudonym “Derry down
Derry,” was compiled for the children of Knowsley Hall, where Lear was painting animals from the menageries of Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby. Lear composed his most famous poem, “The Owl and the Pussy-cat,” for Janet Symonds, the daughter of John Addington Symonds, and gave three fair copies to other children. His nonsense alphabets were gifts designed for young friends he met during his travels. Margaret Terry Chandler—who befriended Lear as a child when her family was traveling in San Remo—remembers how Lear, whom she had “adopted” as her uncle, gave such an alphabet to her and her brother. She writes in her memoirs,

I still have a complete nonsense alphabet, beautifully drawn in pen and ink and delicately tinted in water colours, done on odd scraps of paper, backs of letters and discarded manuscript. Every day Arthur and I found a letter of it on our plate at luncheon, and finally a title-page for the collection, with a dedication and a portrait of himself, with his smile and his spectacles, as the ‘Adopty Duncle.’

(Chanler 29)

Lear, inspired by a little girl who had chosen him as an uncle, the type of familial bond that often generates creative partnerships, repurposed scraps of adult correspondence and literature to compose a nonsense alphabet that Margaret and her brother, in turn, assembled.

Lear’s partnerships with children were too numerous to record in full here, but their sheer number demonstrates how important Lear’s collaborations with children were to his nonsense. These relationships were, I contend, a means to establish that sympathy with childlike modes of seeing the world that Sketchley detects in Lear’s designs. It is in

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183 Lear arrived at Knowsley in 1832, fourteen years before Book of Nonsense was published. The lapse between the composition of his nonsense and its first publication is registered in the dedication. Lear inscribes the book to the children of his original audience. “To the great-grandchildren, grand-nephews, and grand-nieces of Edward, 13th Earl of Derby,” the dedication reads, “this book of drawings and verses (the greater part of which were originally made and composed for their parents,) is dedicated by the author, Edward Lear.” By the time the book was published with Lear’s name in the dedication in 1861, then, he was imagining how his nonsense could unite audiences across multiple generations.
Lear’s literature and illustrations for children, informed by partnerships with the young, that he interrogates the complex systems that organize the social and natural world, speculating about how they can be expanded, questioned, or even upended when observed through the irreverent imagination of childhood. For example, Mrs. Hugh Fraser remembers befriending Lear while she and her sister were staying in Italy with their family. When Fraser’s sister, baffled by the array of eating utensils on the table, “was in trouble with her big knife and fork,” Lear “produced a bit of paper and a pencil” and doodled a bit of nonsense to amuse her. Fraser recalls that the “unmanageable cutlery of the table d’hôte inspired the marvellous botanical specimen, “Manyforkia Spoonifolia” (Fraser 25). This particular specimen has not been published in Lear’s collected nonsense, but presumably this sketch resembled similar drawings lampooning the complex dynamics of dinnerware that have made it into print, including Bottleforkia Spoonifola and The Fork Tree (Figs. 20 and 21). These drawings are samples of Lear’s nonsense botany: line drawings in the style of botanical studies, featuring a single specimen, accompanied by its Latinate name. Lear recognizes that, to a child (and to many adults), the ordered system of Continental flatware is as complex and troublesome as the Latinate names that classify and differentiate species. In Bottleforkia Spoonifola and similar drawings, he models for his young friends how their own imaginative resources can manipulate and subvert the systems and expectations of the adult world. Moreover, the nonsense botany drawings represent not only the fusion of scientific forms and childlike imaginative invention but also how those two discourses can be mutually transformed. When interpreted through the youthful imagination, scientific categories can accommodate new forms rather than simply replicate the order of the established
world, and a child's imagination can be invigorated through the language and
conventions of the adult world, making those conventions less intimidating through their
upheaval.

The plants Lear illustrates for his nonsense botany are purportedly new, never
before discovered specimens. When these drawings were published in *Nonsense Songs*,
*Stories, Botany and Alphabets*, Lear introduced them by an “Extract from the *Nonsense
Gazette,*” which reads: “Our readers will be interested in the following communications
from our valued and learned contributor, Professor Bosh...[W]e are happy to be able
through Dr. Bosh’s kindness to present our readers with illustrations of his discoveries”
(qtd. Noakes 172–3). The act of discovery, which requires the ability to see beyond the
expected, to alter one’s expectations of what is possible in the known world—to
encounter new varieties of life, like the Runcible bird, with an open mind—seems to be a
quality that Lear found particularly childlike. He produced at least three nonsense
botanies as well as seven drawings of nonsense trees. *The Biscuit Tree*, for example, is
simultaneously exotic and familiar, described in terms both scientific and nonsensical (Fig. 22). The sturdiness of its trunk and the formations of its clusters of biscuit blooms

![The Biscuit Tree](image)

**Fig. 22**: Lear, *The Biscuit Tree*, in *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany and Alphabets*; rpt. in Noakes, *Edward Lear: The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense*, p. 439.

are borrowed from familiar patterns in the natural world, and the text that accompanies the drawing appropriates the form and language of natural history texts to communicate the backwards logic of nonsense. "This remarkable vegetable production has never yet been described or delineated," Lear writes. "When the flowers fall off, and the tree breaks out in biscuits, the effect is by no means disagreeable, especially to the hungry.— If the Biscuits grow in pairs, they do not grow single, and if they never fall off, they cannot be said to remain on" (Lear CN 439). Lear employs a similar sense of imagination and discovery in his personal correspondence. In a letter to Grove, he writes that he has discovered in a nearby wood "Toadstools of the loveliest and most surprising colour and form:—orbicular, cubicular and aquambingular;" and he accompanies this
news with a portrait of himself in a state of astonishment encountering an equally surprised anthropomorphized mushroom (Lear CN 155).

Lear stages a more complicated negotiation between sense and nonsense in “The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple,” a nonsense story composed in 1865 for the Fitzwilliam children and later published in *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets*. Comprised of fourteen short, illustrated chapters, the narrative describes the lives of seven animal families—parrots, storks, geese, owls, guinea pigs, cats, and fish—and the disastrous events that ensue when “the Seven Fathers and the Seven Mothers of the Seven Families agreed that they would send their children out to see the world” (Lear CN 196). The story unites three of Lear’s genres—natural history, travel writing, and nonsense—and the resulting story is an artful interplay among the conventions of each; the images and text of “Pipple-Popple” alternate between the order and accuracy of the former two modes and the necessary disorder and imaginative chaos of the last. The narrating voice Lear employs registers, on the level of language, this dynamic. The story begins: “In former days—that is to say, once upon a time, there lived in the land of Grambleamble, Seven Families. They lived by the side of the great lake Pipple-Popple (one of the Seven Families, indeed, lived in the Lake), and on the outskirts of the City of Tosh... The names of all these places you only have probably heard of, and you have only not to look in your Geography books to find out all about them” (Lear CN 193). Lear’s creature families exist first in the ordered world of scientific convention and discovery. The phrase “in former days” situates them as the subject of travel narratives and anthropological texts that describe the habits of creatures in exotic
landscapes, and the narrator employs familiar phrases to help the reader understand the
geography of the tale; they are “by the side” of the lake and “on the outskirts” of the city.

However, the language Lear uses here also suggests nonsense or even fairy tale
landscapes, where the progression of time is not predictable and the past can only be
denoted with the stock phrase “once upon a time.” And the Seven Families are not only
out of time but out of place. The narrator’s concession that “[t]he names of all these
places you only have probably heard of, and you have only not to look in your
Geography books to find out all about them”—a convoluted sentence that requires
multiple re-readings to mean at all—finally implies that this story describes landscapes
unanticipated by topographies found in textbooks. Moreover, in the illustrations Lear
provides of each family group, which comprise the second chapter of the story, the
animals float in an unbounded, empty space. Unlike the nonsense bird illustration Lear
gifted to his particularly generous patron, the images of the animals of Lake Pipple-
Popple do not situate the creatures in a “realistic landscape with a fern.” The unspecific
and borderless space they inhabit undermines the geographic specificity of the opening
lines of the story. Within the first two chapters of “Pipple-Popple,” then, Lear evokes
both the ordered language of scientific or travel narratives and the nonsense that threatens
to sabotage that order. He returns to the trope of discovery that animates his nonsense
botanies, reinventing or reorganizing the rational world and trusting that his readers,
children and adults alike, have inventive, subversive imaginations.

Notably, the Pipple-Popple universe, both ordered and chaotic, is disturbed by the
intrusion of nonsense. Of the seven groups of children sent out to see the world, three are
killed by nonsense creatures. The geese are destroyed by a Plum-pudding Flea (Fig. 23),
a creature "having a perfectly round body, exactly resembling a boiled plum-pudding, with two little wings, and a beak, and three feathers growing out of his head, and only one leg" (Lear CN 199). The Plum-pudding flea—a creature that is beaked, winged, claw-footed, and feathered—could be interpreted as a goose itself, inverted through the distortions of nonsense. The cats die of exhaustion after chasing a Clangle-Wangle, "a most dangerous and delusive beast, and by no means commonly to be met with," and the fish suffocate in the muddy bottom of the ocean after pursuing "a bright blue Boss-Woss" (Lear CN 202–3). The suggestion of nonsensical disorder at the beginning of the story is unseated by even greater chaos.

At the end of the poem, however, the nonsense tale is neatly ordered and contained in a manner Lear transports from his days as an artist of natural history. The matriarchs and patriarchs of the Seven Families of Lake Pipple-Popple, distraught upon hearing the news of the children's deaths, "purchased great quantities of Cayenne Pepper,"
and Brandy, and Vinegar, and blue Sealing-wax, besides Seven immense glass Bottles with art-tight stoppers” (Lear CN 205). After a farewell party, they use their purchases to pickle themselves (Fig. 24) and leave a will instructing “that they themselves in the Bottles should be presented to the principal museum of the city of Tosh, to be labelled

![Image of pickled bottles]

Fig. 24: Lear, illus. to “The History of the Seven Families of Lake Pipple-Popple,” Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets; rpt. in Noakes, Edward Lear: The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense, p. 206.

with Parchment . . . and to be placed on a marble table with silver-gilt legs, for the daily inspection and contemplation, and for the perpetual benefit of the pusillanimous public” (Lear CN 206). Concluding his story with a sense of order and containment, Lear anticipates a tradition of children’s literature that celebrates the chaotic energy of children’s imaginations only to reduce that chaos to order upon the close of the narrative. Years later, Dr. Seuss and Maurice Sendak would employ similar structures in The Cat in the Hat and Where the Wild Things Are, respectively. Like Sendak’s Max, however, the creatures of Lake Pipple-Popple maintain their subversive potential. While they are indeed pickled in air-tight jars, they are there of their own volition and displayed in the
City of Tosh, a nonsense city. While bobbing in a brine of their own concoction, they do not appear to be in suspended animation at all. They peer out at the viewer through their glass jars, very much alive.

IV. *JUST SO STORIES FOR LITTLE ARTISTS*

Lear was certainly influenced by his many relationships with children, but his illustrations are limited collaborations. The childlike qualities of his art originate from his own pen and pencil, inspired by, not produced by, the creative efforts of children. Rudyard Kipling, however, in his fiction for children, employs a more traditional model of adult-child collaboration. He built a creative partnership with his daughter Josephine, who, in her Vermont nursery, listened to and transformed the tales her father would later publish as *Just So Stories for Little Children* (1902). Kipling’s introduction to the first three stories in the series, which appeared in *St. Nicholas Magazine* in 1897, describes Effie’s influence as an active listener to the tales. The author writes that the stories were “meant to put Effie to sleep, and you were not allowed to alter those by one single little word. They had to be told just so; or Effie would wake up and put back the missing sentence” (Kipling “How” 89). Existing scholarship on Kipling’s stories has explored not only how Effie, as a listener, collaborated with her narrating father in a manner resembling the storyteller-auditor relationships explored in Chapter One but also how Kipling’s illustrations to the stories reinforce and reflect that relationship. These insightful studies render Kipling as an author whose familial collaboration with Effie expanded, like the Gatty family collaboration to include the children who read the *Just So Stories* in their own homes, with their own families; however, this research fails to fully
account for how Kipling, in both his illustrations and the captions that accompany them, calls upon children as artists in their own right. In this final section, I will briefly describe Kipling’s partnership with Effie through the work of Brian Alderson and Knoepflmacher. I will examine the interplay between text and image, and between adult storyteller and child listener, not only as it is moved beyond the Kipling domestic space but also when it is examined through nineteenth-century ideas about children as artists. Kipling’s illustrations, I demonstrate, can be read as an unexpected contribution to the burgeoning market in painting books for children.

Alderson argues that Kipling, in his description of the storytelling ritual he shared with Effie and throughout the *Just So Stories*, frames his collaboration with his daughter as a primary force shaping his stories, insisting “that these stories originated in the living—and private—exchange between a teller and a listener” (Alderson “Just So” 148). While Alderson detects undertones of this father-daughter partnership in the printed text, registered in Kipling’s choice rhythmic words, he finds that their partnership is most palpable in the twenty-three full-page illustrations Kipling created for the stories when they were published in a single volume in 1902. These images, Alderson argues, “increase the communion between the storyteller and his audience,” existing in an “organic relationship to the text” and providing a “parallel commentary” that interprets rather than reflects the story (Alderson 159–60). Alderson points out Kipling’s penchant for providing definitions and names for objects in his illustrations, explanations “put into the same register as the voice of the story itself” (Alderson 158). Thus, Kipling’s caption to an illustration for “How the Whale Got His Throat” notes that “the sea looks so ooshy-skooshy . . . because the whale is sucking it all into his mouth,” an onomatopoeiatic aside
that demands to be read aloud (qtd. in Alderson 158). The captions, illustrations, and stories exhibit a “referential playfulness,” providing “an almost endless variety of jokes, ironies, and narrative extensions” (Alderson 159). It is this “referential playfulness”—a “running reciprocation of story, design, and commentary”—that mirrors Kipling’s relationship with Effie. The complex interplay the illustrations create is difficult to maintain in later editions of the *Just So Stories*, Alderson maintains, because newer texts inevitably replace Kipling’s minimalist, black-and-white illustrations with newer images that, while perhaps more colorful and modern, cannot replicate Kipling’s intentions.

Knoepflmacher, like Alderson, acknowledges “the privileges due to that original listener, the vibrant Effie,” who exerts a “controlling stake in narratives that involve an active partnership between teller and listener” (Knoepflmacher “Kipling” 27). Knoepflmacher discusses how Kipling responds to the changing nature of the intergenerational partnership at the heart of *Just So Stories* after Effie’s unexpected death in 1899. For example, he notes the particular poignancy of three stories—“How the First Letter Was Written,” “How the Alphabet Was Made,” and “The Tabu Tale”—stories, Knoepflmacher argues, that can be read as elegies, in which Kipling “allowed himself the luxury of a more direct expression of his feelings by transforming Effie into Taffy, a best beloved child he deposited in the safe haven of a prehistoric past” (Knoepflmacher “Kipling” 30). Grieving the loss of his daughter and collaborator, Kipling had to “take the . . . difficult step of rechanneling his deep emotional attachment” to a wider readership of children, reframing his collaboration to include an audience of what Knoepflmacher calls “effigies of Effie” (Knoepflmacher “Kipling” 31). After her death, Effie as a unique, individual collaborator was accessible to Kipling through “an undying
fictional Other who was his personal Best Beloved as well as a universal Every-child” (Knoepflmacher “Kipling” 31). Kipling developed strategies that helped him acknowledge and negotiate with this new, generalized audience. For example, Knoepflmacher argues that the paragraph-length captions Kipling includes on the facing pages of his full-page illustrations anticipate “the many questions that an inquisitive child might pose,” providing information not readily apparent or legible in the drawing that is meant to delight “the child who relishes such verbal extensions and also accepts the invitations to let its visual fancies range beyond the limits of an illustrated page” (Knoepflmacher “Kipling” 29). These images, then, foster collaboration between adults and children based on oral and textual cues. Knoepflmacher explains how Kipling’s playful captions—his comment upon an illustration for “How the Whale got his Throat,” for example, that the “Whale’s name was Smiler, and the Mariner was called Mr. Henry Albert Bivvens, A. B.”—encourage “both child and adult” to interpret the “cryptic images” (Knoepflmacher “Kipling” 29).

Both Alderson and Knoepflmacher contend, albeit in different ways, that the father-daughter partnership that generated the Just So Stories continued beyond the initial storytelling moment, either problematically in revised editions of the tales, as Alderson claims, or in the reproduction of adult-child interpretation and meaning-making over Kipling’s illustrations, as Knoepflmacher argues. However, both readings, while astute, do not fully explain one of the more unusual aspects of Kipling’s illustrations. Throughout his captions, Kipling insists that his drawings are inadequate or unfinished. For example, the caption for an illustration for “How the Leopard got his Spots” reads: “This is Wise Baviaan, the dog-headed Baboon, who is Quite the Wisest Animal in All
South Africa. I have drawn him from a statue that I made up out of my own head... He is not beautiful, but he is very wise; and I should like to paint him with paint-box colours, but I am not allowed” (Kipling 36). Alderson concedes in a footnote that “[o]ne gets the impression that Kipling would have liked his readers to color the pictures,” a “destructive” possibility that would not be truly satisfied until the publishing company Hodder and Stoughton released a painting-book version of the *Just So Stories* (Alderson 168). However, I would argue that Kipling, by mentioning the possibilities of the painting box, is slyly suggesting one way a young viewer can alter the drawing to initiate a private and artistic collaboration with the author-illustrator after the books’ publication. Moreover, this invitation draws upon an appreciation of children as artists—exhibited in the writings of scholars such as Sully and Cooke and, as described in the last section, in the nonsense illustrations of Lear—temporarily subverting adult-child authority through the possibility of creative mischief.

The Baviaan caption and image are a particularly apt demonstration of this type of play. While Alderson notes that Kipling’s captions are written in the same lighthearted voice that narrates the stories, the narrator’s regret here that he is “not allowed” to paint this portrait of Baviaan is in fact unusual when read against the adult-child dynamics that generate the text of the tales. Throughout *Just So Stories*, the narrating voice appears to be a storytelling adult who entertains and educates the younger Best Beloved. The phrase “not allowed,” on the contrary, suggests not an authoritative adult but a child expected to submit to parental discipline. This momentary change in perspective serves multiple purposes. First, it implies that the narrator understands the position of child readers (or listeners); he sympathizes with how children’s experiences with illustrated books are
policed by adults who, perhaps, require that children handle the volumes carefully, with clean hands. No painting boxes allowed. Moreover, when this caption is read in relationship with the illustration of Baviaan (Fig. 25), it seems likely that Kipling, through the narrator's voice, is employing a subversive strategy common to Lear's nonsense; he is representing the "correct" order of things only to invite children to challenge that order, implicitly asking them to flout the conventions of accepted behavior with their creativity. Kipling, in a very practical way, was *not* allowed to use color in his illustrations for the stories, which were printed in black in white. When he represents Baviaan, the dog-headed baboon, he does so in a simple line drawing with large, open spaces that are particularly tempting to a child's paintbrush. Regretting that he cannot paint this drawing, Kipling implies but does not directly state that the child holding the book, in fact, could. Children, through their propensity for mischief—through their
subversive and sometimes destructive play, their insistence in doing what is “not allowed”—can enliven the image of Baviaan in a way that Kipling, an adult artist, cannot. While, as Knoepflmacher suggests, Kipling’s playful captions anticipate a child’s interaction with an image by building an expanded textual narrative around the details of the illustration, these captions also encourage a child’s collaboration with the author in a more material way.

Moreover, by noting that the image is “drawn . . . from a statue” that he “made up out of [his] own head,” Kipling recognizes two conflicting models of children’s artistic imagination. The first half of this statement—the narrator’s statement that Baviaan is “drawn . . . from a statue”—recalls ideas of the dependent imagination and the imitative methods of art education based upon those ideas; Kipling, like the child artists copying Fröhlich prints as they listen to Gatty’s “Nursery Nonsense” or the young Edmund Gosse set to copying his father’s watercolors, refers to a model before rendering the dog-headed baboon. However, the second half of this statement undercuts the first, for the statue Kipling used as a model, like Baviaan himself, is imaginary, “out of [Kipling’s] own head.” This phrase evokes both ideas of the child’s imagination as an independent creative impulse and methods of art education that appreciate the lines, colors, and forms children produce independent of models and guides. The caption to Baviaan, then, ultimately privileges an artistic imagination that is purely inventive rather than imitative. Illustration and representation, Kipling implies, need not answer to the conventions of the rational world, and the children inspired to paint the illustrations of the Just So Stories should feel free to choose their colors as they please, disregarding adults’ disapproval at destroying the book and the colors and the forms and artistic conventions found in the
model prints set before them in art classes. Their own depictions of Baviaan, like the narrator’s outline of the god, can be freely imaginative, out of their own heads.

The narrator makes similar suggestions for artistic collaboration to the child viewer in many of the captions in *Just So Stories*. Commenting upon an image from “The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo,” the narrator informs the child reading that “Yellow-Dog Dingo is drawn black, because I am not allowed to paint these pictures with real colours out of the paint-box,” and in the caption describing an illustration from “The Elephant’s Child,” the narrator notes that “that black stuff is the banks of the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River (but I am not allowed to paint these pictures)” (Kipling 76, 58). The most striking example of these commentaries, in fact, occurs in this story of how the elephant got its trunk (Fig. 26). This caption for this illustration reads:

> This is just a picture of the Elephant’s Child going to pull bananas off a banana-tree after he had got his fine new long trunk. I don’t think it is a very nice picture; but I couldn’t make it any better, because elephants and bananas are hard to draw. The streaky things behind the Elephant’s Child mean squoggy marshy country somewhere in Africa . . . I think it would look better if you painted the banana-tree green and the Elephant’s Child red.

(Kipling 64)

By conceding that the picture isn’t very good and by admitting that “elephants and bananas are hard to draw,” Kipling is again sympathizing with his child readers, who have perhaps experienced similar difficulties in their own artistic attempts. The language Kipling uses, in particular the term “squoggy,” appeals to the childlike imagination like Lear’s nonsense words or the portmanteau terms that comprise Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky.” Such words may appeal to the child’s imagination as an inventive faculty, able to rearrange the known world into new and unexpected formations. They
reference terms recognized in standard vocabularies—here, “squishy” and “soggy”—but break the conventions of spelling and grammar to create a previously unrecorded but
definitely suggestive terms. More importantly, however, Kipling provides a series of suggestions for the young artists, naming concrete ways they can improve the picture. By inviting the child to alter the picture, to paint the banana-tree and the elephant, Kipling invites collaboration. This illustration in particular but, in fact, many of the drawings included in the 1902 edition of *Just So Stories* expand the possibility of collaboration both beyond the intimate family circle, encouraging the creative participation of the “universal Every-child,” but also beyond the act of narration and composition.

The multiple opportunities for collaboration in the *Just So Stories* are, undoubtedly, a manifestation of Kipling’s personal strategies to represent and reflect upon his relationship with his daughter. However, as I have shown, Kipling’s interactions with his child audience—in particular the dialogue he develops in the

![Fig. 26: Kipling’s illustration for “The Elephant’s Child”, Just So Stories, 1902; rpt. in Just So Stories, 2003, p. 63.](image)
captions quoted above—also recall the history of children’s art education and shifting ideas about children’s relationship to art. Kipling’s line-drawing of Baviaan, with its large, empty spaces perfect for “paint-box colours,” and his request that his child reader color “the banana-tree green and the Elephant’s Child red” transform the published volume of Just So Stories into a painting book. By the 1880s, painting books for children were widely available and, judging by the proliferation of advertisements for them, were quite desirable. The concept of the painting book was popularized in particular by The “Little Folks” Painting Book, A Series of Outline Engravings for Watercolour Painting (1884), which contains over one hundred black-and-white outlines of illustrations by Greenaway drawn from a number of her picture books: Under the Window, Birthday Book, A Day in a Child’s Life, and Mother Goose. This painting book was extremely successful due to its association with the popular Little Folks magazine, and it was followed with other titles associated with that periodical, including the “Little Folks” Proverb Painting Book and Fruits and Blossoms for “Little Folks” to Paint. According to the writer of “Art in the Nursery,” the “Little Folks” painting book “is a book for wear and tear—a common, every-day delight; it contains some of the artist’s most amiable work, it should be popular all the world over” (“Art” 257).

However, these painting books, usually sold for one shilling, were meant to be educational, published both to instruct children in the placement and harmony of colors and to educate them in moral and cultural norms through accompanying didactic stories and verses. The editors of the “Little Folks” Painting Book, for example, note that it “is, of course, apparent that, in a book of this description, the talents of young artists must be chiefly directed to the fitting choice of colours, and their harmonious arrangement” (Little
Folks vii). Child artists are instructed to find, in the final pages of the book, directions for mixing colors, particularly adapted for the use of the Little Folks Fine Art Moist Colour Box. To emphasize the merits of determining “fitting” colors and their “harmonious” placement, the Little Folks book and many similar productions include, alongside black-and-white outlines meant for children to paint, full-color versions of the same images. Walter Crane’s Painting Book (1880) used this strategy (Fig. 27). The New Painting Book for Boys and Girls, published by Raphael Tuck and Sons in 1865, provided models in a similar manner. Each of the book’s eight leaves is split into two frames, and the engravings in the upper area were colored as painting guides for the identical illustrations below. This education in art production is accompanied by moral education, evident in the poems and stories included alongside the line engravings.

Children painting in the “Little Folks” book, for example, illustrate the vanity of “Little Miss Pride” and, while tinting the illustration for the verse “A Rhyme in Season,” are instructed that there is “Time for work and time for play!” (Little Folks 56, 88).

While didactic in nature, these painting books also offer children a degree of artistic agency. First, they enable child artists to collaborate, albeit in a mediated way, with some of the most recognizable illustrators of children’s literature of the nineteenth century, from Greenaway to Crane to Caldecott, whose illustrations were transformed

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184 The Little Folks painting book is part of a proliferation of consumer products for children in the nineteenth century and demonstrates how one text or periodical can inspire a range of goods. The craze for clothing styles that mimicked Kate Greenaway’s illustrations is one example of this phenomenon, as is the industry that grew up around Beatrix Potter’s books in the twentieth century. Painting and coloring books, moreover, were appropriated by savvy companies as advertisements for their products. An exhibition on American art education from 1800–1950 held at the Huntington Library in 2003–4 included many examples of coloring books published to encourage brand loyalty among the young, including Fleischmann Co.’s “Easy Drawing for Little Ones” (ca. 1890), the “Dutch Boy’s Jingle Paint Book” (1921), the “Heinz Kindergarten Book No. 5: Pictures to Trace, Jingles to Learn,” (ca. 1910) and Singer Sewing Machine Co.’s “The Singer Drawing Book for Young Artists” (ca. 1900) (“Drawn to Art”).
Fig. 27: Paired images from Walter Crane’s Painting Book. London and New York: Frederick Warne, 1880, pp. 13–4.

into outlines and posthumously published by Warne in Randolph Caldecott’s Painting Book (1901–2). Moreover, the artists and publishers who produced these painting books could not control how children used the blank spaces on their pages. These painting books are potentially opportunities for children to contribute their point of view, to align their artwork with the examples and instructions publishers offer, conforming to the norms of art and even the rational world, or to break off in a new, original, imaginative direction. While painting books attempted to encourage children in certain habits of taste and to educate them in particular habits of artistic expression—the epitome of art education through imitation—the blank spaces that fill these books invite invention. The subversive potential of the painting and coloring books was realized in the twentieth century with the rise of the activity book, a genre that seeks to foster, through blank pages or free-form drawing, individual creativity, encouraging children not to color exact replicas of the work of adult illustrators but instead to invent their own drawings.  

An extreme example of the activity book’s ability to inspire invention rather than imitation is Susan Striker’s “Anti-Coloring Book” series, which began publishing in 1978. Striker claims that traditional coloring books “inhibit a child’s natural inventiveness with drawings that simply require him or her to color within the lines someone else has drawn,” and she created her series, full of books comprised of blank or sparsely-illustrated pages accompanied by prompts meant to encourage children to invent their own
V. CONCLUSION

In 1890, ten years after the publication of Walter Crane’s Painting Book, the Royal Drawing Society staged its first exhibition of children’s art. The Society, which included in its membership well-respected figures in children’s literature such as John Tenniel and Lewis Carroll, was headed by Thomas Ablett, the educator who delighted Ebenezer Cooke at the International Conference on Education in 1884. Ablett worked in conjunction with Queen Victoria’s daughter, Princess Louise, to produce a professional display of the work of young artists that Louise’s husband, the Duke of Argyll, dubbed “The Children’s Royal Academy” (S. MacDonald 327). In his history of art education, Stuart MacDonald notes that “[t]he Victorian public, familiar with the child worlds created by Kate Greenaway, Tenniel, and Carroll, were enthusiastic about the annual exhibitions of the Society . . . In [1892] Princess Louise made her own contribution to the recognition of child art by purchasing ‘Babyland,’ a watercolour consisting of 112 figures, exhibited by a girl of twelve years” (327). Princess Louise’s purchase is an apt conclusion to an examination of the relationship between Victorian ideas about art created by children and art produced for children. The Children’s Royal Academy not only recognizes children as artists but also situates them in a narrative of illustration for children, and the sale of a twelve-year-old girl’s painting, which is registered as one of the “child worlds” created by more mature artists, demonstrates that the boundary between adult artists and writers for children and their audiences was, by the end of the drawings (“Anti”). Striker’s series, and her attitudes toward child art, provide an interesting endpoint, perhaps, to the history of Victorian ideas about children’s art outlined in this chapter.
nineteenth century, permeable, able to be traversed by the artistic efforts of the young themselves.
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