ORPHANS, IMMIGRANTS, AND EMPIRE:
MAKING AND UNMAKING IDENTITY IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

As the British Empire neared its height in the second half of the nineteenth century, the question of who and what counted as British became a major concern for both the English “at home” and the colonies abroad. Novels contributed to the resulting attempts to consolidate a British identity. Focusing on the Victorian novel, this project argues that underlying such narratives of identity formation is a concurrent narrative of unmaking—one embodied in the proliferation of the orphan figure in much of nineteenth-century British fiction. In the nineteenth century, the figure of the orphan was both ubiquitous and ambiguous. The workhouse and the orphanage, institutions that were established in the previous century, had begun to flourish, attracting the attention of social welfare reformers to the plight of poor and working-class children. The novel reflected this fascination with destitute and orphaned children.

Yet in the Victorian legal system, orphans held no fixed status, putting them in a liminal position that made their representation in the novel equally tenuous. My project suggests that the presence of the orphan figure in many British novels of formation complicates the work of the Victorian novel in defining a British identity by revealing how fiction also unmakes identity—not only the identities of orphan figures themselves, but also the particular social, cultural, political, and national identities that works of fiction have been understood to shape and consolidate. This process of making and unmaking, which I call “orphanization,” necessitates the erasure of any preexisting markers of identity and results in the refiguration of individuals as blank slates on which new identities are written, sometimes by the orphan figures themselves, but more often than not, by external forces invested in the fashioning of particular identities. By focusing on the literary production of orphans at the height of the British Empire, this project examines the impact of imperial formations on conceptions of national identity.
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Introduction

In 2009, *Slumdog Millionaire*, a British film set and shot in India, became a critical and box office hit, grossing nearly half a billion dollars and winning eight Academy Awards, including Best Director and Best Picture. With an orphan from the slums of Mumbai as its protagonist and a third-world setting as its backdrop, *Slumdog Millionaire*’s success in the United States was unexpected. The film was as much of an underdog as its hero, Jamal Malik. Based on the novel *Q & A* by Vikas Swarup, *Slumdog Millionaire* follows Jamal’s journey from the slums to being a contestant on the Indian version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* While on the game show, Jamal’s surprising success causes the host and producers to suspect him of cheating and, before the final, million-dollar question, the police detain and torture him. The film intersperses scenes of Jamal’s interrogation with flashbacks that reveal the defining moments in his life that have enabled him to answer the questions on the show. Over the course of two hours, the audience learns that, along with his brother Salim and another orphan, Latika, with whom he falls in love, Jamal has spent his entire life trying to escape the impoverished and criminal underworld into which he was born.

While the film’s “universal underdog theme,” along with its “global perspective” (Sharma 197, 198), has no doubt contributed to its success, *Slumdog Millionaire* also echoes familiar Western narratives about orphans, particularly the Victorian novels whose conventions of realism and social commentary have continued to influence postcolonial writers, including Swarup. Like Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1838), the film features a Fagin-like character who lures children into working for him as beggars, as well as precocious orphan figures who endure heartbreaking trials of separation and betrayal. Also like Dickens’s popular orphan, *Slumdog Millionaire*’s hero concludes his perilous journey with a fairytale reunion: convinced by the sheer improbability of his life’s story, the police release Jamal, who correctly guesses the
answer to the final question and reunites with Latika. As the film’s meteoric rise suggests, stories
about orphans have compelled audiences and readers across generational, class, and racial
divides.

However, *Slumdog Millionaire*’s heroic portrayal of the Indian orphan Jamal points to
only one traditional characterization of the orphan figure. Cheryl Nixon observes in her 2011
study on the legal and literary value of the orphan figure that, since the Victorian Age, the novel
genre has contributed to the “archetypal status” of the orphan as “ultimate ‘other’”: foreign,
marginalized, and threatening—an outsider to both the family and the nation (7). In nineteenth-
century Great Britain, the novel, a previously maligned genre, rose to prominence and
respectability, becoming an acceptable forum for registering and commenting on social and
political issues. At the same time, social welfare advocates directed their reform efforts toward
relief institutions, like the orphanage and the workhouse, for the poor and abandoned (Nixon 7).
This conjunction gave rise to popular and cultural figurations of the orphan as multitudinous
“other.” The nineteenth-century orphan’s nebulous legal definition and status—as one without
any parents, as well as one with only one living parent (Peters 1)—contributed to such
representations, particularly in literature.¹ Indeed, as enduring as the American rags-to-riches
tales by Horatio Alger have been the Victorian images of little Oliver Twist’s pathetic plea for
more gruel and Fagin’s band of juvenile pickpockets. Twenty-first century popular culture has
reproduced this narrative of the orphan figure as well. For instance, in the 2009 horror film,
*Orphan*, John and Kate Coleman, a middle-class American couple, adopt a nine-year-old
Russian girl, Esther, whose foreignness—embodied in her Victorian dress and apparent sense of
propriety—represents very real threats to both the Colemans’ marriage and their lives. As the

¹ As Lydia Murdoch notes, popular representations of poor children consigned to the workhouse or the infirmary
further extended the definition of the term “orphan” to include those whose living parents had been deemed unfit by
the state.
film unfolds Esther’s mysterious past, we learn that the orphan is, in fact, a homicidal and manipulative 33-year-old woman with a hormone disorder that has stunted her growth, allowing her to pass as a little girl. Having murdered her previous adoptive family after the father had rejected her sexual advances, Esther kills John for the same reason before Kate discovers the orphan’s true identity and puts an end to her homicidal rampage. Orphan draws on prevailing nationalistic and sexist discourses to figure Esther as a sinister and illegitimate pretender to the dominant culture epitomized by the white, middle-class Colemans. In this way, the film not only reproduces Victorian concerns about the threat of the orphan to the family, the accepted microcosmic representation of the nation; it also reappropriates them in new contexts. Esther’s characterization echoes the common representation of Russian orphans in the media as psychologically and medically damaged by abandonment, while her intrusion into the Colemans’ marriage reiterates Cold War anxieties about Russians as invaders. As a foreign and stunted orphan figure, Esther also calls to mind Emily Brontë’s Heathcliff, who similarly wreaks havoc on the family into which he has been adopted.

While many scholars have discussed the conflicting symbolic status of the orphan figure—as both a promise and a threat to the stability of the family—few have focused on the process by which an individual becomes an orphan, in both the literal and figurative sense of the word. In their studies of representations of orphans in both the Victorian novel and nineteenth-century reform literature, Laura Peters and Lydia Murdoch call attention to the Victorian investment in the creation of orphan figures. Peters, for instance, notes that nineteenth-century perceptions about the corrupting influence of the adult poor on their children led the British state

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2 For a discussion of the association between the British middle-class and the nation, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall.

3 See, e.g., Peters, Nina Auerbach, and Diana Loercher Pazicky.
to “make orphans” (13). Specifically, midcentury advocates for the separation of such children from their parents and families encouraged the establishment of district schools, whose purposes “came to be understood as orphaning children of the poor to produce malleable, useful citizens and a ready supply of domestic labour” (14). Murdoch likewise points out the late-Victorian curiosity of creating portraits, often literally, of such children “as isolated in the world, without family or friends, arriving at institutions from unknown or transitory locations” (1). For example, in order to raise funds for the homes that he founded for destitute and orphaned children, the philanthropist Thomas Barnardo mass-produced photographs of working-class children whom he had instructed to pose as street urchins. Noting the disjunction between such public representations and the records of poor law and charitable institutions themselves, Murdoch observes that, by the 1870s, child welfare reformers increasingly defined citizenship in terms of middle-class domesticity and separated poor children from their parents to “reclaim [them] as citizens” (7). In these examples, the condition of orphanhood was imposed on children of the poor—without either their knowledge or consent, it seems—for the benefit of the state, whose interests at the time reflected those of the middle class.

This process of producing orphans—what I call orphanization—necessitates the erasure of any preexisting markers of identity and results in the (re-)figuration of individuals as tabulae rasae, blank slates on which new identities are written, sometimes by the orphan figures themselves, but more often than not, by external forces invested in the fashioning of particular identities. As a contribution to literary studies, I argue, the concept of orphanization illuminates the ways in which fiction unmakes identity—not only the identities of orphan figures in, say, the Victorian novel, but in fact, the particular social, cultural, political, and national identities that works of fiction have been understood to shape and consolidate. Sometimes, as in Oliver Twist,
orphanization launches the narrative: the novel opens with the title character’s literal orphaning and then devotes three volumes to scaffolding onto him an identity rooted in Victorian middle-class values. In such instances, orphanization pushes undesirable identities—working-class, racialized, colonialized, etc.—to the periphery, if not altogether outside the textual bounds, of the narrative in order to make way for the dominant culture. Other times, as in Dickens’s most autobiographical novel *David Copperfield* (1850), orphanization punctuates the narrative: the protagonist’s identity is continually made, unmade, and remade; he gains and loses family members; he makes himself over, while giving in to others’ attempts to strip him of identity-markers like clothing, money, residences, and loved ones; who he is and where he belongs become more and more unclear with each unmaking. This example of narrative orphanization makes clear the instability and fluidity of the identities that the novel attempts to articulate, fix, and consolidate, suggesting that orphanization functions as an instrument of identity-formation while simultaneously undermining the identity-making and nation-building work of Victorian fiction. In the British bildungsroman, in particular, orphanization, or the deliberate creation of orphan figures, not only drives or punctuates the plot; it reveals a narrative of unmaking that runs counter to the narratives of development and incorporation that scholars, like Fredric Jameson, have linked inextricably with the genre.4

Coined by Karl Morgenstern in 1819 and popularized by Wilhelm Dilthey in an 1870 essay, the term “bildungsroman” has come to describe a genre of novels that focuses on the mental and moral growth of the protagonist. According to Dilthey, the prototypical bildungsroman was Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* and, since the term first entered

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4 While the bildungsroman seems especially invested in identity-making, I contend that other kinds of Victorian novels (e.g. the adventure novel, the sensation novel, the domestic novel, etc.) also contribute to nineteenth-century attempts to define Britishness. This project examines the bildungsroman, in particular, and the Victorian novel, in general.
literary criticism, many scholars have debated the formal and thematic features of the genre, with some concluding that the bildungsroman in its pure form does not, in fact, even exist. Many scholars have recently begun using alternative terms like the “novel of formation” to describe nineteenth-century fiction that reflects the characteristics traditionally associated with the bildungsroman.5 In his study on the relation of cosmopolitanism to the bildungsroman, Tobias Boes overviews the history of criticism on the genre and concludes that “the Bildungsroman is a genre connected more than any other to the rise of modern nationalism,” yet novels of formation “repeatedly run into difficulties when they attempt to…link national experience to the life of their hero” (3). The first part of Boes’s observation echoes Jameson’s famous claim that the novel of formation functions as a national narrative. However, given the coincidence of the emergence of the bildungsroman in Germany with the rise of German idealism, the novel of formation seems to narrate, specifically, German nationalism—a premise that later iterations of the genre challenge. In Victorian England, in particular, the novel of formation emerged as the defining genre of British fiction, evident especially in the popularity of two of its leading writers, Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Culminating with the maturation of a young protagonist, the British bildungsroman emphasizes a narrative of identity-making: the orphan physically and mentally develops into an individual worthy of being incorporated into a family and, by extension, the nation.

Despite the proliferation of orphans in Victorian fiction in general and the British novel of formation in particular, seminal scholarship on the bildungsroman, beginning with Jerome Hamilton Buckley’s *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (1974), has upheld this narrative of identity-making, tending to focus on the different stages of the protagonist’s development, rather than his or her orphanhood. In the process, such criticism has

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5 See Laura Green for an explanation of critics’ movement away from using the term “bildungsroman.”
established the teleological growth of the protagonist as definitive of the genre of the bildungsroman and associated the individual development of the protagonist with the nation’s progress. Subsequent studies, including Franco Moretti’s *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987), link such narratives of personal development to concurrent historical developments. Concerned with the youth of the protagonist, Moretti posits the bildungsroman as “the ‘symbolic form’ of modernity” and youth as “modernity’s essence,” capable of representing “the ‘formlessness’ [and brevity] of the new epoch” (3-4). In the British bildungsroman, in particular, youth inevitably terminates in maturity (8), “a stable and final conclusion with a disclosed and firm identity and self-awareness of [the novel’s] protagonist” (Summerfield and Downward 27). In his reading of Moretti, Jed Esty makes even clearer the assumption of a link between personal development and historical development operating in studies of the bildungsroman. In *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (2011), Esty argues that the nineteenth-century bildungsroman conceives of ideal adulthood as intertwined with the notion of national destiny. “The discourse of the nation,” Esty notes, “supplies the realist bildungsroman with an emergent language of historical continuity or social identity amid the rapid and sweeping changes of industrialization” (4). In other words, in the face of “rapid and sweeping changes” brought about by industrialization and, more importantly, empire building, the “realist bildungsroman” fashions an improbably continuous and linear national narrative. Although Esty’s study then turns to the ways in which the “colonial bildungsroman”—a term that encompasses novels that straddle the end of the Victorian Age and the beginning of the twentieth century—take on the trope of stunted adolescence, it nevertheless offers an understanding of the nineteenth-century bildungsroman as

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6 Mikhail Bakhtin’s “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism,” which was first published in the collection *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986), had previously established such a link.
contributing to the consolidation of a British identity. According to Esty, the “frozen youth” of
the colonial bildungsroman protagonist reflects the increasingly uneven development and failed
progress of the British Empire at the turn of the twentieth century.

Focusing on the orphanhood of the protagonist, rather than the temporal stages of his or
her development, I suggest that the Victorian novel also unmakes identity—through the process
of what this project has begun to describe and elucidate as “orphanization”—to varying
purposes. In Great Expectations (1860), for example, Dickens narrates the process by which his
protagonist becomes orphaned, as well as the process by which he creates a new identity for
himself. Dickens’s novel, then, is not only a narrative of identity-making, but also one in which
the conditions of orphanhood are reproduced several times over. As the state and Victorian social
reformers participated in the production of orphans, severing poor and working-class children
from their families to manufacture orphans who could uphold the myth of the middle-class
family, British novelists simultaneously engaged in the unmaking of their characters’ identities
for similar purposes. This dissertation focuses on such representations of identity-unmaking to
argue that the construction of orphans and orphanhood in the Victorian novel captures the larger
social, political, and cultural processes of nineteenth-century identity-formation on both the
familial and the national scale, such as empire building and the middle-classicization of the
nation. In American literature, as Diana Loercher Pazicky contends, “[o]rphan imagery appears
as a response to the social upheaval and internal tensions generated” by three major historical
episodes: “the Great Migration, the Revolution, and the rise of the republic”—periods during
which the proliferation of the “orphan trope signifies the threat to the identity of the dominant
culture” (xiii). Taking the rapid expansion of the British Empire as its major historical episode,
this project examines not only the proliferation of the orphan figure, but more importantly, the
making of orphans, in the Victorian novel to underscore how empire building shaped popular and cultural narratives of belonging and unbelonging. In turn, by examining orphanization as a literary phenomenon, I call attention to the capacity of the novel to capture such moments of social, cultural, and political upheaval.

Keeping in mind Boes’s observation that the bildungsroman simultaneously succeeds and fails in narrating nationalism, this dissertation adds to the list of difficulties that novels of formation run into when they attempt to link individual development with national progress, by focusing on the British bildungsroman—particularly, novels written at the height of the British Empire when unprecedented territorial and political expansion led to increased attempts to bolster a British national identity. A common figure of nineteenth-century British literature, the orphan highlights the impossibility of critical definitions of the bildungsroman, especially when read alongside the project of empire building. Indeed, the presence of the orphan figure in these novels reveals a narrativized unmaking concurrent with the developmental teleology of the genre. The effect of this narrative of unmaking is to unravel, destabilize, and even erase identity, not only disrupting the link between individual experience and national development, but also elucidating the difficulty of consolidating national identity into a single narrative. Considered alongside established readings of the bildungsroman, orphanization complicates the predominant critical narrative of the Victorian novel as a genre engaged in the creation of a homogeneous and coherent British national identity. This project, then, redirects critical attention away from the closure offered by teleological readings and toward the potentialities of identity-unmaking that the orphan figure opens up.

In contradistinction to the family, in relation to which seminal and recent scholarship has tended to discuss orphans, the orphan figure was a rootless and often racialized outsider. This
was evident in the popularity of the term “street arab”—a phrase first used in the 1840s by the philanthropist Thomas Guthrie to describe the poor children of Edinburgh—to characterize all impoverished children who had been either literally or legally orphaned (Murdoch 25). Drawing on colonial stereotypes of the Middle East as “wild,” “lawless,” “bound by no obligations,” and “utterly ignorant or utterly regardless of social duties,” the “term ‘street arab’ implied that poor children were nomadic, alone in the world without homes or families” (25). Here, the inscription of stereotypical colonial images onto white English orphans serves to indicate how empire building underwrites different Victorian constructions of alterity. Such racialization of the orphan figure further makes clear that orphanization is a process of othering that also refashions identity in exclusionary ways. While some critics have examined the racialization of white English orphans, very few, if any, have devoted studies to representations of non-white or mixed-race orphans. This dissertation looks at contemporaneous novels from the British West Indies, India, and South Africa to argue that the condition of orphanhood applies doubly to non-white orphans. Racially ambiguous orphans, such as Emily Brontë’s Heathcliff, often lack an identifiable origin—a genealogy that can be documented and produced to corroborate belongingness. Such a lack of genealogy, at a time when family ties represented national ties, meant a lack of not only familial but also national identity. Focusing on the multitudinous alterity of the orphan figure, I suggest that the orphan figure encompasses members of groups, such as colonial subjects and immigrants to Great Britain, who have undergone a process of orphanization that deprives them of a national record. Rather than confer citizenship on the subjects that colonialism increasingly amassed, the expansion of the British Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century sought to eradicate existing national and familial ties and to maintain signifiers of alterity. Figuratively orphaned, colonial subjects share the liminality of
literal orphans: deprived of a genealogy, excluded from an existing family, and yet desirous of incorporation into the dominant domestic fold.

In integrating the cultural threat posed by the orphan figure with the more ontological threat of orphanization, this project revises received criticism on the bildungsroman and extends the work on literary orphans begun by scholars like Peters, Murdoch, Nixon, and Pazicky. I begin, then, with critical, as well as textual, attempts to defuse, expel, incorporate, or otherwise stabilize the threat represented by the orphan figure. Traditional orphan narratives, like *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, represent one such attempt. In such cases, the unmaking of identity leaves the protagonist with a clean slate on which to rewrite his or her identity. However, the trajectory of the narrative allows the protagonist to define his or her new identity in terms of the middle-class family. In other words, the novel of formation, here, stabilizes the threat and anxiety represented by the orphan figure and orphanization, respectively, by delineating a process of identity-unmaking that functions to uphold the prescribed ideal of the family. This project qualifies conceptions of orphanhood that figure it as a prelude to reincorporation into the family in two ways: by turning to novels, like *Great Expectations* and Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), in which the protagonists remain excluded from the middle-class ideal of domesticity and by examining the orphan figure in the context of colonialism and extending the analytical framework of orphanization to other figures—not necessarily literal orphans—whose identities have been unmade and whose incorporation into the family, both domestic and national, proves much more difficult.

This project, then, defines the orphan figure in three ways: the white English orphan who has been literally or legally deprived of any parents; the non-white orphan whose marginalization in Victorian fiction and, to an extent, in Victorian studies suggests an effort to forget colonial
projects such as those that called for cohabitation between British men and indigenous women; and the figurative orphan—colonial subjects and immigrants who have been deprived of a national identity. While the bildungsroman recuperates the white English orphan, this dissertation rethinks the orphan figure and the process of orphanization in these other ways to call attention to, and subsequently to rethink, the function of dominant cultural forms, such as the novel in general and the bildungsroman in particular, in consolidating a British identity.

In Chapter 1, I trace the development of the orphan figure in the novels of Charles Dickens, beginning in the late 1830s with *Oliver Twist* (1838). Along with this most famous of Victorian orphan narratives, this chapter focuses on *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1860), novels that mark the mid- and endpoint of Dickens’s career. This dissertation thus begins in the metropole at the beginning of the Victorian era. As personal and professional milestones in Dickens’s career, *Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, and Great Expectations* elucidate how the impact of empire building, as embodied by the continual making and unmaking of the orphan, complicates the literary convention of reintegrating the beleaguered orphan figure into the middle-class family. This, in turn, highlights the fragmentation of conceptions of British national identity over the course of the nineteenth century. Whereas *Oliver Twist* concludes with a return to the domestic ideal, suggesting that, in traditional orphan narratives, orphanization normalizes the orphan figure, Dickens’s later novels *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, respectively, delineate a process of unmaking identity that serves other purposes. Featuring a protagonist whose identity is continually made and unmade, *Great Expectations*, in particular, makes clear the ever-present threat of orphanization to the stability and uniformity of contemporary narratives of family and citizenship. In connecting Pip’s story with the convict Magwitch’s exile to the penal colony of Australia, *Great Expectations*
colonializes the orphan figure, including the protagonist, and further challenges narratives of identity-making by concluding with a search for national community outside of Great Britain. This chapter examines the destabilizing presence of the orphan figure in traditional British bildungsromans to suggest the increasing impossibility of projects of national identity-consolidation as the British Empire neared its height. While *Oliver Twist* contains the foreign—embodied in the racialized or otherwise othered orphan figure—within narratives of ideal domesticity, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* offer new conceptions of the British national family.

In Chapter 2, I shift my attention from Dickens’s canonical novels toward Dinah Mulock Craik’s *Olive* (1850)—a novel which was popular at the time of its publication but which has since fallen by the critical wayside—and Maxwell Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca* (1854), a Caribbean work that has been rediscovered by scholars and readers only within the last twenty years. Both texts, I argue, widen the scope and the boundaries of Victorian conceptions of national identity by featuring mixed-race orphans and imagining the possibility of heterogeneous national communities. As Jennifer DeVere Brody observes, the presence of figures of blackness in Victorian novels, plays, and works of art reveals the impossibility of Victorian constructions of British identity as white, masculine, and pure. In an attempt to discursively uphold the fiction of such constructions, Victorian narratives of identity tend to relegate racialized and colonialized figures to the periphery, often excluding the mixed-race orphan from the British domestic ideal. In turning to texts that feature mixed-race orphans as their protagonists, this chapter addresses a lack in critical examination of the orphan figure, which has tended to focus primarily on representations of orphans within the metropole—in other words, white English orphans—while paying little to no attention to the mixed-race orphan. Craik’s *Olive* and Philip’s *Emmanuel*
Appodocca demonstrate how the presence of the mixed-race orphan figure unmakes narratives of identity that attempt to uphold the understanding of national identity as cohesive and linear. If Dickens’s novels suggest a class basis for Victorian conceptions of national identity, then Olive and Emmanuel Appodocca elucidate the ways in which emergent midcentury theories of race and miscegenation informed literary representations of the orphan figure and specified who could and who could not be incorporated into the national body.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I suggest that the orphan figure encompasses not only literal orphans, but also colonial subjects and immigrants to Great Britain, groups for whom space and place have been divorced from identity by the deterritorialization and reterritorialization necessitated by empire building. While criticism of novels of formation recognizes the chronological unfolding of identity, only recently have scholars begun to investigate the sociocultural concerns of imperialism in spatial terms. For example, Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton’s edited collection focuses on how intimate relations—between European men and indigenous women, European women and colonial servants, and officers and regiments—interpenetrate the spaces of empire. By bringing together the study of identity formation and theories of space, this chapter contends that identity unfolds not only temporally, as in the common understanding of the idea of “development,” but also spatially—that is, as individuals move across colonial spaces. My third chapter defines space in two ways: first, as physical—encompassing microcosmic settings like the home as well as macroscopic geographical places on the map—and second, as psychical, comprising the conceptualization of individual desires and ideals as located within the self’s “interior.” I draw on Foucault’s theory of space to explicate how empire’s reconfiguration of the land, in turn, alters the psychical space of those who inhabit, negotiate, and otherwise attempt to transcend their physical surroundings. Specifically, my
readings of Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), two novels of formation set in colonial spaces, examine the disjuncture between the expansiveness of the characters’ desires—the spaces of their psyche—and the confined and defined physical spaces that they inhabit. The two major concerns that this chapter explores introduce theories of space and place into discussions of identity formation, nationalism, and empire: the relationship between geographical space and place and national identity; and how the complex psychical space of the orphan figure dislocates narratives of formation that associate the development of the individual with the development of the nation.

Like the recent 2014 adaptation of *Annie*, the perennial American orphan figure, *Slumdog Millionaire* serves the critical function of highlighting how orphan narratives have traditionally taken for granted the whiteness of their orphaned protagonists, eliding the impact of racial politics on questions of individual, familial, and national identity. The function of the family as a microcosm of the larger community—at its largest, representative of the nation—in the popular and political imagination has made such an elision historically necessary. In nineteenth-century Great Britain, especially, the addition of millions of people—the majority of whom spoke different languages and identified with different cultures—increased such gatekeeping attempts to define both the British family and national character. As Diana Archibald notes, even as “millions of British citizens left England for the New Worlds, hearth and home were physically moved from the heart of the empire to its very outskirts. This dispersal, however, does not result in any overt ideological movement away from the imperial center. Home remains fundamentally English” (6). In the novels on which this dissertation focuses, home and the family remain “fundamentally English” and those figures whose racialization and colonialization preclude incorporation into these national bodies make clear the narrative of orphanization—the process
of unmaking identity—that runs concurrent to the work of the Victorian novel in consolidating British national identity.

In adapting Swarup’s novel *Q & A* into the critically acclaimed blockbuster *Slumdog Millionaire*, director Danny Boyle and screenwriter Simon Beaufoy drew inspiration from Bollywood, while also retaining a Western perspective over the setting, the characters, and the narrative. Alpana Sharma argues that “the film’s popularity owes much to the filmmakers’ prescient ability to select those aspects of local culture that carried over to audiences in the West/North and, by the same token, to suppress other aspects that might have limited the film’s scope or otherwise interfered with its appeal to those audiences” (198). In other words, despite its source, location, and choice of protagonist, *Slumdog Millionaire* participates in the homogenization of narratives of identity-formation that the film’s focus on “the subaltern figure of the child” (Sharma 212) serves to challenge. Indeed, as the controversy surrounding the filmmakers’ exploitation of child actors from real Mumbai slums highlights, *Slumdog Millionaire*’s success benefits the underdog only in theory. Even within a twenty-first century context, then, the orphan figure, as the ultimate “other,” can only make a full claim to family and nationhood in fiction.
Chapter One:
Adoption, (Re-)Naming, and the Middle-Class Family in Charles Dickens’s Novels

I. Introduction

In a scene made famous by numerous stage and film adaptations, Charles Dickens’s most renowned orphan, Oliver Twist, begs the workhouse master for a second bowl of thin gruel, the only form of subsistence given to Oliver and his fellow workhouse residents. For his audacity, the nine-year-old receives a blow to the head and is brought before the chairman of the workhouse board of guardians, who declares that the “boy will be hung” (15). Dickens’s melodramatic rendering of the incident emphasizes not only the privation of the orphan figure, who is “desperate with hunger,” but also the eagerness of the parish representatives to criminalize the poor for circumstances that leave them “reckless with misery” (15). Workhouses like the one in which Oliver resides were developed in eighteenth-century England and flourished in the nineteenth century, becoming repositories of the homeless and unemployed poor, the physically or mentally disabled, unwed mothers, and abandoned or orphaned children (Nixon 8). While residents were expected to earn their keep by contributing to the workhouse’s maintenance, the institution itself was both feared by the poor and stigmatized by the public, becoming in Victorian England associated with deprivation and depravity, characteristics often associated with the poor themselves. Occupying the same space as the poor, the ill, and the “fallen,” orphans were similarly stigmatized as threats to be contained. However, as Laura Peters has observed, Victorian orphans also “offered a unique hope” (9), their circumstances as unattached figures leaving them susceptible to exploitation by various external influences, including criminals as well as social reformers. Literary representations of the orphan capture such fears about orphans, characterizing them as uncontrollable and unpredictable figures to be
reined in or altogether excised from the social fabric of Victorian England. The plot of *Oliver Twist* bears out the paradox that Peters and other scholars have noted. Put into confinement, lest he corrupt the other paupers, Oliver becomes a problem of which the workhouse desires to rid itself by advertising “a reward of five pounds to anybody that would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the parish” (Dickens 15). The irony with which Dickens here characterizes the bedraggled and emaciated Oliver as a threat makes clear that, at the time of the novel’s publication, the orphan serves as a vehicle for Dickens’s critique of the workhouse, an institution that he despised. After escaping “the hands of the parish” and inadvertently falling in with a gang of juvenile pickpockets, Oliver attracts the attention of middle-class families who recognize in him a potential for respectability.

Despite the promise that the orphan figure held for both Victorian social reformers and novelists, the image of the abandoned, neglected, and destitute orphan—of little Oliver Twist begging for “some more” and disrupting the order of the workhouse—has dominated seminal studies of orphans in literature until the last decade. While earlier scholarship, like Nina Auerbach’s “Incarnations of the Orphan,” imagines the orphan as “the primary metaphor for the dispossessed, detached self” (Auerbach 395), more recent critics, like Cheryl Nixon, call attention to how earlier forms of fiction, like the eighteenth-century novel, ascribe a value and agency to the orphan that seems missing from Dickens’s depiction of the workhouse. Nixon’s observation that the eighteenth-century novel represents the orphan as a social individual who effects change (13) invites us to reconsider the position of orphans in nineteenth-century novels, like *Oliver Twist*, that feature orphan figures to critique corrupt social systems. In highlighting the absurd internal logic of relief institutions, Oliver’s ability to disrupt the order of the workhouse with a plea for more gruel suggests a more complicated function of the orphan figure.
than simply evoking sympathy or fear. Embodying the potential for reincorporation as well as destruction, the orphan signifies who belongs and who doesn’t belong—to the family, to the nation, and to the empire. Specifically, in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, when colonial projects were changing both the landscape of Great Britain and the makeup of British identity, the orphan figure served to register anxieties about the fluctuating definition of national character. Along with Lydia Murdoch, Peters notes that Victorian social reformers “chose to produce orphans (or the condition of orphanhood)” in order to rescue some children from the perceived corrupting influence of the adult poor and working-class, while simultaneously neglecting a “significant proportion of real orphans” (14). In other words, the deliberate production of orphans—what I call orphanization—was a historical phenomenon that enabled the state to rewrite identity in terms that excluded certain individuals, such as the adult poor, from the national community.

In examining the presence of the orphan in Victorian fiction, I argue that the Victorian novel was similarly invested in the creation of orphans—in the deliberate dismantling and construction of identity—for purposes of inclusion and exclusion. As a literary phenomenon, orphanization speaks to the ability of the novel to represent moments of cultural upheaval and reveals another dimension to critical discussions of nineteenth-century orphans: figured as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, the Victorian orphan’s identity was investible and, indeed, fought over. As the rapid expansion of the British Empire necessitated the revaluation of Britishness, the orphan figure in Victorian fiction foregrounded anxieties about the fluid nature of even national identity. In many nineteenth-century novels of formation, the development and fate of the orphan protagonist serve as signifiers of the state of the nation, informing macrocosmic questions of identity. Diana Loercher Pazicky echoes the familiar correlation between individual and national
development, noting that, “whatever shape the orphan assumes, the figure signals identity formation, not only individual but cultural” (xi). In the same way that Victorian child welfare reformers orphanized poor children—erasing their working-class origins—in order to enfold them into a middle-class domesticity that increasingly came to represent British notions of national identity, the Victorian novel engaged in the creation of the orphan figure—in other words, in the process of orphanization—to several ends.

In this chapter, I focus on three of Charles Dickens’s novels—Oliver Twist (1838), David Copperfield (1850), and Great Expectations (1860). As one of the most popular writers of his time, Dickens became a vocal and influential critic of the changing social and political climate of Victorian England. While most of his fiction includes orphans, either in the foreground or in the background, each of the three novels mentioned here not only features an orphan protagonist, but also devotes attention to the process by which the protagonist has become an orphan—that is, his orphanization. As milestones in Dickens’s life and career, the novels together also offer insight into how Dickens’s treatment of the orphan figure changed over time to reflect his increasing displeasure with the direction in which England was headed. Whereas Oliver Twist, one of his earliest novels, concludes with the restoration of an idyllic image of the nation, Great Expectations, one of his last novels, makes clear Dickens’s disenchantment with the national progress championed by his contemporaries, including John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and Thomas Babington Macaulay. In each novel, Dickens delineates the impact of adoption on the orphan’s making and unmaking. Literary representations of adoption—a correlative of conversations about orphans and orphanhood—not only capture how Victorian social reformers turned to de facto adoption practices to remove children from “vicious” family situations and rehabilitate them into contributing members of society (Behlmer 86); they also elucidate who
could and who couldn’t be reincorporated into the national family. In this chapter, I focus on novels with male protagonists because, in the Victorian imagination, female orphans signaled specific anxieties about prostitution and sexual abuse—the fear of “falling”—which in the novel precluded them from incorporation into the middle-class family.

By examining the work of an author considered to be one of the leading voices of his time, this chapter reveals not only Dickens’s, but also the Victorian reading public’s revaluation of the relationship among orphanhood, adoption, and identity: from mid-century attempts to preserve the middle-class understanding of British identity to a reluctant recognition, by the fin de siècle, of the inevitability of external colonial influences. Specifically, this chapter examines the different narrative trajectories of Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, and Great Expectations to argue that, later in Dickens’s career, the impact of empire building, as embodied by the continual making and unmaking of the orphan, would complicate the literary convention of reintegrating the beleaguered orphan figure into the middle-class family. At the end of Great Expectations, the orphan is still displaced, neither fully incorporated into a family nor the nation. As the British Empire reached an unprecedented scale, then, the capacity of the middle-class family to represent the nation became tenuous, and the function of the novel of formation to provide narrative closure in the figure of the socially assimilated protagonist could no longer be taken for granted. By focusing on the three novels—Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, and Great Expectations, this chapter identifies a trajectory in Dickens’s treatment of the orphan figure that moves away from a more traditional view of the orphan becoming reincorporated into middle-class society through adoption to a more ambiguous conception of orphanhood that reflects Dickens’s disillusionment with the possibility of a consolidated national character.
II. Dickens and the Plight of Poor and Working-Class Children

In 1824, as many of his biographers have described, Charles Dickens was sent by his parents to work at Warren’s Blacking Warehouse, where he would earn six shillings a week labeling pots of polish, to help out with his family’s mounting debt. Earlier in the year, Dickens’s father John had been sentenced to debtors’ prison for failing to repay his creditors, leaving Charles, then only twelve years old, “the man of the family” (Tomalin 23). While young Dickens continued at the blacking factory, boarding at a family friend’s, the rest of his family—including Dickens’s mother and four younger siblings—moved into prison with his father, as was customary at the time. The period marked the Dickenses’ removal from the comforts and respectability of middle-class domesticity. As a frail and sensitive child, Dickens was, not surprisingly, traumatized by such early exposure to poverty, labor, and family disruption. In fragments of an autobiography that would not be published until after his death, Dickens attributed the end of his innocence to the harsh working conditions of the blacking factory. Although only a few months later John Dickens would receive an inheritance that allowed him to pay back his creditors, the impact on Dickens of his father’s imprisonment and his parents’ seeming abandonment of him was lifelong. He would go on to reproduce the story of his childhood in several of his novels, making the plight of poor and working-class children the focus of much, if not all, of his writing and, in the process, becoming not only one of the nineteenth century’s most successful writers, but also one of the most vocal critics of the many social injustices troubling Victorian England.

Dickens’s parents both survived into their son’s adulthood. Yet, in many ways, this period in his life redefined Dickens as an orphan. After his father’s release from the Marshalsea

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7 For biographies of Dickens, see, e.g., John Forster’s *The Life of Charles Dickens*; Claire Tomalin’s *Charles Dickens: A Life*; and Jane Smiley’s *Charles Dickens: A Life*. 
Debtors’ Prison, much to Dickens’s disappointment, his mother pushed him to remain at the blacking factory. Reflecting on his early years, Dickens wrote after becoming a famous novelist: “I do not write resentfully or angrily, for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am, but I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back” (qtd. in Tomalin 29). Dickens eventually returned to school, but only two years later, his family fell on hard times again, forcing him to withdraw from school for the last time to work as a law clerk. Within a year, Dickens began covering the London courts as a freelance reporter, embarking on the first steps of his writing career. Left to fend for himself at a young age, Dickens was not only figuratively orphaned, but also shouldered with the adult responsibility of easing his family’s financial burdens. However, what he was most resentful of was the dismissal of his “worth and bright promise” (Bremner 22), a sentiment that he would later ascribe to the protagonist of his most autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield*:

A child of excellent abilities, and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf. But none was made; and I became, at ten years old, a little laboring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby. (149)

Although Dickens completed only a fragment of his autobiography, Robert E. Lougy, along with other critics before him, observes that “its pressure on the shapes and trajectories of *David Copperfield* is especially striking, for the novel is the direct heir of the anxieties and painful memories that first found voice in the fragment” (408).8

Before exploring such “anxieties and painful memories” in his later novels, however,

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8 See Steven Marcus for more information on the autobiographical details of *David Copperfield*. 
Dickens spent the first half of his career satirizing the policies and perspectives that shaped treatment of the poor in general and orphaned children in particular. First published serially in 1837 in *Bentley’s Miscellany*, Dickens’s second novel *Oliver Twist* criticizes the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, which intended to solve the problem of pauperism by reforming relief systems like the workhouse. The consensus among proponents of the New Poor Law was that the workhouse, under its old system, was an expensive and poorly managed institution that encouraged, rather than deterred, idleness among the poor. In reducing the relief offered to workhouse residents and in controlling population growth by splitting up couples and families, the 1834 Act sought to keep the poor and working-class out of the workhouse. Although the opening chapters of *Oliver Twist* satirize the systematic treatment of the poor, emphasizing the inadequacy of governmental institutions like the workhouse to provide physically or spiritually for orphaned children, I argue that the novel also hints at Dickens’s early belief that such abuses were reversible and that the possibility of a consolidated national character—one rooted in a rural, domestic, and idyllic image of England—was still achievable.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens establishes the orphan figure as pure, defenseless, and in need of guidance: described as “an innocent and unoffending child” (398), for example, Oliver is naïve enough to believe that Fagin and his gang of juvenile pickpockets earn their living by making handkerchiefs and wallets. Specifically, the novel aligns the middle-class family, represented by Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies, with the nation and Oliver’s innocence and resilience with traditional English values. The battle between Fagin, a member of the London criminal underworld, and Mr. Brownlow for Oliver’s identity, then, symbolizes a civil war of sorts: England must be reclaimed from its internal corrupting forces. Like *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* opens with the birth of its title character. However, rather than establishing his genealogy,
Oliver’s birth serves as the novel’s first instance of orphanization: Oliver’s mother, “found lying in the streets” by the workhouse residents, dies shortly after giving birth to him, leaving behind no trace of her identity except the “old story” of being an unwed mother (5). Born under such circumstances, Oliver at first seems invested with the potential to become anyone: “he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar” (5). But, as in David Copperfield and his own autobiographical fragment, here Dickens calls attention to his protagonist’s promise in order to illustrate how prevailing social structures disregard such potential. The workhouse soon claims the infant Oliver: “he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once—a parish child—the orphan of a workhouse—the humble, half-starved drudge—to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none” (5). The circumstances of his birth inscribe Oliver as “a parish child,” an “orphan of a workhouse,” and a “half-starved drudge,” and the treatment that he subsequently receives makes clear how such externally imposed labels act upon him. If the orphan figure signals identity formation, as Pazicky and other scholars have noted, here it figures identity as beyond the control of the orphan himself.

As I have noted, the motivation behind much of Victorian child welfare reform was the fear that, left to their own devices, defenseless orphans would become morally corrupted by their exposure to the poor and working class. Victorian literature records a number of de facto adoption practices—such as the ward system and private foster care systems that boarded out poor and working-class children from the workhouse to better off families—established in the nineteenth century to rescue orphaned and poor children from such influences. However, more controversial practices, including advertisements offering to dispose of unwanted or illegitimate babies, part of what became known as “baby farming,” led to popular associations of the term “adoption” with the “criminal treatment of illegitimate children” (Behlmer 82). As George K.
Behlmer points out, “This dark side of the subject would haunt Victorian social reformers, color the early infant welfare movement, and ultimately complicate the campaign for legalized adoption” (82), which would not become possible in England until 1926. Dickens opens *Oliver Twist* with an ironic description of baby farming that suggests that such practices were tacitly endorsed by the state: after Oliver’s mother’s death, the workhouse and parish authorities, who take him into custody, dispatch him to “a branch workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits at and for the consideration of sevenpence-halfpenny per small head per week” (4). Like her real-life contemporaries, the “elderly female” Mrs. Mann pockets most of the money—enough to provide adequate care—leading “in eight and a half cases out of ten” to the child’s death from malnourishment, illness, or neglect (5).

While the warnings of doctors, journalists, and charity workers over the next two decades would open the Victorian reading public’s eyes to the criminality of baby farming, Parliament did not take legislative action until the 1870s when an exposé by the *British Medical Journal* and the Metropolitan Police resulted in the arrest and conviction of Margaret Waters and her sister Sarah Ellis in the deaths of five infants consigned to their care (Behlmer 82-4). Indeed, in the 1830s and 1840s, when *Oliver Twist* was first published, the state seemed complicit in “adoption” practices like baby farming that sought to dispose of unwanted children: Dickens’s description of baby farming, in the above passage, implies that the parish authorities pay Mrs. Mann to dispose of the children sent to her. The passage also employs satire to highlight how the state criminalized the poor, casting orphaned infants as “juvenile offenders” and “culprits” and emphasizing the fact that, for the authorities upon whom responsibility for unwanted children
fell, poverty was indeed perceived as criminal, and orphans in particular were considered an inconvenience to be “despatched.”

Oliver spends eight years at the baby farm, surviving against the odds, before returning to the workhouse “to be educated” (Dickens 13)—that is, to work. At his first appearance before the workhouse board of guardians, Oliver learns that he is an orphan: that “you’ve got no father or mother, and that you are brought up by the parish” (12). The head of the board reminds Oliver of his indebtedness to the parish, admonishing him to pray for “the people who feed you, and take care of you” (12). In the same breath that the board figures Oliver as an orphan, it also defines him as an adoptee, so to speak, of the parish. Mr. Bumble, the beadle, echoes the board’s definition of itself, telling Oliver that “[t]he kind and blessed gentlemen [are] so many parents to you, Oliver, when you have none of your own” (23). Figuring itself as a benevolent benefactor, the board impresses upon Oliver the need for gratitude, while at the same time instilling in him a fear of the conditions into which circumstances beyond his control have thrown him. On the one hand, then, Oliver is taught to be grateful for the workhouse and to its officials. On the other hand, he also learns to abhor the workhouse’s treatment of the paupers. Dickens’s ensuing characterization of the workhouse officials as greedy and venal, “the tender laws of this favoured country” (13) as cruel and unethical, and the board’s harsh plans to keep the poor out of the workhouse—representations which reflect the reality of the New Poor Law—suggests that this systematic adoption practice creates orphaned individuals, by breaking up families, for the conflicting purposes of refiguring them into industrious members of society and absolving relief institutions of the responsibility of reducing poverty.

Dickens’s representation of the workhouse as a paternalistic institution not only highlights the Victorian fascination with the family, but also indicates how the state and its
offshoots draw on familial conceptions and language to designate who belongs and who doesn’t. Having disrupted the order of the workhouse—a family of sorts—with his plea for more gruel, the orphan Oliver becomes a threat that the board of guardians, following the example of “great families,” briefly considers “shipping off” (27). In *Oliver Twist*, then, paternalistic relief systems like the workhouse, in fact, invert the values and associations of the Victorian middle-class family. As an example of “boarding out,” Oliver’s subsequent apprenticeship to Mr. Sowerberry, an undertaker who is kind to Oliver, but whose wife bullies him, further delineates how systematic treatment of the orphan dismisses his potential and parodies the sanctity of the family. Upon Oliver’s arrival at the undertaker’s, Mrs. Sowerberry declares, “I see no saving in parish children; for they always cost more to keep, than they’re worth” (33). Literally, Mrs. Sowerberry means to inform her husband of the financial disadvantages of taking in a workhouse orphan over hiring a servant, but ironically, her choice of words reveals her heartlessness. Heedless of Oliver’s worth—she sees no value in “saving” him or “parish children” in general—and domineering of her husband, Mrs. Sowerberry’s characterization exemplifies the perverse mother figures who haunt Dickens’s novels, as well as the dysfunctional and abusive situations into which workhouse children were sent. The Sowerberrys’ “adoption” of Oliver recontextualizes the abuse and deprivation of the workhouse in a domestic situation. Indeed, in the course of the novel, Oliver joins and escapes a number of “adoptive families,” including the baby farm, the workhouse, and Fagin’s gang of juvenile pickpockets, before settling into the middle-class existence—seemingly, for Dickens, the only true incarnation of the Victorian family—that Dickens intends for his incorruptible orphan.

Each of the familial situations into which Oliver falls thus presents an image of the family that not only complicates but also threatens the understanding of the nation as a
consolidated unit. In particular, in miming a family, Fagin and his crew of criminals appropriate the notions of discipline and industry lauded by the middle-class for nefarious purposes. Although Fagin’s criminality is evident from Dickens’s introduction of him—“standing over them [sausages cooking on the fire], with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shriveled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair” (64)—Oliver willfully misreads him as the patriarchal head of a makeshift family unit. For example, Oliver thinks of Fagin as a “merry old gentleman” and attributes Fagin’s miserliness to his “fondness for the Dodger and the other boys [which must] cost him a good deal of money” (69). Likewise, Fagin uses the term of endearment “my dear” when addressing Oliver, and he casts himself as the patriarchal head of the group of boys with whom Oliver falls in. Oliver further ascribes a “stern morality” to Fagin’s punishing the boys for not working hard enough, noting how Fagin “would expatiate with great vehemence on the misery of idle and lazy habits” and send them to bed without supper, like a strict father figure (73). The novel delineates the dynamics of Fagin’s crew in order to more narrowly define the genteel, middle-class family unit represented by Mr. Brownlow, Rose Maylie, and her lover Harry—all of whom turn out to be related to Oliver in some way or other—and of which Oliver becomes a part, settling into what the novel has hinted all along to be his rightful place.

While Oliver’s successful resistance of the London criminal underworld reinforces his incorruptibility, Dickens’s introduction of the morally ambiguous character, Nancy, complicates the binary of good and evil embodied, respectively, by Mr. Brownlow and Fagin. A thief and a prostitute, Nancy epitomizes Victorian anxieties about the sexual vulnerability of poor female orphans. For instance, when she requests an interview with Rose Maylie—to whom she serves as a foil in the novel—at the genteel “family hotel” in which Rose is staying, the servants allude to
“Nancy’s doubtful character” and remark “with great fervor that the creature [is] a disgrace to her sex” (330, 331). Yet Nancy’s protectiveness of Oliver inscribes her as a mother/sister figure whose literal self-sacrifice makes her the agent of Oliver’s restoration to the middle class: murdered by her lover, Bill Sikes, Nancy’s death not only saves Oliver’s life, but also leads to Fagin and his crew’s prosecution. Described in more nuanced terms than Dickens’s bad mother figures, Nancy repeats the sacrifice that Oliver’s biological mother, another “fallen” woman, makes at the beginning of the novel. In this way, her death, like Oliver’s mother’s, frees Oliver of the moral blemishes that would prevent his incorporation into the middle-class family.

In contrast to the opening description of the workhouse and baby farming, the novel’s ending depicts Dickens’s ideal form of adoption—Oliver’s “official” adoption by Mr. Brownlow, a kind and generous gentleman who during their first encounter recognizes Oliver’s innate goodness—as the culmination of “a little society, whose condition approached as nearly to one of perfect happiness as can be ever known in this changing world” (435). Oliver’s final adoption not only takes him to the countryside, away from the corrupting influence of “this changing world,” but also fulfills the novel’s opening prophecy that, of the many identities that the orphan could adopt, that of a gentleman’s son seems most appropriate. Despite the narrator’s observation that “it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned” Oliver his identity, Dickens himself has already undertaken to ensure that his protagonist’s “station in society” is a genteel one (3). In this way, the novelist resembles an adoptive parent whose beliefs influence the identity that the orphan eventually adopts. Although unrecognized by the Victorian legal system, Oliver’s adoption by Mr. Brownlow seems the only logical conclusion to a novel whose protagonist embodies goodness. At the end of the novel, it is clear that Oliver, who has always been virtuous, will only grow more so under the care of his equally virtuous guardian.
In *Oliver Twist*, then, Dickens examines several adoption practices to represent the superiority of middle-class domesticity. While critiquing the policies of institutions like the workhouse, the novel nevertheless offers few solutions to the paupers that fill its pages, including Oliver’s friend Dick, another orphan who succumbs to destitution. Instead, it rewrites its poor and orphaned protagonist in a way that erases his association with poverty altogether. Dickens’s orphan proves to be unimpeachably good. While the narrator conjectures as to whether “nature or inheritance had implanted a good sturdy spirit in Oliver’s breast” (Dickens 7), the revelation of Oliver’s relation to the angelic Rose Maylie proves that Oliver’s “good sturdy spirit”—by which Dickens means Oliver’s physical, as well as his moral resilience—is a hereditary trait of which “nature” or external forces (taking on various forms, including the workhouse, Fagin’s gang, and the more genteel persons that Oliver meets in London) attempt to make use of, for good or for bad. The novel’s other poor characters, like Nancy, whose worldly and bodily corruptions preclude incorporation into middle-class domesticity, are given only the option of death. Here, Dickens invests the adoptable orphan figure with middle-class characteristics, not only reinforcing the Victorian correlation of middle-class ideology with British identity, but also rewriting the orphan narrative to preserve such a correlation and understanding of British identity, which remains, at the end of the novel, extra-legal and endogamous. In other words, threatened by the operation of the state as well as the city, Dickens’s middle-class family must relocate to the country, suggesting that, even at this point in his career, Dickens had begun to recognize the fragility of this conception of Britishness.

III. Naming and Renaming the Orphan Figure

In 1850, Dickens published his most autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield*. Like
Dickens’s second novel, *David Copperfield* uses adoption as the vehicle for rescuing the orphan protagonist from the distressed conditions into which orphanhood has thrown him. However, as a bildungsroman, *David Copperfield* differs from *Oliver Twist* in the level of interiority that it attaches to its main character: not only does David narrate his own story, but he also paints a complex portrait of his development—the complications and intricacies of which shape David’s psyche in ways that Dickens’s characterization of the innocent and fragile Oliver never reaches. David is a shrewd narrator: while reflecting on his past mistakes, he simultaneously manipulates his readers into sympathy and forgiveness, by emphasizing his childhood sufferings at the hands of others in the first half of the narrative and his humility in the second half. Focusing on the protagonist’s development into a successful novelist and family man—in effect, his life and education—the novel thus serves as an account of not only Dickens’s rise to middle-class respectability, but also of the nation’s progress at mid-century. Yet, alongside the novel’s teleological narrative of progress, recurrent images of empire-building suggest that, as the rise of his career paralleled the nation’s imperial expansion, Dickens became more and more interested in addressing global issues like anxieties about the nation’s imperial efforts. In fact, at the time of *David Copperfield*’s publication, Dickens’s social reform interests included the rehabilitation of prostitutes through emigration to other parts of the British Empire, such as Australia and Canada.

As Grace Moore observes, “Dickens’s novels are littered with characters who disappear to the empire” (75), and in *David Copperfield*, several characters depart and return to the nation from various colonial outposts. For Dickens, then, empire is always inextricable from domestic issues

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*Jerome Meckier calls attention to the nineteenth-century fascination with retelling *Cinderella*, observing that even Dickens, who would collapse the rags-to-riches narrative in *Great Expectations*, employed the fairytale’s motifs in several of his early and mid-career novels, including *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* (2, 14). In 1848, Thomas Babington Macaulay published the first volume of his *History of England*, in which he described the nation’s progress as “inevitable” (qtd. in Meckier 10). Mid-Victorian novels, Meckier argues, reflect such entitled sentiments of prosperity.*
and policies. Reading such allusions to empire in terms of the generic orphan tale exemplified by *Oliver Twist*, I argue that, in the middle of his career, Dickens not only began to recognize emerging anxieties about the impact of empire building, but also attempted to reconcile them with prevailing notions of nationhood by imagining how the Empire could serve the needs of the metropole.

Many scholars have called attention to Dickens’s description of *David Copperfield* as “a very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction” and, in recent decades, attention has shifted to the novel’s representation of mental derangement as symbolized by the minor character Mr. Dick, an autobiographer struggling to face his past and finish his “Memorial.” In one of the first and most comprehensive studies of the character, Stanley Tick observes that Mr. Dick serves as “an image of the author himself” (113). I suggest that the novel reproduces the anxiety introduced in *Oliver Twist* about the shifting nature of English national character in Mr. Dick’s obsession with King Charles I, whose authoritarian rule led to a civil war in England in 1642. In one of their first interactions, Mr. Dick asks David whether he remembers the year in which “King Charles the First had his head cut off,” a date that puzzles Mr. Dick because “if it was so long ago, how could the people about him have made that mistake of putting some of the trouble out of his head, after it was taken off, into mine?” (197-8). David soon discovers that Mr. Dick, whose real name, Richard Babley, David has been forbidden by his Aunt Betsey to ever mention, has been working on an autobiography—the “Memorial”—for over a decade, during which he has been “endeavouring to keep King Charles the First” at bay (200). Aunt Betsey explains to David that Mr. Dick equates his illness, which manifests in mental “disturbance and agitation” (200), with the figure of King Charles, whose reign was characterized as such. However, the reference plays a much more significant role in Dickens’s most autobiographical novel.
Dickens’s choice of a historical figure associated with empire to symbolize an unspeakable past demonstrates how Victorian imperial efforts, which were unspeakable in the sense that Victorians at home seemed unconcerned about what was happening abroad, inevitably encroach upon fictive representations of nineteenth-century concerns. In other words, Mr. Dick’s continual allusions to Charles I demonstrate microcosmically the macrocosmic recurrence of images of empire in the novel and the obstacle such real-life references pose to fictional attempts to cohere national identity.

While the opening and conclusion of David Copperfield mirror those of Dickens’s earlier orphan narrative, the 1850 novel treats orphanization more complexly and extensively. For instance, complicating Bremner’s suggestion that Miss Betsey’s “willingness to take David into her household is an example of Dickens’s customary ways of solving his heroes’ problems” (23), the novel extends well beyond its protagonist’s initial reincorporation into the middle-class family to show the persistence of orphanization on the identity of the orphan figure. If Oliver’s situation as a child explains his lack of agency, David’s repeated failure to make himself points to a more sinister effect of orphanization: once acted upon, David continues to figure himself as a *tabula rasa* ready to be written on by external forces. In this way, Mr. Dick’s inability to record his past also signals a renaming process with which David Copperfield as a whole concerns itself.

Over the course of the novel, Dickens’s protagonist David takes on several nicknames, each one assigned to him by another character in an act that unmakes and remakes him. Critics such as Joseph Bottum have called attention to the proliferation of naming in David Copperfield, a novel seemingly more concerned with names and naming than any other Dickens work. Bottum argues that, in *David Copperfield*, “Dickens shows how a name imposed in the economy
of power and desire pushes a person into an expression of that name…. [as well as] how the essence to which a true name refers pushes back on that economy with the moral force of truth” (438). I consider naming and renaming to be part and parcel of orphanization, signaling the imposition of a new identity on the orphan figure, as well as the instability of any identity. Beginning with his being named after his dead father to Uriah Heep’s insinuating christening of him as “Master Copperfield,” David’s continual renaming makes clear how orphanization punctuates the novel. One of the most significant instances of David’s renaming takes place following his “adoption” by his aunt Betsey, who renames him “Trotwood Copperfield.” Ruminating over his escape from the wine merchant to which his stepfather had sent him to work and from the Murdstones themselves, David describes his adoption: “Thus I began my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me. Now that the state of doubt was over, I felt, for many days, like one in a dream. I never thought that I had a curious couple of guardians, in my aunt and Mr. Dick. I never thought of anything about myself, distinctly” (256). David’s “new life,” evidenced by his “new name” and “everything new about me,” signals the end of his literal orphanization: the identity—of beloved son—that he lost to his mother’s remarriage and subsequent death is now replaced by new kinship ties. Yet in the same way that he could not question his mother’s marriage to Murdstone, he disregards the fact that his aunt and Mr. Dick pose “a curious couple of guardians.” Indeed, David’s passivity extends to his own sense of self, echoed by the adult Copperfield reflecting that “I never thought of anything about myself, distinctly.”

His childhood difficulties with poverty, labor, and orphanhood over with, Dickens’s protagonist enters and navigates early adulthood rather passively, allowing others to steer him wherever and however they please. For example, in their first encounter as adults, David and his
childhood friend James Steerforth catch up on each other’s histories, revealing how each has come to be in London. When David tells Steerforth of the play he has enjoyed at Covent Garden, Steerforth calls him “a very Daisy. The daisy of the field, at sunrise, is not fresher than you are” (343). This is not the first instance of Steerforth’s renaming of David. When they first meet as schoolmates, Steerforth christens David “young Copperfield” and inquires whether he has a sister, whom Steerforth imagines to be “a pretty, timid, little, bright-eyed sort of girl” (84). Rich and worldly, Steerforth now figures David as his own sister, feminizing him as passive, while also reminding him, albeit playfully, of the tenuousness of his newly acquired middle-class identity by imparting on him the green identity of a fresh “daisy.” A decade later, in *Great Expectations*, Dickens rehearses the tableau of childhood acquaintances reuniting as adults, as well as the trope of renaming, to reinforce the instability of the orphan’s class mobility. Like David and Steerforth, Pip and Herbert Pocket reencounter one another in London outside of an inn, where they reintroduce themselves as adults. When Pip tells Herbert his Christian name, Herbert doesn’t “take to” it. Instead, he rechristens Pip “Handel” after the composer of a “charming piece of music…called ‘The Harmonious Blacksmith’” (187). In the same way that “Daisy” reinforces David’s feminized childhood identity, then, Herbert’s renaming of Pip fixes him to his classed one. But while Herbert sticks Pip with the dinner bill, the ensuing revelation that David has been “put up” in a “little loft over a stable” (343) and Steerforth’s demanding that the waiter exchange David’s room for a better one suggest David’s more modest expectations. David’s susceptibility to Steerforth’s prodigal influence makes clear not only his poor judgment, but also his inability to take command of his own identity. At the same moment that Steerforth teases David over his unsophistication, David relinquishes control of his affairs to his older friend, figured from the moment of his introduction as simultaneously David’s protector and one
of the more destructive influences in David’s education.

In short, Miss Betsey’s influence gives way to Steerforth’s, which gives way to David’s first wife Dora’s helpless dependence on him. It takes a series of crises that he could have foreseen and prevented—Steerforth’s seduction and abandonment of David’s working-class childhood friend Little Em’ly, Steerforth’s drowning, Dora’s death, and the discovery of Uriah Heep’s criminality—for David to begin reflecting on the actions and inactions that he has taken. David returns to England at the end of the novel, from a long trip abroad, and marries Agnes Wickfield, the novel’s most self-sacrificing character. As Gail Turley Houston notes, David redeems his “self-indulgent actions and thoughts” and “casts a positive aura on his own ambitions” by marrying Agnes and depicting her “as a maternal, self-sacrificing heroine who is the inspiration for himself as aspiring author” (13-14). Dickens’s angelic portrayal of Agnes, of course, exemplifies the Victorian trope of the “angel in the house.” But more important, David’s marriage to Agnes solidifies his adoption of and by middle-class domesticity, serving as the literal ending to the novel and the developmental culmination of David’s bildung. As in Oliver Twist, the novel’s other orphans, especially Em’ly, for whom incorporation into the middle class is impossible, are expelled from the narrative in different ways: Ham drowns while trying to save Steerforth and Em’ly emigrates to Australia. Despite many trials, then, David’s return to England and his marriage to Agnes, which produces four children, signals the preservation of a national identity deeply entwined with middle-class ideology. The novel’s expulsion of characters like the Peggotys and the Micawbers from both the narrative and the nation thus suggests that empire-building, to an extent, ensures the stability of David’s domesticity and national stability by making room in the far-flung spaces of the British Empire for those who don’t quite fit into the class and gender systems that sustain Dickens’s conception of middle-class Britishness.
The distinction that Dickens makes in *David Copperfield* between Australia and India reflects the two kinds of colonial enterprise in which Great Britain was engaged in the nineteenth century: settler colonialism in “New World” spaces like Australia and Canada, which were figured as redemptive, and imperial expansion into the East, which was still considered mysterious and threatening. In contrast to the novel’s references to Australia, Dickens’s employment of Eastern images points to the underlying threat of empire to David’s middle-classification through marriage. As Kelly Hager argues, *David Copperfield* is, in fact, a “novel of divorce” (990): a number of troubled or failed marriages, including David’s first marriage to Dora, litter the path to David and Agnes’s domestic bliss. Observing that the novel “presents us with a view of marriage as an institution that does not solve problems of identity and selfhood, but rather creates such problems,” Hager challenges seminal criticism of *David Copperfield* as “about marriage in a very traditional sense” (990). That several of the novel’s troubled marriages involve allusions to India suggests a larger role for empire in the novel’s critique of marriage than has previously been noted: examining the shadow of empire in such marriages reveals the threat of colonialism to not only David’s domestic bliss, but more importantly, the Victorian correlation of British identity with middle-class domesticity.

The novel is bookended by the dissolution of Miss Betsey’s marriage and David and Agnes’s union, creating the illusion of closure in how *David Copperfield* treats the subject. The narrator’s introduction of Miss Betsey—and explanation for her disappointment in Clara Copperfield’s giving birth to a boy—includes a passing description of her estranged husband who was strongly suspected of having beaten Miss Betsey, and even of having once, on a disputed question of supplies, made some hasty but determined arrangements to throw
her out of a two pair of stairs’ window. These evidences of an incompatibility of temper induced Miss Betsey to pay him off, and effect a separation by mutual consent. He went to India with his capital, and there, according to a wild legend in our family, he was once seen riding on an elephant, in company with a Baboon; but I think it must have been a Baboo—or a Begum. Anyhow, from India, tidings of his death reached home, within ten years. (3)

His attempted murder of his wife dismissed as evidence of only “an incompatibility of temper,” Miss Betsey’s husband recedes into a “wild [family] legend” about India. Until his physical reemergence in England years later, this mysterious figure takes up no more pages in the novel, and David repeats here the “tidings of his death,” situating him outside of the textual bounds of the novel, as well as the geographical bounds of the nation. Dickens’s early relegation of this excessive figure to the colonies points to a conception of empire, in general, as a “wild” place in which “riding on an elephant, in company with a Baboon” seems the norm. Like Miss Betsey’s husband’s fate, India here is figured as a legend—a fantasyland irrelevant to not only the narrative, but also the nation. David himself concludes later in the novel that “India was quite a misrepresented country, and had nothing objectionable in it, but a tiger or two, and a little heat in the warm part of the day,” but nevertheless repeats fantasies about the colony by associating Jack Maldon, the suspected lover of another married woman, Annie Strong, with “a modern Sinbad…the bosom friend of all the Rajahs in the East, sitting under canopies, smoking curly golden pipes—a mile long, if they could be straightened out” (236). In a conversation with Mr. Wickfield, Annie’s husband Dr. Strong describes Jack as “needy” and “idle,” characteristics that align him with the colony in which the older men contemplate “dispos[ing]” him (220, 221). Here, as in the earlier reference to India, Dickens situates India as both distant and idle, a site
where men of questionable morals can maintain their indolence without affecting the prosperity of the nation.

However, Miss Betsey’s husband’s repeated clandestine returns to England belie not only the narrative of his death in India, but more importantly, the conception of the colonies as places of no return—as dumping grounds where metropolitan excess becomes absorbed. Upon each of his returns, Miss Betsey’s husband torments and blackmails his estranged wife, effectively disrupting the home that she has created for herself in his absence. Along with Mr. Dick, Miss Betsey and David constitute an adoptive family, and her husband’s reappearance “at intervals” (670) casts doubt on their domestic idyll. Moreover, having committed “offences” that Miss Betsey suggests would be prosecuted in England, her husband’s presence in “this country” (670) represents an unwanted homecoming: the return of the colonialized figure.10 David discovers the truth of his aunt’s marriage in chapter 46; in the following chapter, aptly titled “Domestic,” Dickens’s protagonist reveals the troubles in his own marriage to his first wife Dora. This sequence of events suggests that the anxieties undergirding the revelation of Miss Betsey’s husband’s return from India not only pose a threat to, but also affect David’s own happiness. Having heard his aunt’s “grumpy, frumpy story” (670), David now “labor[s] hard at my book” and “write[s] of the time when I had been married…about a year and a half” (671), revealing that his attempts to train Dora in housekeeping have failed and, more significantly, that his wife is now dying. The colonial infiltration of the narrative thus proves temporarily detrimental to Dickens’s protagonist, orphanizing him twice more: Miss Betsey’s husband infiltrates her home

10 Miss Betsey reassures David that her husband is “nothing to me now, Trot,—less than nothing. But, sooner than have him punished for his offences (as he would be if he prowled about in this country), I give him more money than I can afford, at intervals when he reappears, to go away” (670). While Dickens’s association of this criminal figure with the colonies is problematic in its reinscription of Victorian anxieties about colonial subjects, it prefigures the more complex characterization of Abel Magwitch in Great Expectations.
and reconfigures David’s conception of his aunt and their family, and Dora’s miscarriage and subsequent death ends David’s own familial hopes.

Rather than concluding here, however, *David Copperfield* resums the path of conventionality, even suppressing the colonial threat symbolized in Miss Betsey’s husband by rewriting the return of the colonialized figure as a homecoming. In the novel’s remaining chapters, the Peggotys and the Micawbers—working-class characters who have sustained both social and financial ruin—both emigrate to and return from Australia with reports of their successes abroad. In chapter 57, preparing to depart for the colony, Mrs. Micawber imagines Australia to be a redemptive space and commands her profligate husband to there “Produce your reparation.” Yet, despite her emphasis on “the new,” Mrs. Micawber envisions a future inextricable from “the old country”: “[A]m I not right,” she asks David, “in saying that Mr. Micawber will strengthen, and not weaken, his connexion with Britain? An important public character arising in that hemisphere, shall I be told that its influence will not be felt at home? Can I be so weak as to imagine that Mr. Micawber, wielding the rod of talent and of power in Australia, will be nothing in England?” (789). In contrast to the exile implied in Miss Betsey’s husband’s and Jack Maldon’s departures for India, Mrs. Micawber’s speech pictures emigration as an opportunity to “strengthen” the Micawbers’ identities as Britons: Mr. Micawber’s reparations are to not only his family, but also his country, and in making them, he returns to both the narrative and England a celebrated figure. David himself embarks on a brief self-exile that ends with a return to England and the revelation of his love for Agnes. As Patrick Brantlinger notes, “the more numerous, optimistic figures of colonial progress, prosperity, and happiness—the Peggottys and the Micawbers—who populate British fiction from the late 1840s

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11 Mr. Peggotty likewise envisions emigration as a chance for his family, particularly the “fallen” Emily to “begin a new life” (711).
through the 1870s” differ significantly from the more complicated returns of colonialized figures like Abel Magwitch, the convict whose adoption of the orphaned Pip serves as the narrative foundation of Dickens’s second autobiographical novel (121). In making a distinction between Great Britain’s imperial projects, *David Copperfield* suggests that orphanization serves to unmake identity to make way for a new conception of middle-classicization that subsumes the more palatable of the two.

IV. Colonial Invasion and National Identity

In *Great Expectations*, Dickens complicates the binary of Great Britain’s colonial enterprises with the character of Abel Magwitch, who lies at the center of the novel’s references to the East and Australia, and whose return to England upends the identity of London gentleman that the protagonist and narrator Pip has cultivated for himself. The 1997 publication of Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs*, a neo-Victorian adaptation of *Great Expectations* centering on the titular Jack Maggs’ life—Carey’s reworking of Abel Magwitch’s story—has led critics to pay more attention to Dickens’s transported convict, whom Janet C. Myers describes as “a marginal character who nonetheless serves as a pivot around which various plots hinge” (456). Similarly, recent scholars like Jerome Meckier have begun to examine the significance of the novel’s Eastern allusions, including Pip’s reference in chapter 38 to the “Eastern story” of Misnar’s pavilion to describe the crushing revelation of the true identity of his benefactor.12 Having labored under the impression that the wealthy Miss Havisham has adopted him in order to make him a more suitable match for her adoptive daughter Estella, Pip learns in chapter 39 that Magwitch, the escaped convict whom he helped as a boy and whose transportation he witnessed,

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12 The story of Misnar’s pavilion was, in fact, not an Eastern story, but rather, first introduced in James Ridley’s 1764 parody of the *Arabian Nights*, a collection called *The Tales of the Genii*. 
is in fact the enabler of his great expectations. Reading Magwitch, along with the novel’s numerous allusions to the East, as central to Pip’s orphanization reveals not only Dickens’s growing disillusionment with middle-class domesticity, but also the ways in which *Great Expectations* registers Victorian anxieties about reverse invasion and colonial contamination—threats to the myth of British national identity.

Grahame Smith observes that “Dickens’s preoccupation with suffering childhood” began to wane in the decades after the publication of *David Copperfield*, reflecting the “relative decline of interest in the fate of poor children” on a national scale (46). In 1860, when *Great Expectations* was published, Dickens’s marriage to his wife Catherine had also dissolved, the two having separated in 1858 after twenty-two years together. If there is a correlation between Dickens’s social outlook and his artistry, then *Great Expectations*’ departure from the thematic concerns of Dickens’s earlier novels seems in keeping with his growing frustration with reform efforts, as well as with the disintegration of his family in the years immediately before the novel’s publication. Meckier offers a similar, albeit more speculative, explanation for the thematic shift in Dickens’s second autobiographical attempt. Facing competition for his status as the century’s most prominent writer from the likes of William Makepeace Thackeray and Wilkie Collins, Dickens’s “paramount reason for writing *Great Expectations*,” according to Meckier, “was to reconsider the prevailing climate of unrealistic expectancy, to discredit novelists whose use of Cinderella motifs fostered such a climate” (12). Frustrated by the national tendency toward snobbery and self-entitlement, Dickens “was convinced that reading novels in which the fate of hero or heroine vindicates Cinderella’s was akin to living in a fairy tale” (Meckier 12). In making clear that the middle-class prosperity that concluded his first autobiographical attempt was, indeed, a fantasy, *Great Expectations* synthesizes Dickens’s personal disappointments and
his growing disillusionment with social reform and the nation’s so-called progress. That is, by the end of his career, Dickens began to question more explicitly the possibility of a national character grounded in middle-class domesticity and the family. Indeed, Pip’s adoption by Magwitch, whose transportation foregrounds the nation’s imperial projects, disrupts the correlation—first introduced in Oliver Twist and then developed in David Copperfield—between adoption and the integration of the orphan figure into the national family.

Having violated his sentence and risked his life to return to England to claim Pip’s gratitude, Magwitch tells his story to Pip for the first time in chapter 39. Pip’s initial disgust with his “second father” (340) and Magwitch’s motivations for patronizing Pip suggest a relationship between adoption and identity that extends beyond the desire to rescue—or even preserve—the orphan figure from potentially harmful influences. Instead, Magwitch, along with the novel’s other adoptive parents, Miss Havisham, Pip’s sister Mrs. Joe, and even Pip’s generous brother-in-law Joe Gargery, seek to remake Pip’s identity for their own purposes. Even more than in David Copperfield, adoption features prominently and takes multiple forms in Great Expectations. Like the opening scene of Oliver Twist, the first chapter of Dickens’s second attempt at an autobiographical novel establishes the protagonist’s orphanization—his literal orphanhood, as well as the subsequent unmaking and remaking of his identity. Here, Pip first encounters his future adoptive father Magwitch, and here, he expounds on his kinship ties, telling Magwitch that he lives with “My sister, sir—Mrs. Joe Gargery—wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir” (3). In the next chapter, Pip introduces his sister as an abusive mother figure who has brought him up “by hand” (6). Appearing in the opening of both Pip’s narrative and Oliver Twist, the phrase “brought up by hand” illuminates how Dickens’s figuration of adoption shifts over the course of his career.
Historically, the term referred to the manual feeding of babies without mothers or wet-nurses. In Oliver Twist, it appears only once and in connection with the “systematic course of treachery and deception” to which Oliver falls victim in the workhouse into which he was born (4). Used only in the context of “a systematic course,” the phrase reinforces the fact of Oliver’s literal orphaning and how it has left him susceptible to exploitation at the hands of others, including the workhouse and parish authorities. In other words, Oliver’s orphanization—which results in the need to bring him up by hand—positions him as a victim and his orphanhood as exploitable. In contrast, “brought up by hand” recurs repeatedly in Great Expectations, invoking different connotations each time. Raised by his sister after the deaths of his parents, Pip describes his upbringing in the second chapter of the novel more thoroughly: “brought up ‘by hand,’” Pip has found “out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her [his sister] to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in the habit of laying it upon her husband, as well as upon me, I supposed that Joe Gargery and I were both brought up by hand” (5). As a euphemism for the physical abuse that both Pip and his brother-in-law endure at Mrs. Joe’s hands, the phrase in this passage calls to mind Victorian associations between the hand and the working class and thus refers to a classed practice of child-rearing and domesticity. Pip’s sister’s “hard and heavy hand” reflects the hard and heavy instrument of her husband the blacksmith’s work—the anvil on which he forges new objects out of resistant metal—and by extension the working class conditions into which Pip is born.14

The majority of Dickens’s novels display a dislike of snobbery and, in keeping with such

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13 See Houston for more information on the term’s historical context.

14 Furthermore, Pip’s sister, along with their meddlesome neighbor Uncle Pumblechook, considers Pip to be hardheaded, likening him to the metal that Joe must beat into shape. Ironically, to his wife, who lays her hands upon him as well, the blacksmith seems soft and pliable, an ally rather than a guardian of Pip.
censure, *Great Expectations* features several snobs, including the novel’s protagonist himself, who fall from grace. Dickens’s description of Pip’s introduction to Miss Havisham, a wealthy recluse, and her adopted daughter Estella delineates the beginnings of Pip’s snobbery. When Miss Havisham, “an immensely rich and grim lady” who invites Pip to keep her and her daughter company (39), commands Estella to “[l]et me see you play cards with this boy,” Estella dismisses Pip as “a common laboring boy” (46). For Miss Havisham, Pip’s being a boy renders him nothing more than a plaything—an object on which to exact vengeance (using Estella as the instrument) for having been jilted by her lover several decades earlier—while for Estella Pip’s working class upbringing, as evidenced by his “coarse hands” and “thick boots,” signifies his nothingness (47). In this scene, the phrase “brought up by hand” applies to the physical manifestations of Pip’s working class background. Miss Havisham’s invitation inspires in Pip’s relatives the hope of economic and social advancement for Pip as well as for themselves, but only results in the reinforcement of Pip’s own sense of his inferiority. Seeing himself through Estella’s eyes, Pip learns to be ashamed of his upbringing for the first time in his young life and begins to aspire to an identity whose attainment seems impossible.

Read alongside the events of the novel’s opening chapter, “brought up by hand” also brings to mind a more literal image. While hiding from the authorities, the escaped convict, Magwitch, comes across Pip in the village graveyard and threatens Pip into bringing him a file and “wittles” (3), by lifting him off of the ground and turning him upside down—literally raising Pip by hand. Magwitch commands Pip to identify himself (“Tell us your name!”), his home (“Pint out the place!”), and his family (1), all markers of an identity that seems tenuous at the moment of their first meeting and would remain so in the course of the novel. The repetition of the phrase in *Great Expectations*, then, underscores the proliferation of adoption practices in the
novel. In the three instances that I have outlined—Mrs. Joe’s begrudging and abusive rearing of Pip, Miss Havisham’s exploitation of him for her own vengeful purposes, and Magwitch’s secret financial support of him from Australia—the relationship of the adoptive parent to the orphan reads as self-serving: each adoptive parent desires to make Pip’s identity. In such moments of direct, as well as indirect, contact, Dickens makes clear the influence of the adoptive parent on the identity of the adopted child. In other words, the range of adoptions in *Great Expectations* suggests that, later in his career, Dickens began to consider identity in more fluid terms: whereas in *Oliver Twist* the values of the adoptive parent only reinforce the innate goodness of the adopted child, *Great Expectations* suggests that the orphan figure is capable of being acted upon in not only the physical, but also in the psychological, sense. Like *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* features several instances of naming and renaming to stress the orphan’s malleability, reimagining such moments as more sinister and permanent.

While I have called attention to how others attempt to shape Pip’s identity for their own purposes, Pip also desires a hand in the creation of his own subjectivity, which even at a young age he recognizes to be complex. This makes him a more developed character than even Dickens’s autobiographical protagonist David Copperfield. As Andrew H. Miller observes, the opening scene of *Great Expectations*—in which Dickens’s protagonist reveals the origin of his unusual name—“establishes who Pip is” (776). Standing over his parents’ tombstones, Pip explains that his “infant tongue could make of both [his first and last] names [Philip Pirrip] nothing longer or more explicit than Pip,” and thus, “I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip” (Dickens 1). Pip’s self-naming is an “originary moment,” Miller argues, which elucidates Pip’s “inward division…signaled even in the syntax of Pip’s sentence, stretched out as he is between subject and object” (776). Such moments can be found in a number of Victorian novels,
particularly ones that feature an orphan protagonist. What distinguishes Pip’s act of self-naming, however, is the “inward division” to which Miller calls attention: Pip’s originary moment also presages the identity-unmaking that awaits him by hinting at the instability of his sense of self. What Miller describes as “Pip’s alienation” (776) serves as the first instance in the novel of Pip’s orphanization—the first of many instances in which Pip’s loss of family correlates with an unmaking, or loss, of identity. As Pip reveals his “father’s family name,” he reflects on his genealogy, enumerating the immediate family members who share his name but whom he “never saw” (Dickens 1). Notably, Pip identifies “Pirrip” as his father’s, and not his own family name, and his only authorities on the fact are his parents’ gravestones and his sister, “who married the blacksmith” Joe Gargery and who herself possesses another family name (1). In the process, Pip disassociates himself from the Pirrip family and thus establishes himself as an orphan in the most literal sense—one without living parents and without a family (name). Yet at the same time, he discloses his own sense of self, naming himself “Pip” and making for himself a new identity: not only a nickname, but one detached from any familial affiliation.

On the one hand, as several critics have noted, “Pip” is the lowliest of identities that Dickens’s protagonist could have chosen for himself, reflecting Pip’s perception of his own insignificance. On the other hand, the name that Pip has chosen for himself also connotes possibility: defined as “any of the seeds of various fleshy fruits” (OED), “pip” not only calls attention to the number of identities available to Dickens’s orphan, but also points to the ability of others to shape Pip’s maturation. In other words, the opening scene figures Pip as a seed

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15 Mario Ortiz Robles devotes an entire chapter to the act of self-naming in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre in his study of speech acts in Victorian fiction.

16 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “genealogy” as “[a]n account of one’s descent from an ancestor or ancestors, by enumeration of the intermediate persons.”
whose final form has yet to be determined, either by himself or by others. Indeed, the plot of the novel centers on the concept of possibility—the promise of great expectations—and reading Pip as a seed brings to the forefront the contest for his identity: while his act of self-naming hints at his agency, others take it upon themselves to water him, so to speak, and the making of his identity is at times out of his hands. As the novel begins, Pip’s sister and Joe have already established that Pip will follow in Joe’s footsteps and become a blacksmith, a trade whose respectability Pip does not begin to question until his exposure to Miss Havisham and Estella’s snobbery.

Taken for granted, Mr. and Mrs. Joe’s plans for Pip make clear that, while Pip’s care has fallen to his sister, Pip’s affinity lies with his sister’s husband. Although the novel figures Joe more as Pip’s ally than his parent, Joe considers Pip a part of his family, despite the non-existence of legal adoption at the time. In chapter 7, in a touching scene that takes place a year after Joe and Pip participated in Magwitch’s capture, Joe reflects on his courtship of Pip’s sister and adoption of Pip: “When I offered to your sister to keep company, and to be asked in church at such times as she was willing and ready to come to the forge, I said to her, ‘And bring the poor little child…there’s room for him at the forge!’” (37). Joe’s generosity and affection for “the poor little child” serve as foils to his wife’s abuse and sense of burden, bringing into relief how Dickens’s characterization of adoption in *Great Expectations* upsets Victorian gender norms. Linked to Magwitch, Pip’s other adoptive father figure, the scene associates good parenting with fatherhood and, in contrast, bad parenting with motherhood. Critics such as Houston have discussed Mrs. Joe’s and Miss Havisham’s lack of maternal instincts, focusing at length on Miss Havisham’s parasitic adoption of Estella and Estella’s learned deficiency of feeling. Comparing *Great Expectations* with *David Copperfield*, for instance, Houston argues that, “in contrast to
young Copperfield’s first sense of the ‘identity of things’ as residing exclusively in the maternal reproductive sphere, Pip’s sense of the ‘identity of things’ is a combination of familial and economic bonds” (17). With little, if any, maternal nurture to protect him in the reproductive sphere, Houston suggests, Pip seems destined to fall into the productive sphere, becoming the property of those who seek to make his identity (17). Yet, by providing Pip with financial independence, Magwitch’s adoption of Pip offers him a freedom missing from Mrs. Joe’s and Miss Havisham’s treatment of him. If, as Miller notes, the novel’s card scene makes clear who Pip is not, it also instills in Pip a desire to be a gentleman, which Magwitch’s economic support makes possible, however momentarily.

The struggle for Pip’s making, then, involves a complex web of desires, including the desire for Estella that prompts Pip himself to unmake his association with the forge. Looking back on his years at the forge, Pip recalls that he “was not only odd-boy about the forge, but if any neighbor happened to want an extra boy to frighten birds, or pick up stones, or do any such job, I was favored with the employment” (33). Sarcasm underlies the older Pip’s opinion of the course upon which his sister and Joe set him: Pip’s linking of the odd jobs with which he “was favored” with the “dignity” of being apprenticed to Joe suggests that, for him, these employments resemble one another. The narrator’s insistent use of the passive voice in this description reinforces Pip’s frustration at his lack of choice in the direction that his life could take: he “was to be apprenticed” and he “was favored with” odd jobs. Although Pip’s early perception of his own insignificance reappears here in his calling himself an “odd-boy” and an “extra boy”—extraneous and unwanted around the forge, specifically, and in the world, generally—the fight for his identity that plays out among the adoptive parental figures in the novel suggests that, contrary to popular and critical perception, the nineteenth-century orphan
figure could be valued within both his extended family and the community at large.

Reading Pip’s orpanization and adoption within the context of mid- to late-Victorian attempts by child welfare reformers to rescue poor and working-class children from their supposedly detrimental family environments reinforces the fact that a class ideology underlay Victorian notions of citizenship and national identity. While the reformers in Murdoch’s study figured the orphanization in which they engaged as an instrument of recuperation, the creation of the orphan figure also functions as a process of exclusion. Noting the proliferation of emigration schemes targeting orphans that began in the 1850s, Peters observes that “[t]he emigration to the colonies of orphan children of the poor marked both a new phase in the state (parish) provision for such children and a concerted effort to ensure the familial nature of empire by settling the colonies with British children” (79). But despite the rhetoric that characterized such schemes as contributing to the expansion of the British family, there is an impossibility of return implied in the shipping abroad of “those for whom England could not provide a suitable birthright” (79-80).

Attention to the character of Magwitch in *Great Expectations*, one of the novel’s orphan figures, and the risk that he takes in returning to England to look upon the gentleman that he has created not only challenges this notion of the impossibility of return, but also brings into relief the waning influence of the middle class on constructions of national identity. The novel’s numerous associations of Magwitch with colonialism make him the character in *Great Expectations* who most evokes the impact of empire on identity formation. Even before his capture and exile to the penal colony, Magwitch’s character conjures images of slavery and colonialism: he first appears to Pip nearly naked and in chains (1) and exits the novel not long after aboard a prison-ship, which to Pip’s young eyes seems “to be ironed like the prisoners” (30). The novel’s early images of Magwitch thus associate the exile of prisoners to Australia with the transatlantic slave trade
and the prisoners themselves with excess to be repurposed in the colonies. When Magwitch returns to England at the end of the novel and confesses his crimes to Pip, he reveals that his former partner Compeyson “got me in such nets as made me his black slave” (273), explicitly casting himself as an exploited colonial subject—as colonialized. Catherine Gallagher notes the pervasiveness of the trope of slavery in the presentation of British working-class (qtd. in Smith 47). For instance, Mrs. Joe similarly describes herself as “a slave with her apron never off” (16) and her housework as befitting a “Negress slave” (76). However, Dickens’s characterization of Magwitch as a colonial subject extends beyond this trope. In describing his life in Australia, Magwitch sets himself in opposition to the “colonists,” whose “blood horses” fling dust at him:

“And then, dear boy, it was a recompense to me, look’ee here, to know in secret that I was making a gentleman. The blood horses of them colonists might fling up the dust over me as I was walking; what do I say? I says to myself, ‘I’m making a better gentleman nor ever you’ll be!’ When one of ‘em says to another, ‘He was a convict, a few years ago, and is a ignorant common fellow now, for all he’s lucky,’ what do I say? I says to myself, ‘If I ain’t a gentleman, nor yet ain’t got no learning, I’m the owner of such. All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman? This way I kep myself a going. And this way I held steady afore my mind that I would for certain come one day and see my boy, and make myself known to him, on his own ground.”

(253)

While the passage describes the possibility of remaking identity in the colonies—there, Magwitch “was a convict, a few years ago” (my emphasis)—it nevertheless calls attention to the replication of English society in such outposts: there, Magwitch could be nothing more than “a ignorant common fellow,” while the colonists position themselves as gentlemen. Like the blank
slate of orphanhood, the blank slate afforded to the colonial subject is quickly written upon by external forces: in Magwitch’s case, by “them colonists” who read his rough manners and hardened appearance—physical manifestations of his criminal past—as incompatible with gentility.

Yet Magwitch’s creation of Pip as a gentleman upsets the power dynamics of the center (embodied by the colonists) and the periphery (embodied by the ex-convict/colonial subject), as well as redefining the definition of British identity, which the novel here links to the concept of the “London gentleman.” In making himself the “owner” of a gentleman, Magwitch reverses his position as a “slave,” a fact which he relishes in secret and which motivates him to “kep myself a going.” While the colonists’ desire for more “stock and land” drives the engine of empire building, Magwitch’s investment in Pip’s identity elucidates the incongruity of imperial profit and the maintenance of British identity abroad. Magwitch invests all of his fortune into the cultivation of a London gentleman, rather than a colonial one, and contributes to the maintenance of the nation that has exiled him: “I lived rough, that you should live smooth; I worked hard that you should be above work” (340). In other words, unlike in the cases of the Peggottys and the Micawbers, the markers of Magwitch’s identity cannot be unmade by imperial profit. Pip observes that “there was something in him that made it hopeless to attempt to disguise him. The more I dressed him, and the better I dressed him, the more he looked like the slouching fugitive on the marshes” (356-7). In contrast to the colonists’ desires, the ex-convict’s investment in Pip makes clear that increasing attention to materiality leaves the abstract construction of British identity susceptible to colonial influence. Rather than the “London gentleman” that Pip, and even Magwitch, imagines Pip to be, Magwitch’s adoption of Pip figures British identity as colonially produced. As Magwitch describes his parentage of Pip—his “making [of] a gentleman”—it
becomes clear that the identity under which Pip has been operating is a colonially created one.

Predicated on the impossibility of return, Magwitch’s exile to the Australian penal colony at first creates a distinction between the identity of the center and the identity of the periphery, suggesting that, despite the expansion of the British Empire, British identity remained inextricable from English soil. Pip is, of course, a “London gentleman” (my emphasis). Magwitch’s return to England, however, calls to mind Victorian fears of colonial invasion. Pip’s initial horror over discovering the identity of his benefactor suggests the realization of such fears. Overwhelmed by the infiltration of the colonial into his London home, Pip almost suffocates to death as “the truth of my position came flashing on me”: “its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds, rushed in such a multitude that I was borne down by them and had to struggle for every breath I drew” (252). His identity as a gentleman, he realizes, depends on the colonial, the return of which the narrator describes in terms reminiscent of a violent invasion: “flashing,” “rushed,” “multitude,” “borne down,” “struggle.” But despite Pip’s initial reaction to learning the identity of his benefactor, Pip learns to love Magwitch and to accept his colonial contamination. Risking his life to save Magwitch, Pip forfeits Magwitch’s money and his identity as a gentleman. In the process, Pip learns to care for and redeem someone other than himself. Unlike David Copperfield, who only exchanges one mother figure for another, then, Pip becomes a man, so to speak.

Magwitch’s death in chapter 54 leads to Pip’s final orphaning. Indeed, in the chapters leading up to Magwitch’s death, the layers of Pip’s identity as a gentleman begin to unravel: even Estella, for whom alone Pip has cast off his associations with the forge, proves to be a construct, her identity as rich heiress as illusory as Pip’s great expectations—Pip learns that Estella is, in fact, Magwitch’s long-lost daughter. Yet orphanizing him once again, Magwitch’s
death also frees Pip to remake himself for the first time in his life. As he comforts the ex-convict in his final moments, Pip finally recognizes Magwitch for the second father that he has always been: “For now my repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted wounded shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, grateful, and generously towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe” (475). While much of the critical attention to Magwitch’s character emphasizes his vengefulness—his use of Pip to exact vengeance on his enemies—this passage suggests the importance of Magwitch’s other motivations for adopting Pip: affection, gratitude, and generosity toward the orphan boy who once helped him. Although reminiscent of Mr. Brownlow’s reasons for adopting Oliver and Miss Betsey’s for taking in the runaway Copperfield, Magwitch’s devotion to Pip figures more complexly. Magwitch, the colonial figure, is “a much better man” than Pip, for all his gentlemanly aspirations, has been. Likewise, in reminding Pip of his abandonment of his first adoptive father Joe, Magwitch’s death forces Pip to confront all of the identities that he has lost, including his affiliation with the blacksmith, and creates for him a new originary moment in which to redefine and rename himself.

V. Conclusion

If *David Copperfield* epitomizes the English bildungsroman, *Great Expectations* rewrites the genre: Pip’s great expectations never come to fruition and, in the novel’s concluding chapters, Pip leaves England for Egypt, where he spends eleven years working for and eventually becoming “in sole charge of the Eastern Branch” of the firm Clarriker and Co. (376). As Meckier notes, Egypt is the “biblical country symbolic of exile” (105). In effect, Pip recasts himself in
Magwitch’s image: Pip’s self-exile mirrors Magwitch’s transportation, while the hard work to which he sentences himself calls to mind Magwitch’s labor in the penal colony. Unlike his counterpart Copperfield, who adopts the identities of husband and father, Pip reverts back to orphanhood at the end of *Great Expectations*.

However, finally in a position to choose his own identity, Pip remakes himself in terms that associate him with the British colonies. Although Dickens changed his original ending to the novel, after Edward Bulwer-Lytton suggested that the first one was too sad, both versions describe Pip as a bachelor returning to England after over a decade in the East. Rather than the image of the orphan fully assimilated into the family, then, *Great Expectations* concludes with the return of a self-exiled and colonially constructed figure, whose continually made and unmade identity reflects the confused state of British identity at the height of the British Empire. Unlike Magwitch’s transportation to a penal colony, however, Pip’s ability to return from Egypt suggests the relative openness of his identity and Dickens’s understanding of national character at the end of the nineteenth century, as represented by his orphan protagonist’s shifting conception of self. Pip’s final adoption of a colonial identity makes clear the impossibility of a cohesive national identity.

While seminal studies of Victorian representations of the orphan figure discuss orphans as an internal problem, in delineating the trajectory of Dickens’s treatment of orphanhood, I have begun to consider how the naming and renaming of orphan figures in Victorian novels reflect on a microcosmic scale the macrocosmic reterritorialization of colonized spaces and rewriting of colonial subjects’ identities. In other words, the remaking of the Victorian orphan’s identity, as an act imposed on the orphan figure, analogizes the physical and psychical ways in which empire building contributes to the rewriting of the histories of colonized peoples and redraws the maps
of the nations that it invades. Where *Great Expectations* concludes with a racialized white orphan figure able to return to England, the novels *Olive* by Dinah Craik and *Emmanuel Appadocca* by Michel Maxwell Philip, the subjects of the next chapter, feature biracial orphan protagonists whose spatial liminality further complicates the question of who belongs and who doesn’t.
Chapter Two:

Racing/Erasing the Orphan Figure in Dinah Craik’s *Olive* and Maxwell Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca*

I. Introduction

Like the bildungsromans that I discussed in Chapter 1, Dinah Mulock Craik’s second novel *Olive* opens with the birth of its protagonist, “a small concretion of humanity, in colour and consistency strongly resembling the ‘red earth,’ whence was taken the father of all nations” (5). Described at her birth as a *tabula rasa*, the newborn nevertheless bears, in her “colour and consistency” and through “her place of nativity” (8), an identity grounded in nineteenth-century racial conceptions of national belonging. Published in 1850, *Olive* is a bildungsroman in the tradition of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and follows the struggle of a young woman to overcome economic and social constraints to achieve individualism and to marry well. But unlike Brontë’s orphaned governess, Olive is born to parents who endure for half of the novel, and it is the Rothesays’ heterogeneous marriage, uniting the Scotsman Angus Rothesay with the Englishwoman Sybilla Hyde, that sets the stage for the novel’s exploration of the relation between mid-nineteenth-century conceptions of race and the shifting national boundaries of the British Empire. While many scholars have discussed national belonging in terms of Brontë’s novel, in this chapter I discuss Craik’s lesser-known *Olive* in conjunction with the 1854 Caribbean novel *Emmanuel Appadocca* by Maxwell Philip to examine the place of the mixed-race orphan within the nation and how orphanization redefines national spaces.

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17 Critics often discuss Craik’s *Olive* in conjunction with *Jane Eyre*. See, e.g., Elaine Showalter’s “Dinah Mulock Craik and the Tactics of Sentiment: A Case Study in Victorian Female Authorship” (1975); Shirley Foster’s *Victorian Women’s Fiction: Marriage, Freedom, and the Individual* (1985); and Sally Mitchell’s *Dinah Mulock Craik* (1983).
Within minutes of Olive’s birth, her nurse Elspie and the doctor discover that she has a slight spinal curvature, a deformity that the novel suggests is a product of the Rothesays’ mésalliance. This tacit link hints at contemporaneous concerns about miscegenation—both within the British Isles and throughout the Empire’s colonial holdings. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as Juliet Shields observes, British writers “understood race in terms of fluid and mutable physical and moral characteristics” (284), and the concept of race was conventionally figured as “lineage or genealogy” (289), rather than as inextricably linked to appearance or behavior. But by the middle of the nineteenth century, as Nancy Stepan describes, a very complex edifice of thought about human races had been developed in science that was sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly racist…. [T]he language, concepts, methods and authority of science were used to support the belief that certain human groups were intrinsically inferior to others, as measured by some socially defined criterion, such as intelligence or ‘civilised’ behavior. (ix)

One of the foremost proponents of and contributors to what Stepan calls “scientific racism” (ix) was Craik’s contemporary, Robert Knox, who argued in his 1850 best-seller, The Races of Men, that “interbreeding” between races would eventually result in sterile offspring because nature “produces no mules; no hybrids, neither in man nor animals” (qtd. in Kaplan “Heterogeneous” 176). The popularity of Knox’s theories suggests that, in the decades after Great Britain had abolished slavery, when empire-building was on the rapid ascent, questions about the place of newly emancipated blacks and recently colonized peoples gave rise to fears of miscegenation and the contamination of the British bloodstream.¹⁸ Featuring two racialized orphans—the Anglo-Celtic Olive Rothesay and her West Indian-Celtic half-sister, Christal Manners—Craik’s novel not only serves as a commentary on this shift in thinking about race, but also reflects mid-

¹⁸ Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833.
Victorian ambivalence over the hybridization of national identity necessitated by the increasing expansion of the British Empire.

In *Olive*, Craik variously figures race in terms of genealogy, cultural customs, national affiliation, and the manifestation of particular physical and moral characteristics. While the novel’s protagonist embodies in her Anglo-Celtic mixture the racialization of historically and culturally conflicting lineages, the minor character Christal Manners, an orphan who presents as white until the sudden and violent revelation of her West Indian parentage, intensifies and peripheralizes such anxieties about miscegenation. In considering both Craik’s protagonist and the marginal Christal, this chapter calls attention to how midcentury debates about race demarcate and delimit the hybridization of British national identity. As orphans, Olive and Christal begin as “anychild” and “everyperson” (Kaplan “Heterogeneous” 189), endowed with the possibility of being incorporated into the national body, as well as the threat of tainting the bloodstream of that body; but their paths diverge at the moment of the novel’s delineation of their respective racial mixtures. In other words, whereas the novel’s racialization of Olive’s Anglo-Celtic origins is never in conflict with the fact of her whiteness, Christal, like Brontë’s Bertha Mason, marks the limit of the non-admissible, representing what cannot be whitened.19

Although Olive’s deformity horrifies and shames her mother Sybilla—whose decision to conceal it from her husband Captain Rothesay sparks a series of events that destroy the Rothesays’ marriage—the physical manifestation of Olive’s difference virtually disappears as the novel progresses, and in a reversal of the opening chapters, Olive becomes beloved by not only her parents, but also by everyone who meets her. Olive’s deformity, a subject that has made Craik’s novel of interest to contemporary disability studies, then, raises doubts about the

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19 Olive’s name, peculiar for the novel’s setting, also connotes her racialization, but is the only remainder of her appearance at birth as a “little brown thing.”
feasibility of Anglo-Celtic unions only to resolve them through the creation of a character who exemplifies the virtues of both her English and Scottish ancestry. In the second half of the novel, however, Craik replaces Olive’s physical difference with a new conception of racial difference—one that speaks more explicitly to emergent midcentury scientific theories about “human diversity” (Kaplan Introduction xiv-xv). After the deaths of both her parents in her early adulthood, Olive learns that, while in England, Captain Rothesay fathered an illegitimate child with a “quadroon” (Craik 249, 526) woman who had followed him to Great Britain from Jamaica and who subsequently died cursing Rothesay’s name. The discovery of Olive’s octooren half-sister shifts the terms of Craik’s articulation of a hybrid British national identity. While the novel’s repeated reminders of Olive’s “personal defect” (88) and Craik’s correlation of the Rothesays’ irreconcilable temperaments with their national—coded in the novel as racial—differences highlight the complications of an internally mixed empire, the narrative peripheralization of Olive’s half-sister Christal Manners exemplifies how Victorian debates about race, miscegenation, and the impossibility of a homogeneous British national identity underpin nation-building literature.

Craik’s biography seems to have informed her interest in national belonging—and, in particular, her decision to construct Celticism as Scottish, rather than Irish, in Olive. Craik was the daughter of Dinah and Thomas Mulock, an Englishwoman and an Irish minister who abandoned his three children after their mother’s death. In her early adulthood, Craik became a writer to support herself and her two brothers. While her children’s books, which examine the virtues of self-reliance and industriousness, have survived into posterity, her adult novels, which were popular at the time of their publication, have fallen out of favor. Indeed, few critics—including Elaine Showalter, Shirley Foster, and Sally Mitchell—have written about Craik’s
second novel, and among these, only Cora Kaplan and, more recently, Juliet Shields and Alisha R. Walters have examined the novel’s “contributions to mid-nineteenth-century debates on the relationships between gendered, racial, and national identities” (Shields 289). Kaplan observes that *Olive* not only “thematically” introduces the “issue of the racial basis of national identity” through the Rothesays’ “unhappy mixed marriage,” but also dramatizes the issue in “the troubling, invasive presence of the quadroon and octoroon mother and daughter, Celia and Christal Manners” (Introduction xi). Craik’s novel opens by hinting at one of the potential “disaster[s]” of cross-racial unions (xiv). Through dramatizing the perceived racial differences within the British Isles, as well as between subjects of the Empire at home and abroad, *Olive* participates in mid-nineteenth-century ethnological and ethnographic debates that sought to explain human diversity. Shields extends Kaplan’s observations about Craik’s novel, arguing that “*Olive* envisions a British identity that includes Celts while marginalizing, although not entirely excluding, non-European groups” (289), while Walters more generously suggests that “the novel urges for tolerance and acceptance of the racial Other, who is seen—and felt—to form part of the hybridized British corpus” (326). Craik’s novel ends with Olive’s marriage to Harold Gwynne, an agnostic clergyman with Celtic roots whose faith Olive restores, and a tenuous reconciliation between Olive and her half-sister Christal, who lives in a convent in Scotland near the ancestral estate that Harold has inherited from Flora Rothesay, Olive and Harold’s mutual relation. The concluding image of Olive and Harold standing atop the summit of a hill in Edinburgh—a “loud, fierce wind” swirling about them, but “harm[ing] not them” (640)—represents a harmonious union of different racially attributed characteristics, now reinscribed as complementary rather than irreconcilable.20 Christal, who has yet to take her vows, lives at a

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20 As Krishan Kumar has pointed out, the English “were conscious that Britain and the empire were their creations. But rather than assertive, this made them cautious about insisting on their national identity” (179). Craik notably
nearby convent, and her absence from this scene of domestic and national identification delimits the extent of Craik’s hybridized and heterogeneous vision of British identity.

Comprised of the Celts and the Saxons, Great Britain, as many scholars, like Krishan Kumar, have noted, was always already hybrid. Yet as Jennifer DeVere Brody points out, “English texts often stress the nation’s continual covering over, absorption, or exaggeration of differences” in the “struggle to maintain the myth of a stable English identity” (6). Focusing on the figure of the “mulattaroon,” a term that Brody has coined to refer to the disrupting presence of the mixed-race woman in narratives of national purity, Brody calls attention to the marginalization of such a figure in “Victorian discourse, past and present,” whose “own overtly hybrid roots recall the miscegenated borders of the culture itself” (16, 18). The mulattaroon’s “appearance comments on the ‘illegitimate’ sources of English wealth and the unseemly origins of English imperial power” (Brody 18). Eve Allegra Raimon observes that the rise in popularity of sentimental fiction in America at the beginning of the nineteenth century “coincided with the appearance of the refined, orphaned, mixed-race slave character whose ‘tragic’ destiny is overdetermined by the iniquities of plantation slavery” and whose “sexual vulnerability” drives the plot (5). Victorian literature and culture reproduces the discourse that figures the “tragic mulatta” as “highly ambiguous” (Brody 16), beautiful yet undesirable, physically free yet socially constrained, orphaned yet “determined by the will (literal and figurative) of her enlightened white father” (21). In England, where no antimiscegenation laws existed (18), she could marry a white man and become incorporated into the national body since her “beauty and wealth” could override the ambiguities of her own body, permitting her to “reproduce the nation” (19). But as in Craik’s novel, the figure of the mulattaroon, to borrow Brody’s neologism,

grounds her conception of a heterogeneous British identity on Scottish, rather than English, soil, suggesting that a harmonious union of different racial characteristics would best thrive in a space that speaks better to the always-already hybrid nature of Great Britain.
remained more often than not within the margins of the narrative and outside of the ideal of domesticity. Even critical attention to the novel’s engagement with midcentury racial politics reproduces such marginalization by emphasizing Olive’s Anglo-Celtic hybridity over Christal’s West Indian parentage.

While Shields and Walters make compelling arguments for Craik’s inclusion of mixed-race characters in the heterogeneous national portrait that she paints in Olive, the novel nevertheless suggests that the only path to national belonging for the mixed-race orphan is through marriage to an Englishman, an option that Craik ultimately denies her illegitimate mulattaroon. Reading Craik’s contribution to midcentury debates about race and national identity in conjunction with Maxwell Philip’s Emmanuel Appadocca, the tale of a mixed-race orphan who becomes a pirate to avenge himself and his enslaved African mother against the English father who abandoned them both, I observe that gender and race combine in mid-Victorian fiction to preclude the non-white orphan’s incorporation into the domestic ideal and, by extension, the national body. While Dickens’ Oliver Twist and David Copperfield succeed in carving out spaces within the nation for their classed but otherwise racially and sexually dominant orphans, the place of the gendered and raced orphan within the British Empire depends tenuously on her ability to ally herself with the center. Emmanuel Appadocca suggests that sometimes the place of the mixed-race orphans lies outside of the nation altogether.

Although considered by some to be the first Trinidadian novel, Emmanuel Appadocca has received very little critical attention, having been “virtually unknown for more than one hundred years” (Cudjoe xiii). Philip, however, was described by C.L.R. James as “the most brilliant native of his time within memory” (qtd. in Cudjoe ix): a member of a prestigious Trinidadian family, Philip was educated first in Scotland and then in England, where he “entered
Middle Temple, and was called to the bar” (x-xi). Produced during Philip’s “English period,” Emmanuel Appadocca is a novel that defies easy categorization, combining elements of the romance, the slave narrative, and the domestic novel, and challenging “traditional notions of what a ‘national’ literature is and includes” (Cain xix). Philip’s novel shares with Craik’s Olive a sustained interest in colonialism and slavery as well as the role of retribution—featuring mixed-race orphans who desire revenge for the crimes committed against them by their white fathers—and, in adopting the tragic mulatto trope, makes clear the limitations of even the most heterogeneous conceptions of British national identity. If Dickens’s novels suggest that a middle-class ideology underlies Victorian conceptions of national identity, then Olive and Emmanuel Appodocca, which both feature mixed-race orphans, elucidate the ways in which emergent midcentury theories of race and miscegenation informed literary representations of the orphan figure, further specifying who could and who could not be incorporated into the national body.

II. Marriage, Miscegenation, and the Place of the Mixed-Race Orphan

In the 1840s, the “emergence of scientific racism” (Raimon 3)—based on the fields of phrenology, physiognomy, and polygenicism—affected a number of British writers who, according to Shields, began increasingly to describe “racial characteristics as innate and intransigent” (284). Nineteenth-century debates about race included not only such polygenicist beliefs, which posited racial differences as inherent and unalterable, but also monogenicist arguments, which contended that humans originated from a single source and differences in appearance and behavior were the results of climate and dietary habits (Shields 286). Within this historical context, Craik published her 1850 novel, whose Celtic characters and settings also evoke the 1845 Great Famine in Ireland that “strained Anglo-Irish relations almost to the
breaking point” (287). Craik’s sympathetic portrait of the Anglo-Celtic orphan Olive, whose character combines the strength and resilience associated with her Scottish roots and the reason and sweetness ascribed to her English heritage, makes possible the vision of a heterogeneous British national body that calls into question polygenicist arguments for the immutability and incompatibility of racial differences. By focusing on the novel’s representation of mixed-race marriages and miscegenation, I argue that Craik’s hybrid national identity refigures the myth of a pure British identity as a marriage of complementary racial differences, which takes at least two generations to formulate harmoniously. My analysis of Craik’s various depictions of marriage—the culmination of the middle-class conception of domesticity, as well as the resolution to most bildungsromans and domestic novels—points to the centrality of domesticity and domestication to her hybrid national body and suggests that such emphasis ultimately precludes the national incorporation of certain figures, namely mixed-race orphans whose hybridity comprises non-white racial differences.

Craik’s first two domestic novels, *The Olgivies* and *Olive*, received mixed criticism. The *British Quarterly Review*, for instance, praised her fiction for its “purity of moral tone,” but criticized its “lack of ‘artistic power’ and ‘poetic richness’” (qtd. in Chlebek). George Eliot dismissed another review that favorably compared Craik with herself, observing that “we belong to an entirely different order of writers” (qtd. in Foster 41). Despite a convoluted, repetitive, and occasionally plodding plot, *Olive*’s fluid conceptions of race, orphanhood, and national identity should figure importantly in conversations about the influence of colonialism on popular Victorian culture. As Walters notes, Craik’s novel “intercedes against the idea of a monoracial British ethnicity and presents two entwined—and controversial—ways of conceiving national hybridity in the mid-century”: the internal mixture of Celts and Saxons in the British Isles and
the integration of “forms of non-white hybridity in light of the overseas colonial empire” (326).

As the different fates of the novel’s multiple orphans suggest, however, non-white forms of hybridity fit more tenuously within the space of the nation. The novel features a number of orphans and devotes much attention to their differing conditions of orphanhood: the English “baby-bride” (17) Sybilla, Olive who is initially emotionally orphaned and then literally orphaned in her early adulthood, Olive’s childhood friend the motherless Sara Derwent, and of course Olive’s octoroon half-sister Christal. But whereas the white orphans, even those whom Craik paints as racially hybrid through attention to their coloring and through her reproduction of racially coded behaviors, still claim membership to a national family, the same does not apply to the novel’s only non-European mixed-race orphan. This makes clear the nuances of Craik’s delineation of the relation between race and British national identity.

As I observed in the previous chapter, Dickens’s novels establish a connection between national identity and national space. In Olive, Craik makes a similar association by correlating birthplace and strength of character, particularly in her opening characterizations of the heroine and her English mother Sybilla. Craik has Elspie, Olive’s abrasive but devoted nurse, describe her heroine as a “[p]uir hapless wean” with no “kinsman’s love,” “siller,” or “beauty” (14) at the novel’s start. The circumstances of Olive’s birth, observes Elspie, figure her as a temporary orphan: with her father in Jamaica—“Ye’re come into the warld without a father’s blessing” (6)—and her mother considered by Elspie to be a “child” (17) for whom “beauty [was] all in all” (29), the deformed newborn is essentially abandoned to Elspie’s care. Yet the novel’s attention to Stirling, Olive’s “place of nativity,” which she has the “honour” of sharing with “many a king and hero” (8), presents identity, first and foremost, in terms of national belonging and figures Craik’s heroine as a tabula rasa only to an extent. Whatever degree of orphanhood Craik
ascribes to her protagonist, Olive can trace her Scottish identity back to her place of birth. In the next chapter, the narrator begins to establish Olive’s family history by delineating her mother Sybilla’s own orphanization. While emphasis on Sybilla’s “delicate English beauty, and quick, ringing English voice” further suggests that the orphan figure may claim membership in no family, yet still trace her national genealogy, it also represents the well-worn conflation of familial and national identification: although an orphan in the literal sense, like her daughter, Sybilla already belongs to a national body by virtue of her “place of nativity.”

In discussing her marriage with Elspie, Sybilla calls attention to not only her orphanhood, but also to the English characteristics and customs that distinguish her from the family into which she has married. “I wonder what Angus would like?” she asks Elspie, mulling over what to name their newborn. “A family name, perhaps, after one of those old Rothesays that you and he make so much of,” to which the nurse takes offense, questioning whether the Englishwoman is “proud o’ your husband’s family” (20). Sybilla’s response highlights one of the fluid ways in which the novel conceives of race: as genealogical, illustrated here by Sybilla’s emphasis on the Rothesay line:

“Yes, very proud; especially as I have none of my own. He took me—an orphan, without a single tie in the wide world—he took me into his warm loving arms”—her voice faltered, and a sweet womanly tenderness softened her eyes. “God bless my noble husband! I am proud of him, and of his people, and of all his race….,” (20)

“An orphan, without a single tie in the wide world,” Sybilla reassures Elspie of her gratitude for her adoption into the Rothesay family—an adoption made possible through marriage. But despite her new place in her Scottish husband’s family, Sybilla makes a distinction between her own English identity and Angus’ “people” and “all his race.” Her marriage has reinscribed her as a
Rothesay, but only to an extent: she remains English, part of a distinct people and race. In this instance, then, Craik defines race in terms of both familial heredity and national genealogy. Despite being an orphan in the most literal sense of the word, Sybilla retains her claim to an English identity, which the novel represents as a set of physical and moral characteristics: her elfin-like beauty; her vain pride; and her infantile helplessness. The racial codification of Sybilla’s and Angus’ national affiliations thus figures their marriage as a mixed-race union and their newborn Olive as a product of miscegenation.

Compounded by the eventual deterioration of the Rothesays’ marriage, the distinction that Sybilla makes between her husband’s “race” and the novel’s emphasis on her own Englishness suggest the precariousness of such a *mésalliance*. As other critics of the novel have noted, Olive’s spinal curvature and the early deaths of the Rothesays’ other children speak to contemporary theories of race that suggest the long-term unsustainability of interracial unions. Robert Knox, as I have mentioned, was one such theorist, whose influential *The Races of Men* appeared in publication the same year as Craik’s second novel. Shields contends that *Olive* “refutes Knox’s theory that seemingly innate differences between Celts and Saxons must necessarily prohibit their assimilation by claiming a special role for women as racial mediators” (285). In other words, with her moral fortitude and angelic femininity, Olive paves the way for a successful Anglo-Celtic union. Such a reading excludes the English Sybilla from the role of “racial mediator,” while highlighting the potentiality in Craik’s blurry portrait of Olive’s racial makeup. Upon learning of the newborn’s spinal curvature, Sybilla declares that “this child—her child and Angus’s,—would be a deformity, a shame to its parents, a dishonour to its race” (29). But what the novel means by Olive’s “race” is not as clear-cut as Sybilla’s English appearance or Angus’ Scottish pride; nor is it clear whether the deformity would prove shameful to Olive’s
English ancestry, given that Olive inherits her mother’s elfin-like stature, or her Celtic origins, considering that her “personal defect” contributes to her moral resilience, a characteristic that Craik associates with the Scottish.

Whatever Olive’s racial ambiguity, however, her whiteness is never in question. Although at birth she appears “such a little brown thing” (19), this seeming signifier of her mixed-race parentage quickly—and literally—fades from Craik’s description of her heroine. Indeed, for most of the novel, Olive, along with the novel’s other characters, fixate on her whiteness, which Craik codes as ethereal and striking, in stark contrast to the physical deformity that supposedly repels. For instance, the initial site of the Rothesays’ failing marriage—their estate in Stirling—is haunted by “the phantom of the pale, deformed child” (36), and much is also made of Olive’s beautiful “amber-coloured hair—pale ‘lint-white locks,’ which, with the almost colourless transparency of her complexion, gave a spectral air to her whole appearance” (45). Despite the pity that Olive’s spinal curvature elicits from her parents, her friends, and even herself, Craik works hard to present her heroine as desirable, in temperament as well as in appearance, and couches Olive’s beauty in descriptions of her whiteness and its signifiers—the “inexpressible charm in her purely-outlined features to which the complexion always accompanying pale-gold hair imparted such a delicate, spiritual colouring” (260). Indeed, though initially rejected by her parents, Olive becomes to her mother “the very likeness of the angel in her dreams” (260-261), a literal Angel in the House, who improves the lives of almost all whom she meets. As Kaplan writes, “[l]ittle Olive is created as an exercise in Christian patience and abjection; her energetic passivity, together with her capacity to offer love in the face of rejection, is seen as a winning tactic” (“Heterogeneous” 188). In the characterization of her Anglo-Celtic heroine, then, Craik combines—and indeed, conflates—questions of national identity and race.
At this point in the novel, Olive’s fate seems to be spinsterhood, a fact to which she resigns herself by repeated references to her physical deformity. However, in establishing Olive’s whiteness, Craik makes clear the possibility of her potential as a domestic national subject. If Craik’s novel suggests the possibility of a heterogeneous portrait of Great Britain, as Shields and Walters have argued, it codifies such hybridity in terms of varying degrees of whiteness, drawing on both emerging and traditional conceptions of race. In other words, Olive’s Anglo-Celtic mixture figuratively unites the different white races (read: nations) that the Acts of Union 1700 and 1800 had legally joined.21

Craik’s novel borrows from early-nineteenth-century nation-building novels by Scottish and Irish women writers, like Maria Edgeworth and Sidney Owenson, that “construct an analogy between the domestic and the national by using marriage allegorically to comment on England’s political unions with Scotland and Ireland,” as well as domestic novels, like Bronte’s and Dickens’s, that position the family as the “moral center of Britain’s empire” (Shields 288). If the Rothesays’ troubled marriage serves as a comment on the impossibility of homogenizing an always-already hybrid conception of Britishness, then the novel’s fascination with the question of Olive’s marriageability, or lack thereof, raises doubts about the long-term sustainability of a heterogeneous conception of the empire. Thoughts of romance first occur to Olive at Oldchurch, the English town where the Rothesays relocate at the beginning of the novel. There, Olive befriends Sara Derwent, an English girl whose “charming face, with its large, languishing Asiatic eyes, and delicate mouth” (113) the novel exoticizes. When Sara begins a flirtation with a naval officer, Olive “count[s] her friend’s happiness as if it were her own” and becomes conscious of a “vague longing—a desiring of love for love’s own sake” (119). Yet the probability of marrying

21 The Acts of Union of 1706 and 1707 united Scotland and England into a single kingdom: Great Britain. In 1800, another Act of Union annexed Ireland to Great Britain.
seems unlikely to Craik’s heroine, who “born with a woman’s longings—longings neither unholy nor impure, after the love which is the religion of a woman’s heart—the sweetness of home, which is the heaven of a woman’s life—felt that from both she was shut out for ever” (140). Love, marriage, and the “sweetness of home,” Craik suggests, are the natural, even God-given, desires of every woman and only within such a domestic ideal would her full potential be met. Even Olive’s later success as an artist pales in comparison with the “religion of a woman’s heart” and the “heaven of a woman’s life.” But Olive believes that her “personal defect” has shut her out from both, a belief in which the novel shares, emphasizing Olive’s deformity even as the narrator takes pains to point out that it became “less apparent as she grew up” and that the “extreme sweetness of her countenance almost atoned for her bad figure” (123). Notwithstanding her “extreme sweetness” and the shrinking of her “defect,” Craik’s heroine remains a “bad figure”—a child of miscegenation who, according to Victorian scientific racism, would be infertile, barred from both the literal and figurative reproduction of the nation.

However, despite insisting on Olive’s unmarriageability, the narrative concludes with the orphan’s marriage to Harold Gwynne, the widower of Olive’s childhood friend Sara, and a refiguration of the domestic ideal. While, as Kaplan notes, “Craik will not risk the possibility of the reproduction of Olive’s spinal curvature and implicitly limits Olive’s maternal opportunities” (Introduction xxiii) to her new role as stepmother to Harold’s daughter Ailie, the possibility of a harmonious and hybrid marriage of Anglo-Celtic beliefs and characteristics is implied in Olive’s nurturing of her adoptive daughter. As a child of an Anglo-Celtic union, herself, Ailie has not only inherited her parents’ physical beauty, but also been influenced by Olive’s moral teachings. Rather than reproducing the novel’s two failed Anglo-Celtic marriages—the Rothesays’ and

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22 See Stepan for a comprehensive study of nineteenth-century scientific racism.
Harold’s disastrous first marriage—Olive and Harold forge a family out of complementary differences.

In nineteenth-century Britain, as Radhika Mohanram notes, whiteness as a racial category was unstable. While “signifiers such as youth, athleticism, the muscular body, and health all were metonymically linked to whiteness,” pointing to a definition of whiteness akin to British masculinity, Mohanram suggests that British women’s whiteness “was liminal, almost temporary” and that the “overvaluation of white women is directly connected to their undervalued status” (xxiii). Reading the Contagious Diseases Acts alongside Victorian middle-class definitions of femininity, Mohanram discovers “an alternate meaning to white women’s bodies…that they become white through a process of osmosis in their relationships with white men rather than from being intrinsically white in themselves” (xxiii). While Olive’s whiteness, which her Anglo-Celtic parentage calls into question at the beginning of Craik’s novel, becomes solidified through her marriage to Harold Gwynne, the West Indian Christal’s failure to marry not only highlights the different ways in which the novel racializes Christal as non-white, but also confirms the problematic route that the mixed-race orphan figure must take in order to become a part of the British national body.

Christal makes her first appearance in *Olive* as an “eight or ten years old” (252) orphan whom Craik’s protagonist meets by happenstance. At this point in the novel, Olive and her mother—no longer the childlike Sybilla, but now the infirm widow Mrs. Rothesay—have relocated to Woodford Cottage, where Olive has embarked on a career as an artist under the tutelage of a veteran artist, Michael Van Brugh, to support herself, following her father’s failed speculations and sudden death. Olive and her mentor’s charitable sister, Meliora, take an interest

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23 Parliament originally passed the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1864 to contain the spread of venereal diseases among British troops by identifying and forcing prostitutes to undergo regular gynecological exams and treatment (Mohanram 36).
in one of Van Brugh’s models, “that Quadroon woman—Mrs. Manners” (249), an impoverished beauty on her deathbed. With “ragged elbows” and “elf-like black eyes,” the young Christal catches Olive’s attention while she and Meliora wander the poorer part of the village in search of Celia Manners’ abode. Olive identifies Christal as “the poor woman’s. She left it in the hall one day at Woodford Cottage, and I noticed its black eyes and fair hair. I remember, too—for I asked—its singular and very pretty name, Christal” (250). While the novel presents Olive’s “pale-gold hair” as a symbol of her beauty, Christal’s “fair hair” is remarkable only in contrast to her “black eyes,” the combination of which exoticizes her in Olive’s eyes, as does her “singular and very pretty name.” Craik’s use of the genderless and inhuman pronoun “it” to refer to Christal, likewise, presents Christal as a curious object. Unlike the opening scene of Olive’s birth, which describes her figurative orphaning, the circumstances of Christal’s orphanization are unclear. As the ward of a beautiful but destitute woman whom she refers to as her “ma mie”—French for “my love” and similar in sound to “mommy”—the “little, thin-limbed, cunning-eyed girl” loftily declares that “My mother was a rich lady, and my father a noble gentleman” who “drowned together in the deep sea, years ago” (252). In other words, Christal invents for herself a family that excludes the quadroon Celia Manners and obscures her own illegitimate and mixed-race parentage, the physical evidence of which the novel suggests manifests only in the singular combination of her light hair and dark eyes.

Although Craik withholds the truth of Christal’s parentage and the revelation of her relation to Olive until much later in the narrative, the novel hints at Christal’s origins from its very introduction of her, coding her racial differences in distinctive ways. First, as a seeming counterpart to Olive’s physical deformity, Craik ascribes to Christal what Shields calls a “moral defect in the violent, uncontrollable passions that we are encouraged to trace to her volatile
ancestry as a child of a Celtic father and a quadroon from the West Indies” (286). Even as a little
girl, Christal seems impetuous and quick-tempered, speaking to Celia Manners in a tone
“between complaint and effrontery” that strikes Meliora as rude (252). Second, whereas much
attention is paid to Olive’s “place of nativity,” Christal’s mysterious origins and the supposed
deaths of her parents at sea serve to displace her not only on the familial but also the national
stage. In short, Christal is the novel’s only orphan without an identifiable “place of nativity” to
vouch for her Britishness. Indeed, upon Celia’s death, Meliora arranges to have Christal sent to a
French finishing school and promptly forgets about the orphan until her return to England years
later as an unrecognizably “stylish young woman” (292) with a cosmopolitanism that not only
repulses Meliora and the Rothesay women, but in fact further obscures Christal’s parentage. The
narrator’s first description of the adult Christal emphasizes her unbelonging:

She stood, a picture less of girlish grace, than of such grace as French fashion dictates.
Her tall, well-rounded form struggled through a painful compression into slimness; her
whole attire had that peculiar *tournure* which we islanders term Frenchified. Nay, there
was something in the very tie of her neck-ribbon which showed it never could have been
done by English fingers. She appeared, all over, “a young lady from abroad.” (289)

The passage sets up a distinction between those belonging to the British Empire—“we
islanders”—and those from “abroad,” figuring Christal as not only the novel’s Other, but also
Olive’s foil. Unlike Craik’s small heroine, Christal is “tall” with a “well-rounded form.” On the
surface, Christal seems French—her differences Continental, rather than non-European
altogether—but on closer examination, she does not quite fit into her French identity, either. Her
height and “well-rounded form,” a phrase that calls to mind racist depictions of black women’s
bodies as larger than white women’s, has been painfully compressed “into slimness”: she
“struggle[s]” to fit into European costumes/customs. The narrator, identifying herself as a British Islander—English and Scottish alike—terms Christal’s difference as “Frenchified,” a word that suggests imitation of French culture, rather than a claim to French identity itself. Whatever Christal’s origins, then, they are certainly not English. She is, “all over, ‘a young lady from abroad,’” here a fluid term that not only refers to her French education, but also hints at her West Indian and colonialized ancestry.

Christal begins several flirtations with young gentlemen in the village in hopes of marrying and securing for herself a home, but the question of Christal’s marriageability—as yet uncompromised by the revelation of her illegitimacy and West Indian parentage—seems insignificant compared to the novel’s fascination with the possibility of Olive’s unmarriageability. Christal’s flirtations punctuate the story of Olive’s resignedly unrequited love for Harold, serving to illuminate Craik’s protagonist’s stoicism and passivity and to cast aspersions on Christal’s morality. For instance, in the only interlude that inexplicably shifts the narrative focus from Olive to Christal, Craik delineates the latter as an active but artful and deceptive husband-hunter. In order to delay a journey that would take her away from the object of her pursuit, Lyle Derwent, the younger brother of Olive’s childhood friend Sara, Christal feigns a broken ankle. As she relishes the success of her plan, “her air was a triumphant, girlish coquetry” mixed with “a woman’s passion” (425). The resulting portrait is unflattering—all the more so in comparison with the novel’s immediate shift in emphasis to Olive’s “patience” and “self-denial” (426). As a glimpse of the extent of Christal’s capacity for cruelty and violence, this interlude reinforces Christal’s aberrant morality as more intractable than Olive’s physical deformity, representing her moral defect as the obstacle to her participation in social and national reproduction through marriage. For Christal, marriage is not only a desire, but also a necessity:
as an orphan without discernible wealth or connections, Christal must marry in order to survive and, for many of the other scenes in which she appears in the novel’s second volume, Craik depicts Christal as a coquette who teases and deceives in an attempt to seduce, first, Harold Gwynne and then, later, his brother-in-law Lyle, into marrying her. In both cases, however, the men are revealed to be secretly in love with the supposedly unmarriageable Olive. The novel’s fascination with Olive’s perceived unmarriageability, then, serves to mask the real fact of Christal’s denied social legibility.

At the novel’s end, shut up in a convent near Olive and Harold’s ancestral estate, Christal remains on the periphery of middle-class domesticity. The only path to integration into the family left to her is to bend to “Olive’s gentle influence,” a possibility that the novel leaves open, but that would maintain Christal’s secondary status in Craik’s vision of a heterogeneous national body. Christal herself is resistant to Olive’s attempts to incorporate her into the Gwynnes’ Anglo-Celtic union, refusing to see Olive until Olive literally sneaks up on her at the convent. As she reveals during Olive’s forced visit, Christal has undergone a second orphanization. Having disintegrated with the revelation of her illegitimacy, Christal’s self-fashioned identity as the orphan of wealthy parents is now replaced by a life of self-denial: she has “[f]orgotten all,” distinguishing between her “old vain life” (637) and her current existence in the convent. However, her refusal to see Olive suggests that she has not forgiven all—an obstinacy that the novel deems unreasonable: Harold, for instance, “could not believe there was in the whole world a heart so hard and cold, that it could not be melted by Olive’s gentle influence, and warmed by the shining spirit of Olive’s spirit of love” (638). The narrative figures Christal’s obduracy as a racial characteristic that, unlike Olive’s physical deformity, persists to preclude her participation in the reproduction of the nation. Recalling Robert J.C. Young’s explication of colonial desire,
Jennifer DeVere Brody describes the mulattaroon figure as ambiguously desirable and undesirable and observes that American fiction featuring black female subjects rarely conclude with their marrying. As a “most precious if precarious bounty,” Brody writes, “the mulattaroon languished in America until her luxuriousness (sometimes also her literal luxury in dowry form) was recognized by an upstanding English gentleman and she could be imported to England’s welcoming, supposedly more democratic shores” (19). However, even in nineteenth-century novels in which the figure of the mulattaroon marries, the marriage does not quite fit into the Victorian domestic ideal. Grounded in lust and/or greed, as opposed to the meeting of complementary minds represented by Olive and Harold’s marriage, such marriages figure into the antiquated model of marriage, based in money and assets, from which domestic novels began to move away in the nineteenth century.24 Instead, Celia Manners’ disquisition on “young girls, whose mixed blood is too pure for slavery, too tainted for freedom” makes clear the impossibility of a Victorian marriage for the mulattaroon (Craik 254-255). Indeed, Celia’s—and by extension, Christal’s—identity is tied not only to the colonies, but also to the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Great Britain’s West Indian holdings. As Celia tells Meliora and Olive:

“You know nothing of me? Then you shall know. I come from a country where are thousands of young girls, whose mixed blood is too pure for slavery, too tainted for freedom. Lovely, accomplished, brought up delicately, they yet have no higher future than to be the white man’s passing toy—cherished, wearied of, and spurned.” (254)

Unlike Olive’s Anglo-Celtic parentage, the mulattaroon’s “mixed blood” figures more ambiguously—at once “too pure” and “too tainted.” Implied in Celia’s description of purity/taint is an articulation of whiteness as the pinnacle from which other races have fallen. Celia and

Christal’s whiteness makes them unfit for slavery, while their blackness prevents them from enjoying the freedom and the sustained desire/love of men accorded to “pure” whites. Occupying such a liminal space, the figure of the mulattaroon is denied marriage, with “no higher future than to be the white man’s passing toy,” white enough to be “cherished,” but too black to marry. After a pause, Celia declares bitterly that “I but fulfilled my destiny. How could such as I hope to bear an honest man’s honest name” (254-255). In Christal’s failure to marry, the novel echoes her mother’s “destiny,” drawing on the language of purity and impurity to figure Olive as morally pure and her octaroon half-sister as morally impure.

I argue, then, that the novel ascribes Olive’s moral fortitude to her whiteness and Christal’s moral defect to her blackness, employing different conceptions of race in its delineation of each character’s morality. In other words, while Olive is genealogically raced, Craik’s characterization of Christal echoes contemporary theories about race that figure non-Europeans as inferior—physically as well as morally—to whites. While Olive’s whiteness accords her several degrees of social mobility and ensures her moral stability, Christal’s blackness essentializes her as morally defective. For instance, shortly after Olive discovers the truth of Christal’s parentage, Lyle Derwent reveals the prevailing allure of Olive’s virtuousness over Christal’s conniving coquetry by proposing to Olive. Although narratively predictable, Lyle’s proposal surprises Olive, who insists on her own physical undesirability: she reminds Lyle of their age difference and of her lack of beauty. But the language of Lyle’s declaration of love figures Olive as pure, angelic, and virtuous, characteristics that the novel suggests are embodied in Olive’s “pale” and “golden” whiteness. Having worshipped Olive since childhood, Lyle describes the “story of a dream I had, all my boyhood through, of a beautiful, noble creature, whom I reverenced, admired, and at last have dared to love” (544) and confesses that, even as a
boy, he thought the older girl to be an angel (545). In equating Olive with the vision of an angel, Lyle’s dream recalls the novel’s opening description of Sybilla’s dream about an angel called Olive. Even after Olive definitively rejects him, Lyle insists that “I must—must worship you still; I always shall! You are so good—so pure; I look up to you as to some saint” (549). Unable to make her his wife, Lyle returns Olive to the pedestal on which the narrative has placed her from its very opening, solidifying the association between Olive’s whiteness and her purity.

Having reserved his love for Olive, with her “golden hair, and…sweet eyes,” Lyle can only feel a “mere passing fancy” for the octoroon Christal, whose coquetry both attracts and repels him (545). His attentions to Christal, he confesses, have been foolish, reinforcing the improbability that a wealthy Englishman would marry a penniless orphan with ambiguous parentage, as well as the colonial desire at play in their courtship.

Christal’s violent reaction to overhearing the proposal further supports the novel’s association between her moral defects and her blackness. Christal angrily confronts Olive, storming into the room with her light hair wild and her dark eyes set to an “intense glare” (549). Having discovered Christal’s parentage in the previous chapter, Olive now recognizes in her sister “two likenesses; one, of the woman [Celia] who had once shrieked after her the name of ‘Rothesay,’—the other, that of her own father in his rare moments of passion” (550). Christal’s violent and passionate interruption of Olive’s sedate contemplation of Lyle’s proposal brings into relief how the narrative differently racializes the sisters’ distinct temperaments. Christal poses a physical threat to Olive, “lifting her graceful, majestic height” as she “looked contemptuously on poor shrinking Olive” (551), and dismisses Olive’s conciliatory gestures: “You did not think this passion was in me did you? You judged me by that meek cold-blooded heart of yours. But mine is all burning—burning! Woe be to those who kindled the fire” (552). Olive observes again that
Christal looks, “from head to foot, her mother’s child. Hate and love, melting and mingling together, flashed from her black, southern eyes. But in the close mouth there was an iron will, inherited with her northern blood” (552). In Olive’s observation, Craik figures the implications of Christal’s mixed-race parentage as more dangerous than those of Olive’s: Christal seems to have inherited the moral weaknesses of both her West Indian mother and her Celtic father, mingling them in a way that makes her not only quick-tempered, but also violent.

On subsequently learning the truth of her parentage, Christal’s initial fury over Lyle’s rejection of her transforms into a desire for revenge against the first cause of her misery—her father Angus Rothesay—which she exacts against his only remaining legitimate offspring. Christal threatens to kill Olive, “that you may go to your father, and mine, and tell him that I cursed him in his grave!” (554). Rejecting Olive’s familial peace offering, she lifts Olive up with seemingly inhuman strength and dashes her against the fireplace before fleeing not only the house but also the country. As Kaplan points out, the scene echoes the attack of the racialized Creole Bertha Mason on Brontë’s plain and diminutive governess. “[A]s in Jane Eyre,” Kaplan observes, “rage is necessary [in Olive] for the survival of poor, plain heroines, but for them to become legitimate progenitors of their class and nation, surrogate and ultimately expendable women must enact it for them” (Introduction xxiii). In another essay, Kaplan observes that “in Olive, only white men or mixed-race women may feel or express [anger]” (“Heterogeneous” 188). In other words, like Bertha Mason, Christal serves to whiten the novel’s plain, diminutive, and passive protagonist, her capacity for feeling and expressing anger catalyzing the marriage plot that revolves around Olive. Christal’s discovery of and reaction to her mixed-race parentage, as Kaplan argues, functions as a “neat [narrative] move,” shifting “‘the curse of the hopeless
deformity’ from Olive’s shoulders to Christal’s psyche” (“Heterogeneous” 191). As a result, Olive ascends to marriageability, while Christal descends into vengeful madness.

The violence of Christal’s reaction to discovering the identities of her parents, I argue, simultaneously serves to highlight the ways in which Olive has embraced her Anglo-Celtic origins and to suggest the impracticability of mixed-race unions that extend beyond the national borders of the British Isles. While Olive overcomes the repulsion that initially accompanied her discovery of Christal’s parentage, Christal’s murderous rage against both her deceased father and her living half-sister reinforces the impossibility of familial relations and national belonging for the mulattaroon orphan. The course that Christal then begins to take presages what the mulatto orphan of Maxwell Philip’s adventure novel, Emmanuel Appadocca, carries to fruition.

III. Other and Othered Spaces in Maxwell Philip’s Emmanuel Appadocca

In Emmanuel Appadocca (1854), Maxwell Philip appropriates the conventions of Victorian adventure fiction—particularly seafaring novels, popularized in the first half of the nineteenth century by the likes of Frederick Marryat—to redefine national identity along racial and spatial lines. Victorian adventure novels, as several critics have noted, were nation-building narratives that contributed to a masculinist and imperialist understanding of Great Britain’s relationship to other parts of the Empire.25 Adventure fiction, according to Joseph A. Kestner, engaged in imprinting “codes of masculinity”: “rescue, heroism, survival, courage, duty, isolation, voyaging” (1). Like writers of domestic fiction, then, adventure novelists were invested in particular narratives of national belonging. In his first and only novel, Philip, a distinguished Trinidadian jurist of mixed-race descent, recycles these tropes of masculinity, but with a significant difference. Whereas Victorian adventure literature privileges the white male

25 See Patrick Brantlinger’s seminal text on the impact of imperialism on Victorian literature.
perspective, Philip sets his novel in a transatlantic context and features a mixed-race scholar-turned-pirate as his protagonist. *Emmanuel Appadocca* thus articulates conceptions of individual and national identity that challenge the prevailing narratives of national belonging promoted by Philip’s contemporaries in Great Britain.

In the first critical edition of Philip’s novel, William E. Cain introduces *Emmanuel Appadocca*, a previously largely forgotten work, as “a multicultural, polyphonic ‘Atlantic’ book that challenges, even as it capitalizes upon, traditional notions of what a ‘national’ literature is and includes” (xix). Sarah H. Ficke observes that, in setting his novel in “a corner of a triangle formed by the Caribbean, the United States, and England, Philip challenges American slavery and British racism by invoking both American abolitionist works and the highly nationalistic adventure fiction that flooded the Victorian market” (71). Similarly, Gregory Wilson argues that, by setting his novel aboard a pirate ship, Philip challenges “traditional premises of law and autonomy, attacking the principle of slavery and racism at its foundations, without polarizing the novel and alienating a large section of the audience to which he must ultimately appeal if he is to be successful” (n.p.). For Cain, Ficke, and Wilson, the novel’s allusions to slavery, along with its liminal setting and transnational context, make *Emmanuel Appadocca* crucial to critical discussions of midcentury ideas about the relation of race to national identity. In this section, I read Philip’s adventure novel as an orphan narrative that not only partakes in nineteenth-century racial conceptions of British national identity, but also reveals the complex legal and cultural discourses working together to unmake and deny the non-European subjects of the British Empire participation in the reproduction of the nation. In this way, I suggest that the condition of orphanhood, as mediated through fiction, extends beyond the state of being parentless to encompass the experience of the enslaved and the colonized.
While Philip’s preface to *Emmanuel Appadocca* makes explicit the impact of slavery, and the Fugitive Slave Laws of 1850 in particular, on his thinking, the novel is “at the same time distanced from it” (Cain xxxvii). For instance, the crime for which Appadocca attempts to prosecute his white father makes no reference to James Willmington’s status as a slaveholder and, instead, focuses on Willmington’s desertion of Appadocca, an offense which Philip’s protagonist painstakingly describes as a violation of the laws of nature (63-65). Yet, Philip indicates the novel’s engagement with nineteenth-century racial politics in a number of ways, including through the inclusion of a racially and nationally diverse cast of characters. Appadocca’s crew comprises former slaves and the mulatto offspring of slave women and white male slaveholders, as well as Europeans. Appadocca himself has a “very light olive” complexion that indicates a “mixture of blood, and proclaim[s] that the man [is] connected with some dark race, and…he may have been said to be of that which is commonly designated Quadroon” (23). The discourse of scientific racism, particularly phrenology, also imbues Philip’s description of the shape of Appadocca’s head as “what the most fastidious could but admire; his forehead rose in the fullness of beautiful proportions”—in short, as evidence of his “high intellectual development” (24). Appadocca’s pirate ship, significantly named The Black Schooner, shares the high seas with slavers. Such allusions position the novel within the midcentury politics of slavery and colonialism, calling attention to the ways that nationalistic narratives traditionally elide questions of race in their articulation of British identity and, in turn, how such questions problematize these narratives.

Reading Philip’s novel as an orphan narrative also elucidates its generic hybridity. While imperialist adventure fiction in the tradition of Marryat’s midshipman novels privileges action over emotion, devoting little if any attention to the representation of domestic life, Philip’s novel
employs some of the conventions that characterize Craik’s *Olive*, to highlight the interrelation of gender and race in fiction about colonialism. Set mostly onboard a pirate ship in the Gulf of Paria with an alternative yet rigid legal system based on the laws of nature, *Emmanuel Appadocca* is, first and foremost, a tale of familial retribution. The son of James Willmington, an English planter, and a mulatto woman, Appadocca is raised by his apparently independently wealthy mother, who sends him to university in Paris, where he is recognized for his high intellectual abilities. After his mother’s death, Appadocca quits Paris and relocates to England to attempt a writing career, but fails to achieve success. Destitute, he writes to his father, whom he had previously thought deceased, for assistance—only to be ignored. The course of Appadocca’s life of piracy begins shortly after, spurred on by his rescue of a young mixed-race woman on the verge of killing herself and her baby. Appadocca learns that she is an orphan who

had fallen a victim to her own virtues, her own confidence, her own fondness, her own gentleness. The angelic nature of her sex, was worked upon for her destruction, and after having been deceived, she was discarded,—she! nay,—not she alone—but the innocent child—to young to offend, too helpless to be criminal—was also thrown on the wide, unfeeling world. (103)

Appadocca sees his mother in the desperate woman and himself in her “innocent child,” and vows to avenge all of the women and children “deceived” and “discarded” by the “false systems” (105) that have fostered slavery. The family, as Cain notes, was an institution that was legally denied to the “black men, women, and children [who] cherished and fought to preserve” (xxvii) it.26 The “false systems” of slavery, then, orphanized and made permanent orphans of black men, women, and children. Appadocca takes it upon himself to right the wrongs of these “helpless” by turning to piracy to rewrite the laws that have enabled their victimization. In the portrait of the

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26 For a reworking of Orlando Patterson’s notions of social death and kinlessness, see Vincent Brown.
abandoned mother, Philip combines the tropes of the fallen woman and the tragic mulatta—popular in Victorian and American sentimental fiction, respectively—and engenders Appadocca’s recourse to retributive law as masculine and heroic: “[T]his miserable life I devote to vindicate the law of nature which has been violated in me, and in your child…I shall not rest until I have taught my father, that the creature to whom he has given life possesses feelings and sensibility, and is capable of vengeance” (106). In other words, Philip redeployes the codes of masculinity that adventure fiction imprints to empower the colonized other and, in the process, rewrites the purpose of such nationalistic narratives to include the promotion of the rights of non-European subjects. Piracy, and more importantly Appadocca’s gender, makes possible his pursuit of justice. In this way, Appadocca carries to fruition the threat that Craik’s Christal Manners makes after hearing of the crimes of a “rich man’s deserted illegitimate child”: “If I had been that girl, I would have hunted my vile father through the world” (538). Unaware of her own illegitimacy at this point in the novel, Christal speaks presciently, but because of her gender, her own path follows that of the woman whom Appadocca rescues rather than the one promised in this passionate declaration of retribution.

Despite its complication of the masculinist and imperialistic trajectory of the Victorian adventure novel, Emmanuel Appadocca nevertheless reproduces prevailing Victorian racist, classist, and sexist narratives in other ways. Alexandra Ganser reads the Black Schooner as a “heterotopian embodiment of the ideal state” that is “at the same time implicated in dominant racist and gender discourses” (71).27 The novel, for instance, relies on grotesque stereotypes to caricaturize the African servant Jack Jimmy and the African sorceress Celeste. Ganser also notes the complete absence of women from Appadocca’s ship and the relative absence of women from the narrative in general (71). As Ficke points out, the “hierarchy of Appadocca’s ship is visibly

27 Ganser employs Foucault’s concept of the heterotope, with which I engage in the third chapter of this dissertation.
racialized in the relationship between Appadocca and Jimmy” (127), whom Philip positions on the opposite end of the class spectrum from his high-born and intellectual protagonist. But Appadocca is nevertheless an atypical adventure fiction hero, both in his mixed-race parentage and in his refined mannerisms, which I argue are ambiguously gendered. Philip devotes much attention to the figure that Appadocca cuts:

he wore trowsers of the finest and whitest materials, and a Moorish jacket of crimson silk, large and ample sleeves; round his waist was folded a red silk sash, in which a gilded poniard and pistols mounted with gold, were stuck; his head was uncovered, and his black raven locks flowed over his shoulders in wild and unrestrained profusion. (24)

With a “lofty bearing and haughty mien” (24), Appadocca resembles less a pirate captain than the scholar that he was before his mother’s death left him impecunious. When first introduced in the novel, for example, Appadocca appears surrounded by “learned tomes” (24), works by Bacon and Aristotle. Indeed, it is the markers of Appadocca’s difference within the pirate world—his “refined habits” and the “natural paleness of his complexion” (91, 92)—that fosters his success, enabling him to move freely among the merchants and to sell his pirated goods. In the above passage, Philip elides Appadocca’s racial difference, reinscribing it in terms of the pirate captain’s class and gendering, which distinguish him from his subordinates on the Black Schooner while simultaneously allowing him to traverse the divide between the criminal high seas and the West Indian trade economy. Embodied in his mixed-race parentage, Appadocca’s liminality, according to Wilson, makes impossible his complete acceptance in “what was at the time a socially stratified society” (n.p.). Contrary to Philip’s characterization of Appadocca’s dress as “simple,” then, I argue that it reflects Appadocca’s multifarious ambiguity: he carries a

Philip’s characterization of Appadocca emphasizes his Spanish heritage, evident in his name as well as his coloring, in contradistinction to the novel’s other black characters.
“gilded poniard and pistols mounted with gold,” symbols of the masculine order onboard the Black Schooner, while at the same time “his black raven locks” fall over his shoulders “in wild and unrestrained profusion,” reflective of the less rigid society in the West Indian colonies that includes the possibility of romance and domesticity. This ambiguous gendering not only stands in for, but also calls attention to the liminality of Appadocca’s coloniality.

Paul Gilroy figures ships as “shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected” (16-17). As a liminal space, the ship functions in direct opposition to the laws that govern the land, including the regulatory social rules that make domesticity possible. Composed of a hodgepodge of castoffs “from the society of mankind” (44)—former slaves, seasoned sailors, and Appadocca’s former classmates—the crew of the Black Schooner shares in common a misanthropic sense of justice. Despite Appadocca’s refined habits, then, his vengeful pursuit of his father functions as a wholly masculine endeavor that precludes him from incorporation into the family that he hopes to restore by trying his father in the court of natural law. In Emmanuel Appadocca, Philip includes a domestic plot alongside the novel’s seafaring tale of retribution, but for Philip’s protagonist, the two narratives never intersect. At the beginning of the novel, Appadocca successfully captures his father and casts him adrift to suffer a slow and painful death. But miraculously, Willmington survives to implicate his son in his abduction and attempted murder. While onshore to trade his pirated goods, Appadocca is arrested and taken aboard a man-of-war to await trial on charges of piracy and kidnapping his father. Appadocca escapes through a porthole and washes ashore on the Venezuelan coast, where he is taken in by a Ranchero whose daughter Feliciana falls quickly and madly in love with the pirate captain. Appadocca recognizes Feliciana’s love for him, but having pledged his life to avenging his mother, he escapes Feliciana’s father’s estate to rejoin his crew and continue in his pursuit of
Willmington. Vowing to always be near him, Feliciiana embarks on her own pursuit of the pirate captain. But the novel’s conclusion—with Appadocca’s suicide following a storm that destroys his ship and drowns his father—rehearses the trope of the tragic mulatto. Conventionally gendered feminine, the tragic mulatto trope that Philip here employs highlights Appadocca’s ambiguous gendering. With Willmington’s death and the destruction of the Black Schooner, Appadocca returns to an orphaned state, his identity as a pirate captain erased by the storm and his self-appointed *raison d’être* completed with his father’s drowning. Although Feliciiana offers Appadocca her undying love and devotion, Philip makes clear the impossibility of his hero’s return to the domestic life that the novel has figured as governed by a “false system.” Through Appadocca’s suicide, then, Philip critiques how legal and cultural systems deny black men, women, and children membership in the family and, by extension, national belonging. “Rejected by white society,” Ficke argues, “the intellectual Appadocca chooses to go outside society instead of to the bottom of it” (128). In other words, Appadocca’s refusal to subscribe to the legal, philosophical, and national ideologies in place precludes him from claiming a space in the British national family.

While *Emmanuel Appadocca* imagines a transnational conception of identity that takes into account the impact of slavery and colonialism on the non-European subject of the British Empire, Philip’s tale nevertheless serves as “a tragic tale of loss that Atlantic slavery endlessly repeated” (Cain liv). Represented as necessary, Appadocca’s death makes clear how nineteenth-century fiction reflects the denial of social reproduction to blacks under the legal systems of slavery and colonialism. In the tradition of the adventure novel, Philip portrays his hero’s suicide as a stoic and noble act, but read through the lens of the tragic mulatto in sentimental fiction, it
only makes literal the ways in which women of color in the Victorian novel faced what Orlando Patterson terms “social death.”

IV. Conclusion

In concluding with a return to Scotland, the protagonist’s “place of nativity” (8), Dinah Craik’s *Olive* emphasizes the correlation between British identity and British soil in the Victorian imaginary. Such a conception of Britishness excludes the non-white subjects of the British Empire from claims to national belonging, as the mixed-race orphan Christal Manners’ literal and narrative displacement at the end of the novel highlights. In particular, the multiracial orphan here not only embodies racial liminality, but also elucidates the ways in which nationalist narratives traditionally depend on conceptions of locatable space and place to delineate the boundaries of the nation, as well as who belongs within and who remains without. In *Emmanuel Appadoocca*, however, Maxwell Philip widens the geographic scope of British identity to incorporate the Atlantic, the nexus of slavery and colonialism. This functions as a means to both critique and explore the impact of these institutions on emerging definitions of British national identity. As Ficke suggests, Philip’s novel shifts the “terms of the debate from the legality of piracy to the legality of national laws governing the ocean and overseas colonies” (123) and imagines an “alternative community” (127) composed of men “who have disassociated themselves from any national affiliation” (125). Setting his novel aboard the liminal space of a ship and on the high seas—a space that is both isolated from and part of colonized territory—Philip not only refigures the boundaries of the nation, but also highlights the limitations of emerging conceptions of British national identity.
While both Craik’s and Philip’s novels reimagine national community and identity in such heterogeneous and alternative ways, they also reflect the impact of midcentury concerns about race and colonialism on popular and cultural representations of the British Empire. In short, neither Olive nor Emmanuel Appadocca can imagine a fully hybridized British national identity. By introducing the relation of space and place to conceptions of British identity, my readings of the narrativized displacement of the mixed-race orphan in this chapter call attention to the corresponding experience of another orphanized population—the British subject born into and inhabiting colonial outposts. In the next chapter, I turn to Rudyard Kipling’s Kim and Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm to elucidate a process of identity-formation that takes place across both time and space, reflecting the reality of colonialism itself.
Chapter Three:
The “Return” of the Native in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*

I. Introduction

In “Of Other Spaces,” Michel Foucault argues that, whereas the nineteenth century was obsessed with history, the twentieth century is “the epoch of space.” History, in Foucault’s characterization, comprises “themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world” (22). Measured by the passing and the cessation of time, by cycles and seasons, by the persistence of the past and the sluggishness of the present, history depends on the temporal and the chronological. In contrast, Foucault’s formulation of space emphasizes synchronicity, collision, and diffusion:

> We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (22)

In the epoch of space, Foucault argues, “our experience of the world”—which arguably informs the process of identity formation—shifts from a chronological process to a spatial process. Foucault defines space as physical (“the near and far” and “the side-by-side”), as well as conceptual or imagined (life as “a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein”). Although he notes the attempts of certain theories to dichotomize time and space, his own formulation suggests less an opposition between “the pious descendants of time and the
determined inhabitants of space” than a “fatal intersection” of the two, with space emerging as the more precise measure of twentieth-century experience (22).

This chapter examines Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) and Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), two novels about the formation of identity that were published at the moment of such a “fatal intersection” of time and space: the *fin de siècle*. Rather than thinking of the late Victorian era as the end of time and the beginning of space, I contend that the novels of formation that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century call for a spatio-temporal framework of analysis. The figurative collapse of time and space into one register has been suggested by historians as having its origins in late-eighteenth century thought. As David C. Lipscomb observes, developments in the study of geography beginning at the end of the eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth century led to Victorian attempts to read the passage of historical time across geographic space (55). In particular, the invention of new time-telling instruments like the chronometer, which “made it possible to measure longitude from the difference between the local time and the meridian time at the Royal Observatory Greenwich in London,” contributed to the coalescence of time and geographic space in the Victorian imaginary (56). The intersection of such a coalescence and empire building becomes most apparent in attempts, like William C. Woodbridge’s, to map the historical stages of European civilization on to different geographic spaces. In his “Moral and Political Chart,” which appears in several editions of a popular atlas published in the 1820s and 1830s, Woodbridge translates “the Scottish Enlightenment’s stage theory of social development into a five-tiered system of shading,” with “Savage” countries shaded the darkest and “Enlightened” countries radiating beams of light (56). In other words, as Lipscomb puts it, readers of Woodbridge’s chart “are given an imaginative geography that lets them measure *when* they are, in relation to those peoples living in different
stages of social development” (58). Although implicit, observations like Lipscomb’s indicate that, even within the Victorian imaginary, a spatio-temporal register of national development had begun to emerge.

By divorcing the individual’s “experience of the world” from the notion of a “long life developing through time,” Foucault offers us a way to reframe discussions of identity formation in terms that speak to the imperial concerns with contact, expansion, and space that comprised the political realities of the fin de siècle. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British Empire had acquired over ten million square miles of land, making it the largest empire, in terms of both territory and population, in history. Yet critical discussion of British identity, particularly as it was articulated in the fiction of the late Victorian era, has tended to think of the process of identity formation as “developing through [and over] time.” For example, the bildungsroman, which in its pure form presents individual development chronologically, has been described by critics such as Franco Moretti as the representative genre of nineteenth-century European experience, with the English bildungsroman, in particular, speaking “in its moment, and at the same time of its moment” (87). Indeed, since the publication of Jerome Hamilton Buckley’s seminal study of the bildungsroman in 1974, several critics have sought to define the function and impact of the genre on the narration of individual formation. Recent scholarship on the genre, however, recognizes that few novels in fact reflect every characteristic for which the genre calls. In contrast to the masculine, white, and European norm called to mind by the term “bildungsroman” (Green 8), the novels that scholars like Laura Green introduce into the conversation on the bildungsroman feature female, as well as non-white, protagonists. As Green observes, the term “bildungsroman” itself now connotes a history of “debates, distinctions, and categories” (1), and many scholars—including Green who uses the term “novel of formation” to
describe “any novel whose focus is the mental and moral growth of a character, within a specific social situation, who is positioned as the novel’s central consciousness” (2)—have moved away from using the term altogether to describe the fiction of the nineteenth century and its contemporary counterparts.

Nevertheless, some of the work of the bildungsroman, as it has been traditionally characterized, continues to inflect studies of novels of formation. In particular, for some, the growth of the protagonist remains understood as a process that unfolds over time. For example, in his study on “colonial bildungsromans,” the term that he uses to describe anti-developmental fictions set in undeveloped zones, Jed Esty focuses on the trope of stunted adolescence to argue that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the bildungsroman underwent a breakdown reflective of the uneven development of “colonial time,” a period in which progress occurs at an interrupted pace. Although redefining the genre of the bildungsroman to include novels whose protagonists never mature, Esty nevertheless describes progress in chronological terms. This chapter, then, refigures identity formation in terms more reflective of empire building, a process which occurs not only over time, but also across vast and disparate spaces. In other words, I argue that the project of empire building necessitates a new understanding of identity formation, which under colonialism calls into question national genealogies and crosses physical as well as social, cultural, and political borders.

While a spatio-temporal register allowed the Victorians to situate themselves as more developed than those with whom empire building brought them into contact, as Woodbridge’s map suggests, this chapter explores the impact of spatio-temporality on those inhabiting Woodbridge’s darkened territories as rendered in another genre of representation: what I have been calling, variously, the bildungsroman, the novel of individual formation, and the novel of
formation—in short, late Victorian fiction centered on the growth of orphan protagonists. With attention to the function of place and space in the formation of identity, this chapter extends the framework of orphanization beyond the conditions of the literal orphan to those of the “transmigrational orphan,” figures such as immigrants and colonial subjects whose national identities have been obscured in the processes of migration and deterritorialization necessitated by the project of empire making. Recent scholarship, such as Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton’s, makes clear the potentialities of extending spatial analysis to imperial formations. Understanding empire as a “self-consciously spatializing project,” Ballantyne and Burton read space as “a constitutive factor in the creation and maintenance of social, political, and cultural relations”: “imperial spaces did not emerge from either self-evident or static geographies; nor did they exist in mutual isolation,” but rather, “as the ground of consistently territorialized mobility” (2-3). In other words, the territories claimed by imperial projects became in the process of empire building more than mere physical space; they turned out to be imbued with the politics of imperialism. Criticism in Victorian studies on the function of domesticity and domestic space suggests a more specific understanding of the relationship between physical and imagined conceptions of space and national identity. For instance, Diana C. Archibald and Janet C. Myers examine in their respective studies the correlation between the middle-class ideology of domesticity and Victorian notions of national identity. By bringing together the imperial concerns of the former body of criticism and the received work of the latter, I argue in this chapter that orphanization, the unmaking and remaking of identity, unfolds not only temporally, but also spatially, with colonial spaces complicating Victorian conceptions of national identity.

Set in colonial contexts, Kipling’s *Kim* and Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* elucidate the triangulated relationship among empire, space, and national identity.
Featuring white British orphans born and assimilated, to different degrees, into culturally and politically contested spaces, the novels highlight the function of space at the fin de siècle in the mapping of identity. As novels with discernible protagonists whose mental and moral growth drive the plot, Kim and The Story of an African Farm are undoubtedly novels of formation. Yet each also belongs to other genres: Kipling’s novel is at once a picaresque and a spy novel and Schreiner’s novel has been considered a New Woman novel as well as a plaasroman (farm novel), a common genre of South African literature (Coetzee 78-9). The generic hybridity of each novel points to the breakdown at the end of the nineteenth century of attempts to represent identity formation as a chronological process culminating in a cohesive sense of self. Attention to the representation of place and space in each novel helps us to imagine processes of identity formation beyond the teleology of temporal development for which the bildungsroman in its so-called pure form calls.

Like the novels I discuss in the first and second chapters of this dissertation, Kipling’s Kim and Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm delineate the identity-unmaking of their orphaned protagonists. However, the process of orphanization in these two novels occurs across time as well as space, making clear how the genres to which they hark back evolve at the fin de siècle to reflect the expansion of the British Empire. Kipling’s novel, in particular, features a protagonist whose lack of both a family and a fixed abode figures his orphanhood as not only conceptual, but also spatial. Kim’s physical unmooring allows him to slip easily through the proverbial cracks of the imperial system, suggesting that, in many ways, Kipling’s novel is a fantasy about imperial spaces. While Kim imagines physical space as mobilizing, The Story of an African Farm locates possibility in what I call “psychical” space. Citing the work of Gaston Bachelard and phenomenologists, Foucault observes that we live
in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below, of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or a space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal. (23)

Characterized by fluidity and multiplicity, internal space, here, refers not only to literal interiority—the spaces of our primary perception, our dreams, and our passions—but also to a conception of spatiality in contradistinction to the fixity of physical spaces. Thinking of space as both physical and psychical extends the application of spatial analysis to the psychical impact of imperial formations on the transmigrational orphan. Focusing on the lives of two orphans—Lyndall, the daughter of English settlers, and Waldo, the son of a German farmer—Schreiner’s novel locates possibility in psychical spaces like Lyndall and Waldo’s ideals.29

In this chapter, I examine the significance of place and space—as illuminated by the exigencies of empire, emigration, and migration—through the framework of orphanization to argue for a shift in the work of Victorian fiction at the fin de siècle from temporal to spatio-temporal conceptions of identity. If, as Foucault suggests, the nineteenth-century obsession with history gave way to twentieth-century concerns with space, then the fin de siècle witnessed the emergence of a spatio-temporal register for conceptualizing the relationship of the individual to the world.

29 In the Victorian era, the connotations of “cosmopolitanism” ranged from “the pejorative to the progressive” (391). Tanya Agathocleous and Jason R. Rudy observe that the term “evokes the relationship between individual and society, or that between city (polis) and world” (392). Scholars such as Lauren Goodlad, Bruce Robbins, and James Buzard explore “how cosmopolitanism acts as a touchstone for issues recently at the heart of Victorian studies: the intersection of ethics and liberalism; nationalism and gender; imperialism and capitalism” (393).
II. Imperial Fantasy and the Identity of Space

Set in colonial India, Kipling’s novel *Kim* embodies characteristics of the bildungsroman, the picaresque, and Victorian adventure fiction. The novel’s confused plot reflects its generic hybridity. In summary, *Kim* follows the title protagonist, an Irish orphan raised on the streets of Lahore, as he travels across colonial India on a series of loosely related adventures, including serving as a guide to a Tibetan lama, reuniting with his father’s former regiment, and becoming a spy for the British in the Great Game, a term used to describe the nineteenth-century struggle between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for control of Central Asia. Whereas the opening image of Kim sitting “in defiance of municipal orders” astride a gun on display outside of the Lahore Museum presents him as his own person, in the course of the plot, Kim becomes a contested site between the British Colonel Creighton and the Tibetan lama: the vested interest of each in Kim’s education—that is, in the cultivation of his mind and body—positions his moral and physical growth at the center of the plot, suggesting that, at least in part, Kipling’s novel falls under the umbrella of the bildungsroman. However, as Esty notes, Kim never matures, a fact reflected in the novel’s ambiguous ending in which two characters debate the shape of Kim’s future while Kim himself recovers from an illness. On the other hand, the picaresque nature of the novel brings into relief the colonial backdrop against which Kim’s development occurs. I argue that the generic hybridity of Kipling’s novel illuminates the impact of colonial space on the fragmentation of its protagonist’s identity. This section thus focuses on *Kim* to call attention to the function of space on the process of identity-formation, particularly for the transmigrational orphan who wanders across deterritorialized and reterritorialized space.

The first chapter of the novel begins to explicate Kim’s orphanization—the unmaking of his familial, national, and even racial identifications. The opening image of Kim likens him to a
colonialist: “since the English held the Punjab and Kim was English” (1), Kim wrestles control of the “Zam-Zammeh” from an Indian boy. Indeed, the narrator emphasizes Kim’s Englishness in contradistinction to his other characteristics: “Though he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his mother tongue in a clipped uncertain singsong; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar; Kim was white—a poor white of the very poorest” (1). Contrasted with his physical “blackness,” Kim’s whiteness refers to a cohesive understanding of identity centered on national affiliation.\(^{30}\) In other words, Kim is white because he is English, rather than because of his skin color or other physical traits. However, Kipling also makes clear the tenuousness of his protagonist’s Englishness. For example, the only proof of Kim’s Englishness lies in the documents that he wears in a “leather amulet-case” (3) around his neck. The “half-caste” woman who has raised Kim since his parents’ deaths recognizes the import of Kim’s papers, but her distrust of the English officials, whom she knows will place Kim in an orphanage, keeps him among the “natives.” That Kim’s father was an Irishman, at a time when Ireland was considered a colony in the British Empire, makes even more pronounced the paradox of the opening chapter’s insistence on Kim’s Englishness. In short, the novel depicts Kim as English only to then unmake such a conception of his identity.

Kipling also establishes an association between identity and space early in the novel. When Kim first meets the lama, for example, Kim considers him an object of interest that he means “to investigate further: precisely as he would have investigated a new building or a strange festival in Lahore city” (19-20). Likened to “new” and “strange” spaces, the lama represents, for Kim, unfamiliar territory—to be explored and conquered. Although the scene seems to reinforce Kim as colonialist, Kim himself becomes objectified: that the plot eventually

\(^{30}\) Kim’s familiarity the English language also identifies him as both white and British.
centers on the contest between the lama and Colonel Creighton for “possession” and “use” of Kim figures him as territory to be similarly made and unmade. Indeed, as Colonel Creighton, also an ethnologist and a spy, explains: “All we Ethnological men are as jealous as jackdaws of one another’s discoveries. They’re of no interest to any one but ourselves, of course, but you know what book-collectors are like. Well, don’t say a word, directly or indirectly, about the Asiatic side of the boy’s character—his adventures and his prophecy, and so on. I’ll worm them out of the boy later on and—you see?” (179). Kim’s hybridity makes him an object of interest to Colonel Creighton, who recognizes that Kim’s familiarity with colonial India will enable him to become an adept spy for the British. Yet Colonel Creighton also wants to rid Kim of his “Asiatic side,” by which Creighton means the lama and his teachings, in order to impose on Kim a “pure” British identity. How Colonel Creighton presents Kim in this passage—as a discovery and a pawn—reflects in miniature how the novel occasionally figures its protagonist: as a site onto which to map certain identities.

While the figure of Kim reflects a blank canvas, the spaces across which he travels seem to possess particular national identities. A bazaar, which Kipling describes as “roaring,” serves as the backdrop for Kim’s introduction to the lama (6). As Kim observes the lama, Kipling draws on the language of the bazaar to describe Kim’s registering of the stranger: “not one fold of [his clothing] could Kim refer to any known trade or profession”; the lama’s “face was yellow and wrinkled, like that of Fook Shing, the Chinese bootmaker in the bazar” (6-7). Familiar with the space, as well as the workings, of the Motee Bazar, Kim volunteers to beg for the lama, “trot[ting] off to the open shop of a Kunjri, a low-caste vegetable-seller...[who knows] Kim of old” (21). While in the bazaar, Kim gets into a scuffle with a “huge mouse-coloured Brahminee bull...shouldering his way through the many-coloured crowd” (22). The shopkeepers reward
Kim with an abundance of food for driving away the bull. The scene not only exemplifies the picaresque genre of the novel, but also establishes Kim as a fixture of the bazaar. Despite Kipling’s description of the Motee Bazar as “roaring” and “many-coloured,” the space in fact represents what Kipling repeatedly stereotypes as Kim’s “Asiatic side”—not only his familiarity with the local places, but also his ability to adapt to them. Kim navigates the bazaar like a native. In contrast, the regimental camp that Kim stumbles across on his journey with the lama seems strange to him. Expecting a shrine to stand “in so eligible a spot,” Kim and the lama watch in secret as the British soldiers set up camp. Kipling’s description calls to mind an imperial claim: “Another rush of men invaded the grove, pitched a huge tent in silence, ran up yet eight or nine more by the side of it, unearthed cooking-pots, pans, and bundles, which were taken possession of by a crowd of native servants; and behold the mango-tope turned into an orderly town as they watched!” (128). What was only minutes before a “broad tract of grazing-ground” (125)—in Kim’s mind almost holy ground, fit for a shrine—transforms into a colonial outpost before Kim’s and the lama’s eyes. Kipling draws on the language of imperialism, describing the organization as an “invasion” and “unearthing” of colonial land by the British soldiers.

When the chaplains of the camp discover Kim’s identity, they debate between themselves whether to keep Kim with the regiment or to send him to school: the revelation of Kim’s British origins, in effect, consigns him to the custody of the leaders of the regiment, who attempt to claim him for the British in the same way that they have claimed the field for their camp. Kim’s protestations that he has already committed himself as a disciple to the lama go unheard. The lama seems confused by the revelation: “‘A Sahib and the son of a Sahib—’ The lama’s voice was harsh with pain. ‘But no white man knows the land and the customs of the land as thou knowest. How comes it this is true?’” (144). Again, Kipling makes an association between
national identity and land, in particular knowledge of the land. Although Kim promises the lama that he will only pretend to follow the chaplains’ orders and plans to run away in a few days, his sense of his own subjectivity proves idealistic. Rather than deciding his future for himself, he unwittingly becomes caught in a contest between the lama, who claims him as a disciple, and the regiment, which claims him for the British.

However, the constant making and unmaking of Kim’s identity at the hands of others—and as he travels from one place to another—unfixes stable categorizations of identity in the novel. *Kim* repeatedly undermines the fixedness of the essentialized categories of national and racial identity articulated by characters like Colonel Creighton. I argue that Kim’s constant mobility—his refusal to remain in one place—not only reflects his refusal to identify as either British (a “Sahib”) or “Asiatic,” but also reinforces how space figures in the novel’s articulation of the search for identity. While excelling at the English school in Lucknow, for example, Kim remains in contact with the lama and continually sneaks off with him on adventures for which the school administrators punish him. Described by Father Victor, the Catholic chaplain, as “the best schooling a boy can get in India” (149), St. Xavier’s, the school at Lucknow, serves as an alternative to the local orphanages to which Kim seems destined. The school, according to Father Victor, would afford Kim more freedom of choice than the Military Orphanage: “if ye go to St. Xavier’s ye’ll get a better education an’—an’ can have your choice of religions” (166). Yet in private, Father Victor imagines that the school would “cure” Kim of his native tendencies (177). Similarly, Colonel Creighton tells Kim that “They’ll make a man o’ you, O’Hara, at St. Xavier’s—a white man, an’, I hope, a good man” (186). Geographically, the “great old school,” composed of “block on block of low white buildings, stands in vast grounds over against the Gumti river, at some distance from the city” of Lucknow (191). St. Xavier’s, then, not only
represents an English space in colonial India, but also contributes to the reproduction of Englishness in the colony. However, it is the lama who undertakes to pay for Kim’s education at the school, subverting Father Victor’s and Colonel Creighton’s hopes to “rid” Kim of his “Asiatic side.” Rhadika Mohanram notes that, “If Kim’s body is essentialised, it is its reshaping from its geographical surroundings, its autochthony that the text emphasizes” (266). Mohanram’s observation situates Kim as indigenous to colonial India, as not only shaped by but in fact a part of his geographical surroundings. However, attention to the distinction between Kim’s essentialized body and its ability to be “reshaped” makes clear the function of space in the unfixing of Kim’s identity and also suggests that, like the “great, gray, formless [geography of colonial] India” (150), Kim’s identity, in fact, remains in flux.

In the course of the narrative, Kim undergoes multiple crises of identity. Prompted by relocation, removal, emplacement, and displacement—in other words, by the mobility necessitated by his adventures—Kim’s psychical “breakdowns” suggest the permanence of his destabilization. One such breakdown occurs after he finishes his education at St. Xavier’s:

“Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?”

He squatted in a corner of the clanging waiting-room, rapt from all other thoughts; hands folded in lap, and pupils contracted to pin-points. In a minute—in another half second—he felt he would arrive at the solution of the tremendous puzzle; but here, as always happens, his mind dropped away from those heights with the rush of a wounded bird, and passing his hand before his eyes, he shook his head. (296)

With a revolver hidden in his clothes, the amulet containing his documents around his neck, and a begging-gourd and rosary at hand, Kim sits surrounded by the material evidence of his multiple identities (English spy, Irish orphan, and Indian boy). The scene not only suggests the
incompatibility of the different identities that Kim has adopted throughout the novel; it also
demonstrates the instability of each conception of identity. The question that seems to have been
the driving force of the narrative continues to plague Kipling’s protagonist and, “as always
happens,” the novel falls short of answering it. Instead, as in this passage, Kipling’s novel ends
on a note of uncertainty, reinforcing not only the irreducibility of Kim’s identity, but also the
placelessness of the transmigrational orphan.

III. Second-Generation Emigrants and the Collapse of Domestic Spaces

In the fluidity of its mobile protagonist’s identity, however, Kipling’s novel presents a
certain kind of freedom for which the characters in Schreiner’s novel must fight. Published in
1883 and set in the second half of the nineteenth century, Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an
African Farm* centers on the lives of second-generation European settlers in the Karoo region of
the South African colonies. Making up two-thirds of the South African landmass, the Karoo,
geographically, consists of extensive rock formations and “wide sandy plains” (Schreiner 11). In
the middle of the nineteenth century, the introduction of a railway altered its landscape—not
only physically, but also politically—and with the onset of the Second Anglo-Boer War, the
Karoo would become the site of many Dutch victories over the British. Historically, the region
was predominantly inhabited by Dutch settlers. However, given Schreiner’s focus on English and
English-speaking characters, I read the novel within the context of Victorian emigration and
settlement to examine the impact of such reterritorialization on the identities of second-
generation immigrants. As Denis Judd and Keith Surridge observe, British immigrants to the
region defined themselves against the native Africans, as well as the already-settled Dutch (2).
Second-generation British settlers in South Africa, then, negotiated multiple identities—British,
South African, colonizer, colonial subject—embodies the oftentimes competing identities that, together, emplace and displace the transmigrational orphan.

Beginning in the 1830s, British emigration policies encouraged the redistribution of British subjects across vast spaces and, as I argue, contributed to the redefinition of British identity along spatial lines. As emigrants to colonial outposts, such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, settled into unfamiliar surroundings, they sought to maintain their ties to Great Britain while at the same time adopting identities more suitable to their new spaces. Such negotiations, as several critics have pointed out, play out in Victorian fiction, wherein the figure of the emigrant appears frequently.\textsuperscript{31} Exploring representations of emigration in Victorian literature, publications like emigration guides, and correspondence, Myers notes that “what is at stake in representations of colonial success or failure in Australia is nothing less than the integrity of British identity, and at times, of the British nation itself” (4). In the face of an ever-increasing empire, emigrants maintained a cohesive understanding of Britishness by transporting the middle-class ideology of domesticity to the colonies. As Archibald writes: “During the nineteenth century as millions of British citizens left England for the New Worlds, hearth and home were physically moved from the heart of the empire to its very outskirts. This dispersal, however, does not result in any overt ideological movement away from the imperial center. Home remains fundamentally English” (6). In other words, the reproduction of domesticity abroad served to preserve a cohesive—albeit impossible—notion of British identity. More recently, Karen Chase and Michael Levenson recast the critically accepted interrelation of Victorian middle-class conceptions of domesticity and national identity in spatial terms. Chase and Levenson identify “an eager desire for domesticity and nationality to cleave together” (3) in the introductory pages of the 1851 census report, the second of the census reports conducted by

\textsuperscript{31} For further discussions of Victorian emigration, see Archibald, Myers, and Rita S. Kranidis.
the United Kingdom and the first to attempt a definition of the family.\textsuperscript{32} The language that the census report uses to fix a definition of the family borrows from the “circumambient culture, with all the talk of ‘shrines’ and ‘command’ and ‘Englishness’” (5), in short, representing the family—the center of domesticity—as a microcosmic community, with a patriarchal head of household, and women, children, and servants as attendant members.\textsuperscript{33} Although not available to the public until 1912, the 1851 census report was one of the many ways in which the Victorians blurred the lines between private life and the public sphere, by exposing the spatial and psychical interiority of the family to public scrutiny. As Chase and Levenson note, “The controlling insight was that a family was at once a spatial and social unit, according to the principle that it is ‘so much in the order of nature that a family should live in a separate house that a “house” is often used for family in many languages’” (qtd. in Chase and Levenson 4).\textsuperscript{34}

While Myers, Archibald, and others have concentrated on the work of first-generation emigrants in the colonial maintenance of British identity, this section focuses on the offspring of emigrants and their complicated relationship with the imperial center. Rather than maintenance, second-generation immigrants must negotiate, create, or take on new and different identities: as opposed to moving from one space to another, such figures are born and raised into spaces with already shifting cultural and political borders. The domestic makeup of Schreiner’s novel suggests that, for the second-generation immigrant, the Victorian conception of home must

\textsuperscript{32} The 1851 census report counted not only people, but also households, a project that “turned on the studious labor of defin[ing]” what constituted a family, a house, etc. (Chase and Levenson 4).

\textsuperscript{33} In their study, which examines publications ranging from novels to government reports, Chase and Levenson discuss how the 1851 census report, along with other representations of the Victorian family, complicates its own attempts at fixity by recognizing anomalies.

\textsuperscript{34} The 1851 census report’s definition of the family as a spatial unit—an enclosed community made public by the aims of the census report itself—not only refixes domesticity in terms of space, but also points to the affectivity that underpins places otherwise thought to be secondary to, rather than interdependent with, their inhabitants. In other words, the house as a physical space and the home as an affective abstraction work in conjunction to form the Victorian conception of the family.
compete with other markers of national identity. That is, the space of the home must compete with other, colonial spaces.

As the keepers of home and hearth, women in the colonies were expected to reproduce—both ideologically and biologically—the domestic makeup of the imperial center. In the South African colonies, in particular, where the majority of the emigrant population was male, the emigration of white women became a means of strengthening the British Empire. In the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer Wars, female emigration was considered a patriotic activity—rhetoric which was reinforced by publications and annual meetings of the South African Colonisation Society—helping to domesticate the existing emigrant population and, thereby, establish English domesticity in the colony. Schreiner’s novel, which takes place sometime before the Second Anglo-Boer War, at the end of the nineteenth century, anticipates the concerns that underpinned these policies. Featuring an English female protagonist, The Story of an African Farm suggests the difficulty of transferring ideological conceptions of identity across vast spaces by calling into question the expected role of emigrant women and the offspring of emigrants. While the consolidation of British identity and empire building seem to complement one another, Schreiner’s novel reveals their incompatibility through its attention to the conflicting spaces associated with each project.

If the reproduction of middle-class domesticity was necessary to the replication of British identity across the empire, Schreiner’s novel makes clear the ways in which certain colonial spaces and their attendant sociopolitical conditions resist such efforts to maintain the Victorian conception of home by articulating a domestic space in collapse. In this section, I read space as not only the physical setting of Schreiner’s novel—the passive backdrop to the narrative of her

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35 In fact, at the turn of the century (1901-1910), the Colonial Office collaborated with emigration societies in sending single women to the Transvaal, a heavily contested region of South Africa.
characters’ lived experience—but also as an entity in and of itself, imbued with the imperial politics that dictate its use. The space of the farm is not only domestic, but also inherently colonial, contested and oppressive. The opening chapters of *The Story of an African Farm*, I argue, demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, the project of empire building necessitates the breakdown of the things that define the nexus of British culture: namely, domesticity as both an ideology and a spatial experience. In my reading of domesticity in Schreiner’s novel, I challenge such a conception of home by arguing that the domestic space of the novel, the farmstead, functions dually as a colonial space that destabilizes definitions of the family, intimacy, and domesticity. *The Story of an African Farm* opens with a description, which reads almost like an inventory, of the farmstead:

First, the stone-walled ‘sheep kraals’ and Kaffir huts; beyond them the dwelling-house—a square red-brick building with thatched roof. Even on its bare red walls, and the wooden ladder that led up to the loft, the moonlight cast a kind of dreamy beauty, and quite etherealized the low brick wall that ran before the house, and which enclosed a bare patch of sand and two straggling sunflowers. On the zinc roof of the great open waggon-house, on the roofs of the outbuildings that jutted from its side, the moonlight glinted with a quite peculiar brightness, till it seemed that every rib in the metal was of burnished silver. (1)

Divided into different units—sheep pens, huts inhabited by the “native” Kaffirs, and the geometrically distinct “square red-brick building” of the main house—the farmstead appears as a microcosmic community, with a spatial hierarchy that positions the sheep and the natives at the outskirts. In its replication of the spatial unit of a community, the space of the farmstead at first glance hints at the progress and modernity that informs the rhetoric of imperialism. Here is
empire, cast as “a kind of dreamy beauty.” Yet such development turns out to be only a façade; the moonlight obscures the bare facts of the farmstead: that it is “bare” and “straggling,” constructed of cheap materials rather than the “burnished silver” imagined in the passage. In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee observes that “[t]he farm of Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm*…seems to lie outside history, outside society. But this is true only to the extent that the Cape Colony itself lies outside history; otherwise the farm mimics the idleness, ignorance, and greed of colonial society” (4). As the only sign of life amid “the solemn monotony of the plain” (Schreiner 1), the farm appears disconnected from the larger concerns of empire—lying “outside history, outside society”—but as the passage indicates, it in fact embodies “colonial society,” particularly at the spatial level.

Within the walls of the main house, the veneer of domesticity disintegrates even more rapidly. As the narrative enters the “dwelling-house,” we discover that the matriarchal figure presiding over the titular farm is not an Englishwoman, but a Boer-woman, who has inherited the property of her late “second husband, the consumptive Englishman” (2). The characterization of Tant’ Sannie’s late husband as consumptive, in contradistinction to the description of Tant’ Sannie herself as corpulent and greedy, suggests the respective positions of the English and the Boers in South Africa following the First Anglo-Boer War. The introductory pages of the novel, then, render the space of the farm as territory that has passed from the proprietorship of an Englishman to a Boer-woman, reflecting in miniature the contest between the British Empire and the Boers for land already inhabited by natives who have now been relegated to the periphery. However, as the narrative literally enters another room of the main house, we learn that Tant’ Sannie only temporarily possesses the farm, overseeing it until her stepdaughter, Em, comes of age. Schreiner’s description of Tant’ Sannie as a “Boer-woman,” a term used to denote a “Dutch-
speaking colonist in South Africa,” especially “one engaged in agriculture or cattle-farming” (OED), indicates the character’s national genealogy. Transliterated into English as “boor,” Tant’ Sannie’s identification as a “Boer” also indicates her omission from the cosmopolitan ideal Schreiner’s protagonists associate with spaces other than the colonies. Given her national genealogy and her interim proprietorship, the Boer-woman’s performance of domesticity, or lack thereof, is independent of the middle-class ideology that links domesticity to British identity. Instead, I argue, Tant’ Sannie performs, albeit rather ineptly, the function of a colonialist, treating the children under her care—the orphaned protagonists of the novel, Em, her cousin Lyndall, and the German overseer’s son, Waldo, who loses his father in the course of the narrative—as though they are her subjects, along with the Kaffir servants, whom the narrative in fact infantilizes. The novel, then, anticipates the restoration of middle-class domesticity and British identity in Em’s inheritance of the farm. Yet, as Esty notes, the children in The Story of an African Farm never come of age, suggesting that, as the next generation of immigrants takes over, the distance between the colonies and the imperial center widens. Turning my attention to Em’s cousin, Lyndall, who is both orphaned and landless, I argue that empire building requires a new conception of English identity—one which unmakes the received association between domesticity and Englishness. Doubly orphaned, the character of Lyndall allows us to explore the process of unmaking identity that informs the novel.

“[E]lfin-like” (2), Lyndall seems out of place on the farm, particularly in her desire to transcend it. Telling Em that, while Em will inherit the farm at seventeen, she herself “will have nothing,” Lyndall rejects Em’s childishly generous offer of sheep and declares:

“I want things of my own. When I am grown up,” she added, the flush on her delicate features deepening at every word, “there will be nothing that I do not know. I shall be
rich, very rich; and I shall wear not only for best, but every day, a pure white silk, and little rose-buds, like the lady in Tant’ Sannie’s bed-room, and my petticoats will be embroidered, not only at the bottom, but all through.” (12)

An image from a “fashion-sheet” (12), the lady to whom Lyndall refers serves as an example of material success for Schreiner’s young protagonist—an aristocratic ideal, whose “pure white silk” and “little rose-buds” also bespeak an ideal of English femininity. However, Lyndall’s desire to know everything—she imagines knowledge to be the foundation of her future wealth—requires her to leave the farm and to join the world. Lyndall, then, imagines a “grown up” identity that defies the middle-class domestic ideology that confines women to the home and associates English identity with acquired wealth, cosmopolitanism, and knowledge—in short, everything denied to the colonial subjects of Schreiner’s novel by the provincialism of their surroundings.

For the young Lyndall, English identity represents an escape from the spatially and psychically confining life of the farm. Her dream of social mobility thus requires actual mobility—the ability to physically leave the farm. While the cousins are both orphaned, the promise of an inheritance fixes Em to the farm: she cannot imagine a life or a future off of the farmstead. On the other hand, Lyndall’s genealogical lack combines with her geographic rootlessness to enable not only her physical mobility, but also her ability to imagine spaces beyond the ones with which she is already familiar. Before leaving for boarding school, Lyndall conceives of school as a space of psychical growth, where she will become “very wise” and “know everything” (12). In the same way that she thinks of the farm as having already shaped Em’s future, Lyndall attaches a particular identity to the school—an identity which she will take on once she enters the space of the school. The formation of identity—a process implied in the
two girls’ discussion of their future lives—thus becomes spatially informed. However, as her failure to become the aristocratic ideal that she imagined as a child suggests, the particular identity that she attaches to the imagined space of the school is discordant with the colonial spaces that she inhabits. In other words, what enables her physical mobility simultaneously constrains her social mobility, making clear the ways in which imaginative (psychical) and geographic (political, colonial, territorial) spaces conflict in Schreiner’s novel. As a second-generation immigrant in a place to which she has no proprietary claims, Lyndall is doubly marginalized, unable to claim belonging among the community of South African settlers or within the conceptual spaces of the imperial center.

For Lyndall, the colonial spaces of the farmstead, the school, and even the Transvaal preclude the formation of an identity so indistinguishable from the aristocratic ideal to which she strives. While the spaces that she imagines inhabiting are fluid, the ones to which she is actually confined are fixed, as are the identities associated with them. For example, when she comes back to the farm after having spent four years at a finishing school, Lyndall observes: “Strange to go away for four years, and come back, and find that the candle standing on the dressing-table still cast the shadow of an old crone’s head in the corner beyond the clothes-horse. Strange that even a shadow should last longer than man!” (149). The image of the “old crone’s head” promises an end—a teleological maturity that the permanence of the room precludes: the shadow will always remain, confirming both the immutability of the Karoo and the inability of the characters to “develop” while confined to the farm. Lyndall’s observations reinforce the incongruity of the novel’s characters’ desires and the exigencies of the colonial context in which they find themselves.
On her return, Waldo observes that Lyndall has changed. Yet the novel neither narrates her development temporally nor delineates the space of the boarding school. Instead, Schreiner presents the school as taking up only textual space—that is, in its absence from the geography of the novel, it nevertheless occupies space in Lyndall’s narrative. Lyndall imagines, inhabits, and, ultimately, dismisses the boarding school as a place that “finish[es] everything but imbecility and weakness” (152). Thus, it is neither the passing of time nor exposure to the space of the school over the course of four years, but rather the ways in which time and space together work on her development that enacts Lyndall’s transformation. The novel, then, articulates a process of identity-formation that reflects the collapse of time and space necessitated by empire: Lyndall’s transformation occurs over four years and across different spaces, but the narrative fixes its geographic setting on the farm, giving the illusion that time has stood still. Notably, Schreiner’s novel only briefly conceptualizes other spaces, including the more abstract spaces of the orphans’ thoughts, desires, and doubts. Whatever occurs off-stage, so to speak, becomes clear only in a retelling and in a return to the farm.

IV. Physical Mobility and Psychical Space

In a scene that challenges the Victorian narrative of the “fallen woman,” Lyndall tells her lover: “I cannot marry you…because I cannot be tied; but, if you wish, you may take me away

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36 The chapter in which Lyndall describes her four years away also signals a generic shift—from bildungsroman to New Woman novel—as Lyndall calls attention to not only the restrictive roles allotted to women, but also to the futility of trying to change. She has discovered that the school is yet another site designed to keep women in a state of perpetual adolescence: “They are called finishing schools, and the name tells accurately what they are. They finish everything but imbecility and weakness, and that they cultivate” (152). As critics like David, Meyer, and Kranidis have argued, the discourse of empire is inextricably linked to gender concerns. Figured as an adolescent space, the school serves to ensure that its students remain children forever, almost in the same way that the imperial project precludes the growth of colonial subjects. The confining space of the school becomes a reflection of how finishing schools stunt the development of women at the fin de siècle. The novel’s New Woman concerns, then, serve as another illustration of the spatio-temporal collapse at work in the narrative, as well as in the Victorian imaginary in general.
with you, and take care of me; then when we do not love any more we can say good-bye. I will not go down country…I will not go to Europe. You must take me to the Transvaal. That is out of the world. People we meet there we need not see again in our future lives” (206). Having become pregnant with her aristocratic lover’s child, Lyndall now faces a difficult decision: marry the recently hired farm-keeper, a man whom she considers a fool (205), or “go away” with the father of her illegitimate child. Few Victorian “fallen women,” real or fictional, could choose their fates, and Lyndall’s proposal describes the paths that some, like Dickens’ Little Em’ly, were forced to take. However, rather than fleeing to the country or Europe, Lyndall imagines an alternative recourse—escape to a place that is “out of the world.” In the course that Lyndall imagines her life taking, the Transvaal falls in between her childhood on the farm and her “future life.” An interlude in Lyndall’s chronology, the Transvaal also straddles figurations of space: as a contested territory between the British and the Dutch at the time of the novel’s publication, the Transvaal is a physical place, consisting of land whose resources made it colonially desirable. Simultaneously, as a place in which Lyndall can remake herself, the Transvaal represents what I described in the introduction to this chapter as “psychical space”: Lyndall conceives of it as not only a space of anonymity, but also possibility. The Transvaal conceptualizes Lyndall’s liminality as a figure in between literal spaces and figurative places.

The scene also emphasizes the disjuncture between the expansive possibility that Lyndall attaches to her understanding of the world—a “future life” beyond the anonymity of spaces like the Transvaal—and the confined and defined interior of the cabin in which she rendezvous with her lover. The scene elucidates the two conceptions of space operating in Schreiner’s novel: the infinite, interiorized, and intimate space of Lyndall’s desires and the delineated space of her physical surroundings. In particular, the scene elucidates the relationship between space and
national identity: the contrast between the cabin’s “little room,” with its “unused hearth” and “black rafters,” and the “delicately penciled, drooping eyelids,” white hands, and “heavy flaxen moustache” of Lyndall’s English lover, for instance, suggests the incongruity of the setting of the farm and the elegance of the unnamed Englishman, who represents a leisurely ideal inextricable from his English identity (202). Like her lover, Lyndall seems out of place in the spaces of the farm; the cosmopolitan ideal that she imagines for her “future life” is not only incompatible with, but also unrealizable within such spaces. In the Victorian era, the connotations of “cosmopolitanism” ranged from “the pejorative to the progressive” (391). Tanya Agathocleous and Jason R. Rudy observe that the term “evokes the relationship between individual and society, or that between city (polis) and world” (392). Scholars such as Lauren Goodlad, Bruce Robbins, and James Buzard explore “how cosmopolitanism acts as a touchstone for issues recently at the heart of Victorian studies: the intersection of ethics and liberalism; nationalism and gender; imperialism and capitalism” (393).

Described by Foucault as “fantasmatic,” the internal space represented by Lyndall’s desires demonstrates how Schreiner’s novel figures space in multiple ways: as not only physical, but also psychical. Whereas physical space is geographically fixed, psychical space is fluid. The Story of an African Farm highlights the tensions between the two and suggests that we must turn to alternative (psychical) spaces to locate the possibility of subjectivity for the marginalized populations represented by the figure of the transmigrational orphan. Thus far, this chapter has been concerned with the limitations of physical space. In this section, I extend Foucault’s articulation of internal space, to focus on an alternative location of subjectivity in psychical space. If Lyndall’s fate points to the unidirectionality of national identity, turning our attention to
Waldo, the novel’s other orphan protagonist, provides us with an alternative conception of space, one rooted in the “fantasmatic” described by Foucault.

The interiorized narrative of Waldo’s crisis of faith, which occurs across several chapters, represents a different kind of space in Schreiner’s novel. Entitled “Times and Seasons,” the first chapter of Part II of *The Story of an African Farm*, compresses the passing of three years, one of the most significant temporal shifts in the novel, into the space of one chapter. Divided into seven chronologically ordered vignettes, “Times and Seasons” presents the stages of Waldo’s spiritual crisis as a collective experience: opening with the image of an older Waldo lying on his stomach in the sand, the chapter then shifts from third-person narration to first-person plural, figuring the process of Waldo’s development as universal. “Times and Seasons” thus collapses temporal and spatial experiences into a single register—first, by recasting temporality in spatial terms and, second, by figuring individual experience as collective. Whereas the Victorian trend of narrating time in geographic terms maps time onto physical spaces, the kind of space that Schreiner’s novel articulates here rethinks of space in two different ways: as not only the textual space of the novel, but also the psychic space of an imaginary undergoing transition. In the shift to the third-person plural “we,” the narrator observes that,

> in the world to come time is not measured out by months and years. Neither is it here. The soul’s life has seasons of its own; periods not found in any calendar, times that years and months will not scan, but which are as deftly and sharply cut off from one another as the smoothly-arranged years which the earth’s motion yields us. (101)

Imaging a futurity in which time becomes chronologically impossible, the passage attaches this new conception of temporality to the seemingly immeasurable soul. With “seasons of its own,” which “years and months will not scan,” the soul, here, is rendered in spatial terms: “deftly and
sharply cut off from one another,” each of the soul’s seasons seems to border on one another, while simultaneously existing in a vast space independent of each other. Similarly, while the passage hints that the experience of the “soul’s life” may be universal, the chapter vacillates between universal and individual experience, suggesting that souls may collide with one another in such a space. The following paragraph draws even more apparently on spatial language to describe the demarcations of a “soul’s life”: “To stranger eyes these divisions are not evident; but each looking back at the little track of his consciousness illuminates, sees it cut into distinct portions, whose boundaries are the termination of mental states” (101). Individual, as well as demarcated, every soul’s life now seems spatially measurable. Not only does the passage make clear the introduction of a spatio-temporal register of individual experience, but it also carves out a new understanding of space as psychical—physically unidentifiable but rather with its own “seasons” and “boundaries.”

Compared with Lyndall’s geographical journey, Waldo’s psychical development concludes on a hopeful note:

And so, it comes to pass in time, that the earth ceases for us to be a weltering chaos. We walk in the great hall of life, looking up and round reverentially. Nothing is despicable—all is meaning-full; nothing is small—all is part of a whole, whose beginning and end we know not. The life that throbs in us is a pulsation from it; too mighty for our comprehension, not too small. And so, it comes to pass at last, that whereas the sky was at first a small blue rag stretched out over us, and so low that our hands might touch it, pressing down on us, it raises itself into an immeasurable blue arch over our heads, and we begin to live again. (118)
The passage refigures life in spatial terms—a “great hall” and “part of a whole, whose beginning and end we know not”—while distinguishing individual experience (the “life that throbs in us”) in ways that imagine such spaces as interior, imbued with movement (“pulsation”), and fantasmatic (“too mighty for our comprehension”). Further, where physical spaces seem to close in on Schreiner’s orphans, psychical space is “immeasurable” and productive, enabling them “to live again.” Breaking up the chronology of the traditional bildungsroman, “Times and Seasons” contains within a narrow textual space the development of an entire “soul’s life” and, thereby, rethinks identity-formation as a process involving the psychical collision of conflicting desires and the physical collision of souls across vast spaces. Beginning with Foucault’s articulation of physical space as enabling the “simultaneity,” “juxtaposition,” and “dispersal” of experience across a “network that connects points and intersects with its own skein,” I suggest that the delineation between physical and psychical space illuminates the actual limitations of the former and the possibilities offered by the latter. As I observed earlier in this chapter, in contrast to the restrictive and immutable space of Schreiner’s farm, the space of her protagonists’ “dreams” and “passions”—the space of their “primary perceptions”—is boundless and ever-changing.

However, the colonial situatedness of Schreiner’s orphans delimits the forms of subjectivity glimpsed by the “Times and Seasons” chapter. Grounded in their desires to transcend the limitations of the space of the farm, the interiorized forms of subjectivity offered to Lyndall and Waldo in the novel’s fantasmatic conceptions of space translate into physical mobility. In other words, it is not enough, even for Waldo, to be psychically free. Like Lyndall, Waldo feels compelled by his desires (to travel, see the world, find work [182]) to leave the farm and to embark on a journey to find himself, so to speak. Despite Lyndall’s seasoned warning that “the desire to become, to know, to do…is a poison, not a food” (185), Waldo “goes out to taste
life,” unaware of Lyndall’s own plan to run away with her English lover, and disappears temporarily from the space of the narrative. As with Lyndall’s four years at school, Waldo’s two years away from the farm seem independent of the novel’s chronology. His recounting of his travels, in a letter to Lyndall, serves as another example of how the novel collapses time and space into a single register. On his return to the farm, unaware that Lyndall has died, Waldo immediately begins to write to her, compressing almost two years into an “Unfinished Letter,” which comprises a single chapter of the novel. The letter introduces geographical spaces and physical places as confining as the storage-room in which Waldo sleeps for several months, as unstable as the wagons that he helps to transport, and as vast as the sea that disappoints him. The different spaces that Waldo describes not only correspond to the menial positions that he takes off of the farm—as a salesman, as a transport-rider, and at a wholesale store, packing and unpacking boxes—but also signify the impact of physical space on Waldo’s psyche. At the end of his two years away, Waldo comes to the realization that: “You may work a man so that all but the animal in him is gone; and that grows stronger with physical labour. You may work a man till he is a devil. I know it, because I have felt it. You will never understand the change that came over me. No one but I will ever know how great it was” (223). The spaces in which he has resided not only reflect, but also shape him into the stranger that wanders back up the kopje. If Kim’s adventures demonstrate his physical prowess and mental acuity—in short, his adaptability—Waldo’s travels suggest a much bleaker reading of the picaresque. Rough labor and exposure to other ways of living (the cruelty of his comrades, as well as the finery of those whom he serves) have worked on the space of Waldo’s interiority in damaging ways. His letter to Lyndall, then, delineates an internal transformation as the effect of his encounters with different physical spaces. What he describes are things that he “know[s]” and feels—a change of
which “No one but I will ever know” the magnitude. Whereas Part II begins by introducing an alternative conception of space in which the novel’s orphaned protagonists may locate forms of subjectivity denied to them by their physical placelessness, Waldo’s return makes clear the collapse of even such a seemingly fluid space. The limitations of physical space encroach upon the boundlessness of psychical space, imposing on the latter the restrictions and prescriptions which seem inherent to the process of identity-making.

Before leaving the farm, Waldo confesses to Lyndall the overwhelming immensity of his psyche, telling her that “when we lie and think, and think, we see that there is nothing worth doing. The universe is so large, and the man is so small—” before she cuts him off with a warning not to “think so far” (184). What he runs up against in his travels, however, negates such boundlessness by reminding him that his thoughts exist on a different plane than the reality in which he exists. He wonders, in his letter to Lyndall, “if all the things we long to see—the churches, the pictures, the men in Europe—will disappoint us so! […] Is the ideal always more beautiful than the real?” (226). Here, Waldo describes the disappointment he felt upon seeing the sea for the first time, but the question that he asks in his letter has already been answered by the narrative of Lyndall’s similarly failed search for a sense of self embedded in an ideal. It is no coincidence that, like Lyndall, Waldo defines the ideal in cosmopolitan images and terms—“the churches, the pictures, the men in Europe”—none of which can be found in the colonial spaces to which Schreiner’s orphans are confined. Indeed, exposure to the fine ladies and gentlemen of the colonies only reinforces Waldo’s self-consciousness about his own class and his inability to transcend it, despite his desires: “I could not help it. I wanted a finer life” (229). Waldo’s conception of a fully realized self, then, figures success, “a finer life,” in terms of a national
identity: like Lyndall’s stranger, Waldo’s stranger is an aristocratic Englishman who offers him a glimpse of such a life only to eventually reject him.

V. Conclusion

In his unfinished letter to Lyndall, Waldo makes clear that Lyndall represents his most persistent ideal. “You are my very own,” he writes to her, “nothing else is my own so” (230). The news of her death propels him to his own end, cutting short the possibility for either of the novel’s protagonists to transcend his or her colonial spaces. However, that is not to say that The Story of an African Farm opens up the possibility of a new conception of identity-making only to reiterate the trajectory of the traditional bildungsroman. Instead, by distinguishing between the potentialities of physical and psychical space, the novel forwards alternative spatial analyses, as well as alternative processes of identity-formation. In the introduction to this chapter, I described both The Story of an African Farm and Kim as “fantasmatic” novels. In this section, I further such a characterization to include the elements of mysticism that each novel includes. Waldo’s spiritual crisis, which not only culminates in the “Times and Seasons” chapter but also seems to underwrite the entire narrative, points to the mysticism of Schreiner’s novel. Similarly, Kipling’s inclusion of a search for enlightenment spells out the elements of mysticism that thread Kim’s otherwise picaresque plot. Thus, while Kipling’s novel focuses more on physical space than psychical space, the presence of the fantasmatic combines with Kim’s search for identity—brought to bear by the question that the novel repeatedly asks (“Who is Kim?”)—to define space as more than geographical.

As a picaresque, Kim seems to focus more on the surface features of its protagonist—his wit, physicality, and cleverness—which serve to illuminate the exigencies of the imperial
landscape, rather than his internal psyche. However, in Kim’s self-reflections, which occasionally punctuate the narrative, Kipling glosses what I have been calling psychical space. For instance, on the train ride to St. Xavier’s, “a solitary passage…different from that joyful down-journey in the third-class with the lama,” Kim reflects on his placelessness:

“Hai mai! I go from one place to another as I might be a kick-ball. But I am to pray to Bibi Miriam, and I am a Sahib”—he looked at his boots ruefully. “No; I am Kim. This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?” He considered his own identity, a thing he had never done before, till his head swam. He was one insignificant person in all this roaring whirl of India, going southward to he knew not what fate. (186-7)

Although described as the first time that Kim has ever “considered his own identity,” the scene occurs almost halfway through the novel, making clear Kipling’s prioritization of the landscape of colonial India over the landscape of his protagonist’s interiority. As with related scenes, this one concludes in confusion and uncertainty: Kim ponders his identity “till his head [swims].” Nevertheless, such glimpses of Kim’s psyche reveal the impact of colonialism on the formation of his conception of self. Kim recognizes the competing claims of the lama and Colonel Creighton—“But I am to pray to Bibi Miriam, and I am a Sahib”—and, correctly, imagines himself as a “kick-ball” before concluding, “No; I am Kim,” an assertion that only momentarily feels stable. Whereas the possibilities offered by fantasmatic conceptions of space drive Schreiner’s orphans to mobility, Kim’s moments of crises immobilize him. Indeed, it is only after accepting the uncertainty of his “fate” and relinquishing control over his own being that Kim can function again. Kipling’s novel, then, presents the possibilities of psychical space as overwhelming—as almost debilitating. In contrast, the physically delimited space of the colonies seems manageable to Kim, who has learned to navigate it like a “native.”
As Esty notes, Schreiner’s and Kipling’s novels mark a shift in the work of the bildungsroman—one that, I argue, not only reflects the uneven development of empire, but also forces attention to the function of place and space in narratives of development set in colonial contexts. In its application of spatial analysis to the imperial formations articulated in each novel, this chapter has called attention to a counter-teleological narrative of development that takes into consideration the exigencies of empire building. While the failures of Schreiner’s orphans to realize the potentialities of spatial subjectivity delimits the possibilities available to the figure of the transmigrational orphan, such limitations seem inherent to the colonial landscape and its conflicted relationship with the imperial center, rather than as a matter of course for such figures.

As Ode Ogede argues, “the final vision of the dead Waldo with chickens perching on his torn cap and his thoughts [of death] preceding his death develop the reader’s identification of Waldo both as an individual and as a representative of oppressed peoples who are hapless victims of their situation” (254). In other words, the fates of Schreiner’s orphans mirror the impact of empire on colonial subjects in general. As empire building reconfigures the land, these acts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the physical space of the colonies, in turn, alters the psychical space of those who inhabit, negotiate, and otherwise attempt to transcend such geographical spaces in ways that demand critical attention to the effects of spatio-temporality on the formation of identity and of literary orphanization on the capacity of the novel to capture such moments of social, cultural, and political upheaval.
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