Shilpa Bhat Daithota. *Indians in Victorian Children's Narratives: Animalizing the Native, 1830–1930*. Lexington Books, 2017. Pp. xxxi, 103. US$90.00.

Shilpa Bhat Daithota's *Indians in Victorian Children's Narratives: Animalizing the Native, 1830–1930* is the most recent installment in Lexington Books' series Children and Youth in Popular Culture. It examines the impact that Eurocentric discourses had on colonial children's literature during the century preceding the Purna Swaraj Declaration (1930), which heralded the advent of political independence in India. Interested in the allegorical nature of animal stories, Daithota understands nineteenth-century children's literature as legitimizing Western economic and cultural hegemony, both by mythologizing British imperial adventure and by dehumanizing indigenous Indians. *Indians in Victorian Children's Narrative*s explores how animal imagery rehearsed "tropes of the 'sub-human native'" (xx), indulged in racist domination as a pleasure, and encouraged young Britons to envision the colonial subjugation of India "as a vocation" (xxi).

One strength of the monograph rests in the variety of materials Daithota considers "to understand the psychosis of whiteness that ran as an undercurrent in the literature of the period" (xxx). Surveying exhibition pamphlets, alphabet books, nonsense poems, didactic tales, and adventure novels, she

examines the work of an eclectic range of imperial propagandists, including Mary Frances (Mrs. Ernest) Ames, Edward Lear, Samuel Griswold Goodrich, G. A. Henty, Alma Buley, Rudyard Kipling, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Edith Nesbit, Barbara Hofland, and Sara Jeanette Duncan. One rather surprising omission, however, is Helen Bannerman, whose first book, *Little Black Sambo* (1899), likely owes something to Goodrich's "The Umbrella and the Tiger" in *Peter Parley's Short Stories for Long Nights* (1837). In addition, while Daithota notes that Goodrich is American and Duncan Canadian, she does not similarly position Ames as Canadian or Buley as Australian. This oversight is a missed opportunity since it obscures the extent to which white colonists globally imagined India in children's literature. Her discussion of several works would be enriched, moreover, by contextualizing their authors' familiarity (or lack thereof) with South Asia. For example, *The Jungle Book* (1894), though written in Vermont, was informed by Kipling's first-hand knowledge of India, where he spent the first five years of his life and where he later returned to work as a journalist. Given this experience, Kipling's attitude toward India unsurprisingly possesses a complexity that differs from that of Burnett who, although she "neither visited India nor came from a family with Indian connections" (Buettner 27), chose to begin *The Secret Garden* (1888) and *A Little Princess* (1909) in the east. Similarly, some consideration of Lear's own experience as a traveler would help to provide a more nuanced analysis of "The Story of the Four Little Children Who Went Round the World" which, appearing in *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets* (1872), was published a few years before the painter embarked on the thirteen-month tour of the subcontinent documented in his Indian journal. As Ann Colley notes, Lear benefited significantly from acts of imperial power and control in his artistic career, but in his work for children, he also satirized the trophy-taking impetus "to show off colonial authority" (90) and "tame the exotic other by converting it into a domestic commodity" (91).

Taking a chapter-by-chapter approach to various genres of colonial children's literature, *Indians in Victorian Children's Narratives* implicitly traces young readers' exposure to imperial ideologies from infancy to adolescence. Since individual chapters often treat texts in reverse chronological order, however, the organization of the whole tends to obfuscate the historical development of Eurocentric discourse from the 1830s to the 1930s. The discussion of imperial primers is typical insofar as Ames' *ABC for Baby Patriots* (1899) precedes *Colonial Alphabet for the Nursery* (1880). Yet although Daithota usefully demonstrates how such works align imperial pedagogies with literacy education, occasional errors detract from the argument. For example, she states that the illustration for "A" ("Army") in *ABC for Baby Patriots* shows a

row of "British citizens" arrayed against a row of "'native' soldiers" impressed into colonial service (Daithota 17). In actuality, the illustration shows the kilted troops of a highland regiment in black ostrich feather bonnets opposite the Grenadier Guards in bearskin hats. This depiction of Scottish forces on the left and English on the right—both adorned in headdresses fashioned from products of empire—suggests the combined might of the United Kingdom. Likewise, instead of depicting "a single British soldier threatening to shoot an entire row of 'natives'" (18), the illustration for "D" ("Daring") emphasizes British disdain for other European imperialists, since it shows the opposing combatants in the red trousers that distinguished French uniforms prior to World War I. In other words, the illustration positions Britain's enemy as French, not Indigenous. Undeniably racist and jingoistic, *ABC for Baby Patriots* thus speaks less to Britain's oppression of India than to a lingering Francophobia. Indeed, Ames not infrequently justifies British superiority by alluding to the Napoleonic era. In fact, Peninsula (1814) and Waterloo (1815) top the list of "Battles / By which England's name / Has for ever been covered / With glory and fame" (Ames 8). That the end of the Napoleonic Wars allowed Britain to consolidate its power globally perhaps accounts for the symbolic depiction of Africa enchained to Europe in the illustration for "K" ("Kings"). A celebration of British dominance, the illustration places the twice-exiled Napoleon in front of (and hence antecedent to) the Zulu chieftain, Cetshwayo kaMpande, deposed and exiled in the aftermath of the Anglo-Zulu War (1879). Napoleon's neoclassical hairstyle and Cetshwayo's physical size identify the political objects of the caricature.

Despite its shortcomings, *Indians in Victorian Children's Narratives* nonetheless demonstrates how nineteenth-century children's literature operated to sustain colonialism in India by providing "lessons in aggression" (89). The materials selected for discussion convincingly illustrate the exploitative violence of the British imperial imagination.

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Works Cited

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