“Bid him bring the knife of the magic blade /At whose lightning flash the charm will fade”: Re-Interpreting the Fantastic in Irish and Bangla Juvenile Literature.

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work. Signed: (Candidate) ____Anindita Bhattacharya_____ ID No.: 17213690 Date: 15 April 2022

Dedication

What need have I of magic charms –
'Abracadabra!' and 'Prestopuff'?
I have but to wish, and that is enough.

--- Robert Graves.

To the wizard of soft hands, warm cuddles, lullaby, and infinite wisdom, my grandfather, Manoranjan Ganguly

And

Her assistant, Asima, my beloved aunt, who are busy arguing over a spell, somewhere in the clouds!!

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout to denote primary texts referred in my thesis.

SBS – School Book Society

GGBB- Goopi Gyne Bagha Byne

GGK- The Grey Goose of Kilnevin

GGB- The Ghost of Gosain Bagan

GBB- The Ghost and Bertie Boggin

GBBA- The Ghost and Bertie Boggin Again!

PSK- Pagla Sahiber Kobor or The Mad Sahib's Grave

BHG- Back House Ghosts

KIS- The King of Ireland's Son

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Abstract

Anindita Bhattacharya

"Bid him bring the knife of the magic blade /At whose lightning flash the charm will fade": Re-Interpreting the Supernatural in Bangla and Irish Juvenile Literature.

Examining the history of Ireland and India's 'othering' in similar patterns of imperial discourses and their subsequent evolution into zones of hybridity and plurality against the backdrop of a rising tide of nationalism in nineteenth/twentieth century India and Ireland, I examine how these socio-political developments might have informed constructions of the 'child' and conceptualizations of 'childhood' in Irish and Bangla juvenile print literature, folk and fairy tales, and apparition narratives. I compare the educational policies and school curriculum of colonial Ireland and Bengal, reviewing conditions that led to the proliferation of juvenile print literature and recreational reading practices, indicating a shift towards child-centrism and publication of fantastic narratives in the indigenous press as opposed to contemporary publication trends in Great Britain. Then I survey British and other European folk literature to determine the functionality and significance of their fantastic paraphernalia from the standpoint of narration and meaning-making and how that differs from the narrative/thematic modalities prevalent in Irish and Bangla folklore. Comparing Irish and Bangla oral traditions and mythospheres, I analyse how certain folk narratives are re-imagined by Anglophone authors of juvenile fiction in Irish and Bangla literary traditions through the contemporization of the folk-type and re-purposing of the 'fantastic' in literature. This line of inquiry is followed by the study of appropriated fairy tales which I propose, belie Anglican narratives by modifying several structural and thematic elements in them, as a mode of re-writing the 'Western meta-ethic.' Extending the exploration to authors of modern children's fantasy, particularly in their use of the ghost narrative and the horror-humour conjunction, a legacy of both Bangla and Irish satirical literature, I examine their subversive potential within a broader postcolonial discourse. Finally, I draw these strands of argument together to propose the development of what I call, the 'postcolonial fantastic,' an authorial method of exploring the wild and pluralistic possibilities of the juvenile consciousness to account for their own counter-hegemonic and nationalistic visions.

Once Upon a Time: An Introduction

1. The Rationale

> The well educating of their children is so much the duty and concern of parents, and the welfare and prosperity of the nation so much depends on it, that I would have everyone lay it seriously at heart…Though the most to be taken care of is the gentleman's calling; for if those of that rank are by their education set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order. (1824, p.v)
>
> -John Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education"

> Besides the grown people above mentioned, the children of labouring people are an ordinary burden to the parish…The most effectual remedy for this that we are able to conceive…it be further provided that working schools be set up in each parish, to which children…shall be obliged to come. By this means the mother will be eased of a great part of her trouble…and so be at more liberty to work; the children will be kept in much better order, be better provided for, and from infancy be inured to work; which is of no small consequence to the making of them sober and industrious all their lives after… (1697, p.190)
>
> -John Locke, "On the Poor Law and Working Schools"

The relationship between class and education has dominated various social and literary discourses. The views expressed by Locke, as stated above, in two of his essays, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education" and "On the Poor Law and Working Schools," are testimony to a partisan attitude towards education proposed for the 'gentlemen's' children and those from the 'labouring classes'. The purpose of educating children from the gentry class is directed towards the preservation of ranks and those from the working classes, the creation and maintenance of a workforce to assist the gentry. Maria Edgeworth was an Anglo-Irish writer and advocate of women's education who found inspiration in the works of John Locke, a friend of her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth. Many of her educational theories for juveniles take a leaf out of Locke's book. Locke's influence on Edgeworth is noticeable in her approach to the necessity of class-specific instructions, her distrust of imaginative or fanciful literature, and her disapproval of

interactions between the children and the servants of the household. These views are highlighted in her texts for the juveniles such as *The Parent's Assistance* or *Stories for Children* (1796) and *Practical Education* (1798). In the preface to *The Parent's Assistant*, Edgeworth suggests that "education for different ranks, should in some respect, be different." (1796, p.2) and that although stories for children must be engaging, they must "avoid inflaming the imagination, or exciting the restless spirit of adventure, by exhibiting false views of life, and creating hopes which, in the ordinary course of things, cannot be realised." (1796, p.4). In *Practical Education* she includes a chapter on "Servants," where she emphatically remonstrates against any association between the children of the gentlemen and the servants in the house. The education a child receives from the servant is reproached and considered harmful. She writes, "The language and manner, the awkward and vulgar tricks which children learn in the society of servants, are immediately perceived, and disgust and shock well-bread parents. (1798, p.112). The servants, according to her, have no knowledge of the human mind, do not want to learn, are technical in their outlook to work and have no liberal education, making servants unworthy of educating a child and therefore "must have no communication with the children." (173) In the chapter, "Books," Edgeworth outlines the kind of literature children of the gentry must not be exposed to, identifying the servants as the source of that 'kind': the 'kind' entailing irrational and fantastical stories that, according to her, make children believe in unrealistic things. As an example, she offers a review of "The Children's Friends," where:

> …there are several stories well adapted to one class of children, but entirely unfit for another. In the story called the Hobgoblin, Antonia, a little girl "who has been told a hundred foolish stories by her maid, particularly one about a black-faced goblin," is represented as making a lamentable outcry at the sight of a chimney-sweeper; first she runs for refuge to the kitchen, the last place to which she should run; then to the pantry; thence she jumps out of the window, "half dead with

> terror," and, in the elegant language of the translator, almost splits her throat with crying out Help! Help!—In a few minutes she discovers her errour, is heartily ashamed, and "ever afterwards Antonia was the first to laugh at silly stories, told by silly people, of hobgoblins and the like, to frighten her. (1798, p. 283)

At the turn of the eighteenth century, which was also known as 'The Age of Education,'[1]in Britain, the child began to be perceived as a being innately good and pliant as opposed to the Augustinian postulation of child as fundamentally evil and corrupt. But the new-found view of the child also came with a set of rules to instruct and prepare them for the civil society, proposed by educationalists such as Evelyn, Aubrey, Milton, and Locke. In their scheme of things, children had no use for the fantastical literature or tales originating in labouring classes, the maids and the servants; people from whom the upper-class children were meant to be protected. As Kimberley Reynold's has argued, such perceptions led to the lack of a working-class tradition in children's literature by the end of the nineteenth century in England[2]. In addition, the need for the intellectual development of the working-class children was entirely ignored. Instead, they were sent to working schools to inure them to hard labour. To these children, the primary source of entertainment and education were stories they heard from the elderly in their family. As Reynold rightly observes, quite "paradoxically, it was this working-class tradition of oral-storytelling" (2012, p. 19) which was to inspire future writers of children's literature and the growing interest in

[1]See 'John Locke's Images of Childhood: Early Eighteenth Century Response to Some Thoughts Concerning Education,' by Margaret. J.M. Ezell. *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 17(2), (1983, pp.139-155).

[2] See 'Forever Young: Fantasies of Childhood' in *Children's Literature from the fin de siècle to the new millennium* by Kimberley Reynolds, (2012, p.18).

the ‘fantastic.’ But as Natasha Carthew laments in one of her articles, that appeared in *The Guardian* on 12th April, 2016, that as a child reader she felt alienated. She was reading books and watching television shows that were made up of stereotypical depictions of upper-class, house-owning British families that hardly represented children like her; growing up in a rural council houses, speaking different dialects, and living in single-parent households. She asks, “Where were the stories that gave me a sense of belonging outside of my community, the stories that should have empowered instead of isolated?” (Carthew, p. 2016) Highlighting the absence of working-class representation in children’s literature she implores:

> If you live on an estate like I did, you still want to read about wizards and aliens as well as to recognise your own life experiences…I think the problem is about class and race. Of course you can find books that feature working class and non-white protagonists, but you are going to have to look for them. It is about making culture belong to all of us. Inclusivity is beneficial to everyone in society in the long term; ultimately that’s why it’s important. (Carthew, 2016)

Even those few books that feature working-class children or ethnic/racial minorities do not always receive adequate critical attention. Typically, it’s always ‘the classics’ which are syllabized in educational institutions or appear in literary criticisms. Children all over the world have mostly had access to these classics and these standardized depictions of life and livelihood, especially in those communities which were victims of British colonization. This dissertation is a step towards remedying this historical and academic amnesia by reviewing the history of Ireland and India’s “othering in similar patterns of imperial discourse,” their evolution into “zones of hybridity for shifting identities,” and the rising tide of nationalism in the nineteenth

century "in the context of interrelated developments in the British imperial system,"[3] to determine the impact of these socio-political developments on the construction of postcolonial children and childhoods in Irish and Bangla juvenile print literature, folk and fairy tales, and apparition narratives. Particularly, by addressing certain constructs of the postcolonial child in a fantastic narrative this study traces the formation of an emergent interstitial space of textualizing culture that subverts Anglo-centrism and replaces historical linearity with the formation of a hybridized space that contests binaries.

2. Research Objectives

The study explores the changing literary landscape of the 'fantastic' in nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish and Bangla juvenile literature. Folktale, fairy tales, and fantasies are included in the study. The Bangla and Irish literary traditions are juxtaposed in this comparative analysis. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Ireland and India were marked by colonial oppression and civil unrest. Therefore, the first objective of the thesis is to read the colonial/postcolonial/anti-colonial significations of the 'fantastic in indigenous and Anglophone juvenile literature.

Secondly, both Irish and Indian mythology, belong to the Indo-European tradition and therefore have more in common than one would envision. Existing research does not account for these parallelisms in Celtic/Gaelic and Hindu mythospheres and their imprints in children's literature based on the several literary (fairy-stories/folklore) and non-literary (performative story-telling) derivatives of oral traditions. This dissertation seeks to address these similarities.

[3] See 'Ireland, India and the Empire: 1780-1914' by C.A. Bayly, pp. 378.

Thirdly, it can be argued from the study of Celtic/Gaelic and Hindu mythospheres that the dualism that lies between the natural and the supernatural is replaced by a "third territory": a borderland of movement and balance among goddesses, gods, heroes, and warriors of the tribe." [4]The natural and supernatural are extensions of each other and form an organic unity. One of the aims of this study is to understand how this mythic element has percolated into modern writing for children in Ireland and Bengal, especially in 'apparition' narratives and their role in the constructions of postcolonial childhoods.

Fourthly, the study demonstrates the role of humour/satire/irony in these constructions of the postcolonial child and discourses of childhood.

Finally, it seeks to ascertain how indigenous literature subverts the Anglo-centric approach to indigenous races and cultures, especially the problematic position of the Irish race and its history of colonization to offer a fresh perspective on the 'fantastic' in anti-imperialistic juvenile literature in the construction of childhoods that intercept complexities of nationalism, colonial aggression, diaspora, race, and ethnicity through a comparative study of Bangla and Irish juvenile print cultures, folk narratives, and supernatural fiction. The research is a study in intersectionality, cultural specificity, and polemics of representation in literature. It is also interdisciplinary in nature because it draws on anthropology, psychology, literary, and cultural studies.

The thesis raises the following questions:

(1) What is the role of the 'fantastic' in indigenous and Anglophone juvenile literature?

[4] See the 'Publisher's Preface' by Eileen O Malley Callahan in *Gods and Heroes of the Celts* by Marie Louise Sjoestedt, (1981, p. vi).

(2) How does the ‘fantastic’ shape the colonial/post-colonial discourse in Irish/Anglo-Irish and Bangla texts and what are the similarities/differences that underscore representations of ‘the fantastic.’?

(3) How different are the fantastic representations found in British or other European texts that constitute the Western literary canon than those in Irish/Anglo-Irish and Bangla narratives?

(4) How does the ‘fantastic’ inform the process of individuation in the child and constructions of childhood in response to colonialism?

(5) What is the role of the author in constructions of children and childhoods in juvenile literature?

3. Critical Framework

3.1 The Fantastic in Theory

The fantastic has been the centre of many recent studies, the earliest being the twentieth century. It is a term that has been interpreted differently by different literary and cultural theorists. To the Bulgarian-French literary critic, Tzvetan Todorov, the most widely read theorist on the ‘fantastic’ and its representations in literature, the term demarcates a ‘genre.’ In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975), Todorov identifies ‘fantastic’ at the cusp of the ‘uncanny’ (1975, p. 25) and the ‘marvelous.’ (1975, p.25) as a moment of indecision or ‘hesitation,’ (25) of the reader at the intervention of the supernatural. It is not seen as completely uncanny because the ‘pure’ uncanny shocks and terrifies the reader but does not give rise to any indecision because it is seen as rationally plausible. It is also not descried as ‘pure’ marvelous because, again, the incident does not lead to a hesitation as it is perceived as a completely irrational occurrence. Between these two extremes lie the ‘fantastic-uncanny’ (44) and the ‘fantastic-marvelous’ (44), both evoking a sense of ‘hesitation’ in

the reader. Citing few textual examples Todorov explicates these in-between narrative moments in a text. The fantastic-uncanny is brought about by the intrusion of a supernatural event within a rational setting that has the reader in a state of flux, unable to determine the legitimacy of those events. As an example, Todorov refers to Jan Potocki's *Saragossa Manuscript* (1847) which employs the *mise en abyme* or frame-story/embedded-story technique of narration. A tale that begins as a sub-plot within the main narrative, the origin of which is uncertain, soon becomes the main plot and the focus keeps shifting from the narrated to the main narrator to the protagonist in the sub-plot, giving rise to incredulity that is eventually rationalized by the end of the narrative. The 'fantastic-marvelous', again, attempts at rationalising the irrational and the supernatural. The narrative throughout is characterized by 'hesitation,' where the author strives to reconcile the seemingly supernatural events in the narrative, thereby unsettling the reader. In the end, though, the event is established or hinted at as a determinately supernatural event which cannot be explained by natural laws, for instance Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Véra* (1874). In the story, the Count of Athol behaves as if his wife, who is dead, is still present in the house. He locks himself in her vault and pretends that she is still there. The events so transpire that the reader is somewhat convinced of the supernatural presence. Suddenly, he comes out of this delirium, realising that his wife has indeed passed. At that precise moment the key to the vault falls, ratifying the supernatural event. So, the 'hesitation' is finally settled with the confirmation of the supernatural.

In many ways, Todorov's views are aligned with those of some other notable theorists on the 'fantastic' in literature such as P.G. Castex, Louis Vax, and Roger Caillois. He alludes to their theories in *The Fantastic: A structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. According to Louis Vax, it is impossible to define the 'fantastic' as the

term, he thinks, can only be understood in relation to other terms such as "the poetic, the tragic, etc."[5] Vax proposes two categories of the 'marvelous' genre: 'enchantment' (féerique) and 'fantastic'. He also introduces a curious term in the 'fantastic' discourse: 'envoûté' or spellbound/bewitched. He suggests those that have experienced the state of 'envoûté' perceive the enchanted world as metamorphosed but not separate from the natural world. Vax and Todorov concur in their conceptualizations of 'fantastic' as the incursion of the supernatural in a natural world and the indeterminacy that is eventuated by the reader's hesitation at the incursion that has given rise to the metamorphosed world that still somewhat seems familiar to the reader. It also echoes Roger Caillois's definition of the 'fantastic' that "exposes some scandal, some break, some unusual irruption of the inadmissible within the real world." (qtd. in The Heirs of Ariadne). However, all three, Todorov, Vax, Caillois, seem to be confused about the term 'fanatstic' and its significations. Vax interchanges between calling 'fanatstic' a species of the 'marvelous' genre and then identifying 'fantatsic' as a genre itself,[6] like Todorov and Caillois. The confusion seems to be at an ontic level. Neither Todorov nor Vax or Caillois, can decide whether 'fantastic' is a genre, a sub-genre, or a "kind of reading" (Todorov,1975, p.32). Important to note here is how these discourses associate 'fantastic' with terror. Although Todorov does indicate at some point that the 'fantastic' in a text might not always be associated with fear or terror. But many of the stages he describes; uncanny, fantastic-uncanny, fantastic-marvelous, marvelous, and the liminal frontier of the 'fantastic,' have the potential to arouse fear. The 'hesitation' invokes

[5] See 'General Notions' from The Heirs of Ariadne" by Harry Beleván at http://www.educoas.org/Portal/bdigital/contenido/interamer/interamer_55/chap4.aspx?culture=en&navid=221.

[6] Ibid.

apprehension in the reader. For Vax, the fantastic narrative is a thing to "confront" (26) for people who inhabit the real world. About his anthology of horror stories, *Sixty Tales of Terror* (1967), Caillois writes:

> This volume is a compendium of... fantastic tales of terror from various countries of the world... For a tale to appear in this anthology, I have set one precondition that is both necessary and sufficient ... the terror must come solely from some supernatural intervention, culminating in the effect of terror. (1967, p.7)

The supernatural intrusion, he opines, terrorizes the subject in fantastic literature.

It is possible to read certain kinds of fiction in the light of the 'fantastic,' as we have been discussing so far. Gothic fiction, fantastic fiction and apparition narratives constitute some of these kinds. The 'hesitation' also stems from the predicament of the author of the uncanny in fiction who weaponizes the readers' dubiety and quandary and intentionally refrains from providing an explanation for the uncanny phenomenon, although it might have some conceivable explanation.

The existing scholarship on 'fantastic' in literature is primarily dominated by texts that are written for an adult audience. The adult author of adult fiction and the adult author of juvenile fiction might respond to the 'fantastic' in different ways. One of the ways in which the adult writer communicates the 'fantastic' to the child reader is through the mode of liminal fantasy, suggests Sándor Klapcsik in "Neil Gaiman's Irony, Liminal Fantasies, and Fairy Tale Adaptations." He writes, "The language in liminal fantasy is marked by lacks: the lack of the narrator's/ or protagonist's surprise" (2008, p. 3) at a supernatural event. Referring to the child protagonist in Neil Gaiman's "When We Went to See The End of the World by Downie Morningside, age 11 ¼," Klapcsik attributes the girl's "estranged point of view" (3) at the sight of fantastic creatures

during an apocalypse to her perception of reality which is "just as much fantastic to her as the apocalyptic events that she encounters." (3) Klapcsik contradicts his own reading of the 'fantastic' in liminal fantasy as he clearly says that there is a lack of surprise exhibited by the narrator or the protagonist at the moment of experiencing the 'fantastic.' Without the initial hesitation there cannot be a 'fantastic.' The liminality of the 'fantastic' in liminal fantasy arises from the differential perception of the textual reality.[7] In a liminal fantasy the reader's response to the text creates the 'fantastic,' highlighting the extra-textual nature of the phenomenon. Klapscik fails to account for it. But he draws our attention to another aspect of the child protagonist's estranged point of view: her age. It is her age, Klapscik says, that makes the real world appear as 'fantastic' as the fantastic world. Klapscik's views validate an already established belief that a child is unable to differentiate reality from non-reality until the age of twelve (Woolley & Ghossainy, 2013, p.1) and credulity is the child's first response to new information. (2013, p.12). Jacqueline D. Woolley and Maliki Ghossainy gainsay these assumptions to claim that it's skepticism and not credulity that marks a child's initial response to novel information. In "Revisiting the Fantasy-Reality Distinction: Children as Naïve Skeptics" (2014), they propose:

> Children are, in many cases skeptics, albeit often misguided ones. Our theoretical stance is consistent with and inspired by the work of Eugene Subbotsky who has proposed that magical and rational views of reality coexist throughout development. Unlike the previous positions discussed, Subbotsky does not argue that one way of thinking (e.g., skepticism) replaces another more immature one (e.g., credulity). Rather, he argues that different aspects of people's situations will favor or elicit different ways of thinking. Along these lines, we contend that

[7] See "Conjunctions 39 and Liminal Fantasy" by Farah Mendlesohn in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts,* (2004, pp.228-239).

> development consists in finding a balance between acceptance and doubt. (Woolley and Ghossainy, 2013, p. 3).

Rather they claim that it is social conditioning that results in the children's movement from initial scepticism to credulity and acceptance of non-real things as real. As an example, they cite how children begin to belief in religious texts and practices that they were dubious of while they were younger as parents or adult interventions condition them to. The adult world operates on the basis of a semblance of coherence and order. Adults try to bring the child within its folds through schooling, disciplining, and training their minds. But as Woolley and Ghossainy have presented through their empirical research on revising the fantasy-reality distinctions made by children, 'hesitation' is already embedded in children's minds when they encounter the fantastical.

Children's realities are largely informed by adult episteme. The episteme creates a sense of stability and coherence for the child. But the coherence and conformity to the coherence that comes with the adult threshold is what the child tries to relentlessly break away from because they are already aware of "the realm of possibility as a dichotomy" (2013, p. 5). Therefore, taking a cue from Woolley and Ghossainy's study we can say that owing to the children's liminal positionality at the threshold of real and fantastic worlds, they are able to reconcile with both the worlds, and their own liminality. The fantastic instils hesitation in them because it is scepticism and not credulity that governs their basic response to the fantastical unlike adults whose initial response to fantastic is rebuttal because they are able to weigh "one source of knowledge (e.g., testimony) versus another (e.g., person experience)" (2013, p. 14) as an outcome of their self-reflexivity. Children on the other hand tend to overestimate their own knowledge and until a certain age possess extremely definitive views of

reality based on personal experiences that they are unlikely to reconsider readily when braced with new information. The study seems to be congruous with Vax's precis of the adult situation when he writes, "Adults put together a crude but relatively coherent world for themselves (...) When one of those certainties seems to be denied by a fact—be it real or illusory—the result can be the chill of the supernatural (qtd. in The Heirs of Ariadne)" unlike children who are aware of the liminality that lies at the juncture of the real and the non-real and the need to find a balance between acceptance and doubt. The 'fantastic' in children's fiction therefore can be seen as a study of this liminality. When Todorov writes, "the fantastic implies then, not only an existence of an uncanny event, which provokes a hesitation in the reader and the hero; but also a kind of reading, which we may for the moment define negatively; it must be neither poetic nor allegorical," (Todorov, 1975, p. 32) he is expostulating a manner of interpreting a text based on the readers own experiences. For example, a reader will know that a speaking animal in a story cannot truly speak and read it as an allegory. A child reader on the other hand will not interpret the story in the same way as an adult. This dissertation proposes analysing the 'fantastic' in Bangla and Irish juvenile literature as a 'mode of reading' and not merely a study of supernatural events or characters. It recognises the need to address the myriad interpretive possibilities in colonial literature that enabled the authors who appear in this study to experiment with traditional narrative patterns, modes of delivery and themes that negotiate with the juvenile's liminality within and outside of the texts. It also effects a shift from considering children's literature as fundamentally allegorical and metaphorical to a metamorphosis of reality (Irène Bessière [8]and Louis Vax) where allegory and metaphors inform the process of metamorphosis.

[8] In *Le récit fantastique* or *The fantastic narrative* Irène Bessière analyses the literary fantastic in detail, and introduces the concept of 'fantastic' as 'narrative logic' and not a literary genre. See 'Heirs of Ariadne.'

Further, it is suggested that the horror-humour conjunction in juvenile literature can be read as an expression of this liminality and incongruity inherent in the conflicted child psyche. It can be said that the irony and resultant humour characteristic of juvenile fantastic fiction emanates from the recognition of the dichotomy that exists between reality and fantasy, adult coherence and childish nonsense. The child readers can seek consummate affective release from a text that addresses these conflicting emotions and situations. This idea is derived from the American philosopher Noel Carroll's study of horror-comedies from the Anglophone and European Gothic tradition where he cites Freud's definition of humour that "involves a saving or economy of emotion," (1999, p. 158) and identifies this emotion as 'fear', which "disappears when the comic frame causes the burden of moral concern for the life and limb of comic characters to evaporate." (158) 'Fear' that forms the hallmark of Anglocentric horror fiction is supplanted in Anglophone fiction by humour to facilitate a literature of subversion. Thereby, an attempt has been made to consider the fantastic's purpose in juvenile narratives as something that is not restricted to the examination of " the kinds of problems children inevitably face as part of the process of growing up: fear of death and separation, sense of loss, sexual confusion, anger, and so on," (Reynolds, 2012, p. 41) but a 'mode of reading' into the historicity of colonial identities and childhoods. Again, despite the ambiguity surrounding the term 'fantastic', its nature and literary representation, its association with subversion or subversive narrative has contributed further to the development of a methodology for the study of the supernatural in Anglophone fantastic fiction. As Vax quotes:

> The antinomy of the fantastic is apparent. Realistic art, which strives to represent things as they present themselves to us, has nothing of the fantastic about it. On the other hand, art that is totally detached from the real, swings too freely between arabesques and color. The moment of the fantastic is when the imagination is busy

> tearing apart the real, despoiling it. Then we have the impression of a subversion, of some monstrous parody. (qtd. in The Heirs of Ariadne).

The above statement is reiterated in Rosemary Jackson's postulate for the fantastic fiction that:

> …threatens to subvert (overturn/upset/undermine) rules and conventions taken to be normative. This is not in itself a socially subversive activity: it does however subvert rules of artistic representation and literature's reproduction of the 'real.' (1981, p. 8)

This dissertation proposes that 'fantastic' in colonial/post-colonial children's literature has also played a self-same part in Irish/Anglo-Irish and Bangla juvenile literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially literature that has its roots in rustic and working-class traditions. The inter-generational exchanges of narratives originating in these cultures, primarily in the oral medium, ensured the survival of "tales of imagination throughout the long dry period when many educationists held that books for children should abjure fantasy and contain useful information." (2012, p. 19) Thus we see how oral traditions preserved the discourses that would have otherwise been lost to the future generations because of a lack of academic patronage. These texts that abound in all forms of the 'fantastic' came to be associated with a more subcultural popular children's literature, recreational and leisure writing. So, the working-class traditions in children's literature manifested in the fantastic/recreational/populist works that offered "the only appropriate medium for suggesting a sense of estrangement, alienation from 'natural' origins" (1981, p. 10) or normative origins that Dostoevsky supplanted in his narratives in favour of the 'un-natural,' and the 'underground men.'. This was then the modality that eventually took the shape of a literary form where "the fantastic retains [sic] its original function of exerting pressure against dominant

hierarchical systems," (10) signifying not a narrative of escape but of 'equipoise'. (Mendlesohn, 2004, p. 232)

Folk literature has always been abundant in resources for the re-invention and re-constitution of children's literature. Folk literature has also facilitated the growth of national consciousness across cultures and ethnic communities. Therefore, children's literature based on folk narratives also came to reify an idealized national identity. Diarmuid O' Giollain's reiterates the process of reification in *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* (2000) when he writes:

> In other words oral traditions and popular literature could also spread information, inform opinion, motivate action and disseminate interpretations of events relating them to earlier precedents and helping to create feelings of wider solidarity, specifically national solidarity emerging from an ethnic and provincial sphere and children's literature too came to embody these principles. (2000, p. 93)

As stated in the research objectives then, this dissertation analyses the role of 'the fantastic' in the constitution of national consciousness in colonial/post-colonial children's literature. Nationalism acts as a site of resurrection and individuation in a postcolonial text. The self-actualization process of the post-colonial subject is rendered problematic by the individual's placement within the geopolitical discourse as the 'other.' The identity of the 'other,' on the self/other axis, according to Edward Said has no "ontological stability," (Said, 1977, p. xii) and "each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other." (xii) Said uses the definition to describe the establishment of the Orient as 'other' within European Western experience. It is human tendency to establish a dominant culture as a norm from the position of power and 'other' the rest as inferior or dependant on the dominant culture. It is a form of distancing or 'othering' that has not only shaped Indian literature but continues to influence its literary imagination.

In “The Wolds of the Fantastic Other in Postmodern English Fiction,” (2003) Martin Horstkotte adduces that the figure of the ‘other’ plays a vital role in the literature of the fantastic and post-colonialism could also be seen as an instance of postmodern’s concern with the ‘other.’(319) This school of thought opportunes reading the ‘fantastic’ in colonial/post-colonial children’s literature that harnesses juvenile desire for leisurely reading outside the spiel of textbooks to produce narratives of alterity. Horstkotte’s ‘fantastic other’ responds to the fears and anxieties of the self that is confronted by the unfamiliar and frightening ‘other.’ The ‘fantastic other’ in colonial/post-colonial juvenile fiction marks a gradual moving away from a position of hesitation/apprehension to reconciliation with the ‘other’ as extension of ‘self’ within a narrative of counter-hegemony and resistance. As such, this dissertation attempts a re-interpretation of the ‘fantastic other’ as a mechanism to supplant gubernatorial relationships in colonial/post-colonial children’s literature. Therefrom, this study will read the ‘fantastic other’ as ‘postcolonial fantastic’ in juvenile fiction. The ‘postcolonial fantastic’ must not be confused with postcolonial fantasy, speculative or magic realist fiction. ‘Postcolonial,’ in the context of this study, is not only redolent of the period after the end of the colonial era, but also that of the different forms and residuum of colonial domination as well as its far-reaching and ongoing social, economic, cultural, and political ramifications. The dissertation tries to understand how certain authors of juvenile fiction re-imagined folk and mythical literature must have to inscribe them with postcolonial denotations. Also, in relation to postcolonial writing, it is important to highlight the fundamental differences between Irish and Indian postcolonialism. In the words of Brian Friel, “the complexity of the Irish situation especially mandates an analysis that is neither limited to simplified Irish/British binaries nor confined to conventional deployments of race, class, gender” (McGrath, 1999, p. 6) because it is

"located geographically and racially within the first world." (4) unlike other colonies of the British Empire. According to Bhabha, colonialism denotes an exclusion of "dissident histories and voices" (Bhabha, 1994, p.6) of that of 'women, minority groups, bearer of policed sexualities…narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile" (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 6-7). Colonial and postcolonial societies are those that try to re-claim these histories and re-write the metanarrative of Western culture, which will be henceforth addressed as the 'Western metaethic' in this dissertation. Bhabha's assessment of the postcolonial society duly summarises the Irish situation in the light of the 'othering' of the Catholics in a Protestant state and denying them their ancient culture, language, and economic independence.

3.2 Folklore and Children's Literature

The three genres that are integral to this study are folktales, literary fairy tales, and fantasy tales involving apparitions. Each is unique while sharing some inter-relationships. These are narratives that are informed by the 'fantastic.' Priscilla A. Ord, in her introduction to "Children's Literature and Folklore Connection" (1986), ascribes general familiarity of both writers and readers with folklore as a probable cause for constituting the substructure of children's literature. She claims:

> Poetry from traditional rhymes, verses, and chants; familiar stories about folk heroes, and fairy tale figures; fiction with easily recognizable motifs, themes, characters, and "plots"; and picture books illustrating traditional songs that have been already adopted by children are ideally unquestionable sources of material for children's literature. (1986, pp. 114-15)

Familiarity along with the simplicity in expression that underscores folklore makes it suitable for children. Folklore, that constitutes myths, fables, local legends,

rhymes, ballads, songs, proverbs, etc. has had a tremendous influence on modern literature, including juvenile literature. Harold Brunvand notes five qualities that folklorists associate with true folklore: (1) it is oral; (2) it is traditional; (3) it exists in different versions; (4) it is usually anonymous; (5) it tends to become formularized. (Brunvand, 1996, p.594) The third point also indicates the essentially transmutable nature of folklore, making it a potent tool for adaptation for diverse readership. Folklore can be realistic, representing everyday lives and struggles of ordinary human beings. They may not always have a comic ending. Folk tales might or might not involve a supernatural apparatus. Fairy tales, on the other hand, will have a very strong supernatural and extra-human kindred-ship and usually have a comic denouement. Folk tales and literary fairy tales are vastly dissimilar barring their formulaic narrativization. Fantasy tales on the other hand, also have a very prominent supernatural apparatus at work, but do not always have comic endings like fairy tales and might not have any connection to oral storytelling traditions. Fairy tales are often the handy work of the sub-creator.[9] Tolkien upholds that the story-maker or sub-creator "makes a secondary world which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates 'is true': it accords with the laws of that world." (1983, p. 132) Another way to look at the difference between fairy tale and fantasy is, to quote Maria Nikolajeva, "the relation between fairy tales and fantasy is similar to that between epic and novel in Michael Bakhtin's theory: the fairy tale is a fully evolved and accomplished genre, fantasy an eclectic genre under evaluation." (2003, p.139) Fantasy can also be seen as the genre that includes fairy tales. Moving on to folklore, it can be assumed that folklore has a special place in children's literature, not only for having served as a resource for literary fairy tales, but also for being a subject of appropriation and source of new discourses because of its

[9] See 'On Fairy-Stories' by J.R.R. Tolkien in *Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, (1983, pp. 109-161).

adaptability and accessibility. On the connection between fairy-stories and children Tolkien has an interesting observation:

> At least it will be plain that in my opinion fairy-stories should not be specially associated with children. They are associated with them naturally, because children are human and fairy-stories are a natural human taste (though not necessarily a universal one); (1983, p. 135),

Folklore on the other hand wasn't ever meant for children. Children's story-tellers merely found in them a storehouse of resources. These resources have also profoundly influenced modern writing in Irish and Bangla. The Irish Literary Revival/ Irish Literary Renaissance/Celtic Twilight had a strong connection with political nationalism and revival of Gaelic literary heritage. The Gaelic League was formed in 1893. The Bengali Renaissance was also a product of the nineteenth century. Following the 1857 Sepoy mutiny in India, there was an august outburst of Bangla literature. The Irish and Bengali Renaissance were a direct derivative of English education among the natives. The two things that emerged out of these movements were a growing fascination with antiquity and that with vernacular literature. The stalwarts of the Renaissances sought to revitalize a tradition and language suppressed by the colonizing process. The process of revitalization resulted in the rampant appropriation and renewal of folklore. The revitalist ideals also influenced children's writers. These writers, primarily, drew inspiration and subject matter from the more fantastic/magical/supernatural elements in folklore because it offered a varied range of imaginative characters and situations to experiment with. In the *Introduction to Folklore & Modern Irish Writing* (2014), Angela Rourke states that modern Irish writing is characterized by an attempt to engage 'with literary and oral analogues of motifs in various narrative genres,' the analysis of 'oral narratives and belief complexes in Ireland,' 'contextualization and interpretation' of folklore 'within particular cultural

contexts.' She also suggests determining what constitutes Irish writing and how to approach both the streams of Irish writing in Irish and Irish writing in English is important for facilitating a more inclusive approach to resolving the contingencies that might arise due to this. Modern Irish writing also denotes writing for children.

In Anglo-Irish literature, Standish O'Grady's *Finn and His Companions* (1892) can be seen as one of the earliest examples of a writer adapting a folktale for a young readership. It revolves around the hero, Finn, the father of the poet Ossian, and his intriguing exploits. These stories were told to St. Patrick by Caelta, the cousin of Ossian. O'Grady adapted these tales for children, making them "suitable" for their understanding, simplifying the narrative and purging them of the pagan 'profanities' that can be found in the original. In keeping with the nationalist project discussed earlier and children's literature serving as a praxis in the colonial and post-colonial periods, Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn in her essay, "For children or Nuns: language an Ideology in Irish-Language Translations and Re-tellings for Children, 1922-1940", writes about an interesting publishing trend in Ireland that involved translating English texts written by Irish authors back into Irish. Most of these texts were folklore adaptations for children. Standish O' Grady's Finn adaption was one of the chosen texts. The objective of these translations was producing children's fiction based on the Catholic-Nationalist model that reflected the educational policy of the Free State of Ireland. Grady's book was already a highly sanitized version and meant less work for the translators unlike the works of authors such as T. Crofton Croker. Similarly, Edmund Leamy's *The Fairy Minstrel of Glenmalure and Other Stories for Children* (1899) is another example of folklore that was modified to cater to a young readership. It is a collection of three stories for children that incorporate folk and fantasy elements, although themes, such as mortality, human fallibility, sexuality, are also explored in these narratives. The

folklore-based children's texts in Anglo-Irish, therefore, spurred a narrative zone marked by ideological conflicts and contraries.

In Bengal, oral literature has always been intimately associated with childhood and children's folklore or folklore composed by children. Ashutosh Bhattacharya, a renowned Indian folklorist, writes in *Banglar Lokasanskriti* (1982) or *Bengal's Folk Culture*, "The strange life-force behind oral literature lies in its ability to continuously transform and restructure itself." (1982, p. 88) Among the different forms of quintessential Bangla oral literature that he notes are the ছেলেভুলানো এবং আনান্য ছড়া or *rhymes to beguile the child and other forms of rhymes*. He differentiates these rhymes from the English cradle songs as the songs are not merely lullabies but are rich sources of Puranic[10] narratives. He also refers to the very non-religious oral adaptations of the Puranic narratives, and the motherly instinct of addressing the child as one of the Puranic Gods as the motivation behind these rhymes composed for children. As a result, Bangla children's literature abounds in adaptions of Puranic folklore as in the works of Upendrakishore Raychaudhury. He adapted folk narratives from the Puranas and turned them into fascinating supernatural tales for children like 'Stories from the Puranas' and 'Jola and Seven Ghosts.'He has also retold ancient Hindu epics for children viz. *Chhotto Ramayan or Little Ramayan* (1987) and *Mahabharater Katha or About the Mahabharat* (1987). Lal Behari Day, an Anglo-Indian folklorist is also credited for his

[10] The literal translation of Purana means 'old'. The definition of 'Purana' by Amar Sinha, an ancient Sanskrit lexicographer, is a work which "has five distinguishing topics: i) the creation of the universe, ii) its destruction and renovation, iii) the genealogy of Gods and Patriarchs, iv) the reigns of the Manus, forming the periods called Manwantaras and v) the history of the Solar and Lunar races of kings. These also form the basis of the ancient Hindu religion. See John Dowson's A Classical dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature, (1961, p. 245.)

adaptations of oral literature for children, in his book, *Folktales of Bengal* (1883), although the book was not written strictly for children. The book, however, did inspire the Bangla *Kunstmärchen*.

Children's literature has time and again turned back to folklore for material and form. Stories for children, often with simple narrative, tautological elements, and anthropomorphic characters have conveyed searching political, religious, allegorical, moral, and psychological insights, attracting newer scholarships.

3.3 Fairy Tales and Children's Literature

A fairy tale is a narrative that has metaphorical signification and as Jack Zipes points out, it is traditional and subversive at the same time. Like folk narratives, fairy tales are aimed at both an adult and a young audience. This dissertation focuses mainly on the genre that is known as *Kunstmärchen* or literary fairy tales. According to Jack Zipes, the literary fairy tale first gained currency in Italy following the publication of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which paved the way for the novella or conto, which is a short story with a clear narrative plot that talks about wondrous events in everyday life inspired by oral and epic narratives. The first writers of this type of tale were Straparola and Basil in Italy.[11] Their stories incorporated various folkloric plots from Italy and

[11] According to Italo Calvino, the fairy tale with its themes emerged sooner in Italy than in other countries. As early as the mid-16th century, Giovanni Francesco Straparola's Piacevoli notti [Pleasant Nights] had infused tales of wonder and imagination tales with gothic and dialectal elements, while in the following century Giambattista Basile produced the grotesque Pentamerone (Calvino 1956). See, "Fairy Tales in Italy during the 20th Century and the Translations of Tales of Long Ago" by Sabrina Fava, (2016, pp.373–394)

abroad, but with distinct authorial inflections. The stories were majorly borrowed from foreign sources and often lacked a local or regional tenor. Meditations on power and avarice for wealth informed many popular narratives. Basil's tales were sometimes written in the tradition of the carnivalesque or topsy-turvydom of social order, exposing the fissures in the aristocracy. These original tales paved the way for the literary fairy tale, first in France and then in Germany, before finally reaching England. The English fairy tales have Celtic, Germanic, and Christian influences. These elements of English tales are also discernible in Irish tales, but unlike their English counterparts, Irish tales draw extensively on mythology and pastoral life. Many fairy tales are retold and re-versioned across cultures. This is a salient feature of the literary fairy tale genre. For instance, 'Rumplestiltskin' written by the Grimm Brothers entered the English canon as "Tom Tit Tot". "Little Thumb" by Charles Perrault acted as the raw material for such appropriated narratives as "The History of Tom Thumb" by Joseph Jacobs and "Buro Angla" by Abanindranath Tagore. The study of the supernatural in children's literature also entails deconstructive reading of the re-tellings. Adaptations are often found to bear literary or philosophical vision of the author. The journey from the "pre-text", or the original, to the "re-version" and its implications on the metanarrative assume a pivotal role in this study. As Stephens and McCallum point out:

> …few retellings are simple replications, even when they appear to reproduce the story and point of view of the source. In such cases, the purpose is generally cultural reproduction, in the sense of transmitting desired knowledge about society and the self, modes of learning, and forms of authority. (1998, p. 4)

Critics observe that fairy tales reproduced for children attempt to place folk and mythic elements within a "global or totalizing cultural narrative schema" (1998, p. 6) that shapes the readers' experience. This schema is what Stephens and McCallum call the metanarrative or the "Western Metaethic" and indicate how this 'metaethic' is

markedly different in post-colonial societies and the way these stories are told in these societies. They also draw our attention to the various kinds of register(s) the re-teller of these tales can follow to corroborate them to a wider audience and that most retellings have a demotic base that can reveal the metonymic significance of the texts. They write, "the choice (and mixing) amongst hieratic, epic, and demotic registers may function normatively, but can also be used to destabilize norms" (1998, pp. 11-12). The concept of 'Western metaethic' will be analysed in detail in Chapter Two with reference to the folk-retellings of Colum and RayChaudhury.

This dissertation studies fairy tales from the Irish and Bangla literary traditions written primarily for juveniles (but they are almost always meant for both children and adults) in the light of their hieratic, epic, and demotic registers to show how they simultaneously resist and adhere to the metanarrative of children's fairy fiction, thereby realigning social and textual boundaries within a more complex and ambiguous narrative setting through the fantastic medium. It also explicates how these characters, which are deemed conventional in the Western meta-ethic of the epic and the mythical, transform in colonial and post-colonial narratives, ceasing to appear as mere narrative props.

3.4 Fantasy and Children's Literature

Fantasy as a 'term' and as a 'genre' has persistently challenged standardization. What can and cannot be termed as fantasy is still moot. One can read fantasy in the light of Brian Attebery's 'fuzzy set'[12] or Mendlesohn's classification of fantasy into portal quest, immersive, intrusion or liminal, depending on "the way in which the fantastic enters the text and the rhetorical voices which are required to construct the different

[12] See pp.12 of Strategies of Fantasy (1992).

worlds that emerge." (2004, p. 2) The ambiguity surrounding the genre renders it undefinable to an extent. Fantasy can be best understood as an eclectic genre where the 'fantastic' lends it the 'narrative logic' that holds the fantasy narrative together. Despite the supernatural and magical content of literary fantasies, not all fantasies are written with the young in mind. Children's fantasy has a different history and timeline. The emergence of children's fantasy, argues Maria Nikolajeva, coincides with the development of childhood as "separate and formative period of human life." (Edward & Mendlesohn, 2012, p. 50)

In Ireland, the advent of the fantasy genre can be attributed to the publication of James Stephens's *The Crock of Gold* (1912). It is a relatively lesser-known book, but it tells the story of a philosopher and his quest for the most beautiful girl in the world. The first chapter opens thus:

> In the centre of the pine wood called Coilla Doraca there lived not long ago two Philosophers. They were wiser than anything else in the world except the Salmon who lies in the pool of Glyn Cagny into which the nuts of knowledge fall from the hazel bush on its bank. He, of course, is the most profound of living creatures, but the two Philosophers are next to him in wisdom. Their faces looked as though they were made of parchment, there was ink under their nails, and every difficulty that was submitted to them, even by women, they were able to instantly resolve. (1912, p. 5)

As seen in the passage above, this combination of the fantastical and the humorous is a unique feature of Irish fantasy fiction, although it reaches its apotheosis with *Irish Fairy Tales* (1920). The Plunkettian or Colferian fanatsies, the more popular and widely known Irish Young Adult (YA) fantasies mark quite a departure from Stephen's method. Rather Stephens' narration can be considered as a predecessor of Martin Waddell or Catherine Sefton's apparition narratives. Catherine Sefton's series on Bertie Boggin's encounters with the ghost in the coal shed and Jackie's interactions

with the spirits in *The Ghost of Cobweb* are written on the lines of Stephen's comical novel but meant for a considerably younger set of readers. Again, the marriage of the fantastic with the humorous gained immense popularity in Bangla satirical literature. Although these stories were not written for children, they were not entirely unsuitable for a young readership. The works of Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay and Rajshekhar Basu belong to this school of writing and the supernatural is a dominant theme in these stories. Upendrakishore Raychoudhury's, 'Goopi Gyne Bagha Byne' (GGBB) also uses fantasy elements in a folklore retelling. This particular adaptation and its filmic version will be discussed further in Chapter Two. Ray adapts a regional folklore into a modern-day fairy tale set in an imaginary village but populated with characters who are easily recognisable in a rural setting. Like Stephen's *The Crock of Gold*, Ray's story is also a satire on the social condition and human nature. Many writers in post-independence Bengal have since written in this genre, such as Satyajit Ray, Leela Majumdar, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, and Sunil Gangopadhyay. Fantasy fiction or use of fantasy elements in vernacular fiction has resulted in an ever-expanding market for children's literature in Bengal. A distinctive point of concurrence in Irish and Bangla children's fantasy is its recourse to ghost narratives and the generous use of humorous repartee to amuse the readers. The role of humour and its relation to apparition narratives and literature of subversion is an area that will be brought within the scope of this study in the ensuing chapters.

3.5 Childhood Constructed

In her essay on the development of children's fantasy, Maria Nikolajeva, identifies the development of 'childhood' as a distinctive formative phase and its acknowledgement in literature as a pre-requisite for understanding the arc of children's fantasy. Clearly, this argument indicates the very 'constructed-ness' of childhood as a

social, cultural, and literary concept. In the Introduction to their book *Constructions of the Irish Child in the Independence Period, 1910-1940*, Ciara Gallagher and Ciara Boylan write, "the policy-maker, the librarian, the Boy Scout troop leader, the clergyman, the publisher, and the children's author, all constructed a different Irish child to represent a broader cohort" (2018, p. 2), reinstating the significance of identity construction in colonial Ireland. These constructions perpetuated the concept of two binaries: the Dionysian and the Apollonian image of the child. The Dionysian image was a very Christian conception of the child as a sinner and hence, inherently "sinful, corrupt, wilful, sexual, and knowing, ontologically not much different from an adult" (2018, p. 3) and the Apollonian construction that perceived the child as inherently good and innocent in the likeness of the "Romantic conceptualization of childhood."(3) On a parallel note, Satadru Sen, in his essay, "A Juvenile Periphery: The Geographies of Literary Childhood in Colonial Bengal", writes about the children's magazines in colonial Bengal collaborating broadly "in the construction of a literary and pedagogical child that is generally middle class and Hindu"[13] like the Catholic-Nationalist child in independent Ireland, and similar to the Blakian philosophy of innocence and experience.[14] Reading narratives that "consciously or unconsciously address[sic] particular constructs of the child, or metaphorical equivalents in terms of character or situation (animals, puppets, under-sized or underprivileged grown-ups)"(Hunt ,199, p. 25) in "texts that display an awareness of children's disempowered status (whether containing or controlling it, questioning or overturning it) (25) constitutes the

[13] See https://muse.jhu.edu/article/55325.

[14] By positioning himself within the instructional genre of child's reading book with the 1789 publication of *Songs of Innocence*, William Blake indissolubly links his poetry with a theme of interest to both the ideologists of his own time and the ideology critics of ours: the theme of education and literacy. See *Ideology and Utopia in the Poetry of William Blake* by Nicholas M. Williams, (1998, p. 32)

foundation of this study. The dissertation seeks to analyse these constructions of children and their childhood by examining their relationship with the 'fantastic' and how it defines their role in postcolonial children's literature. As stated earlier, 'totalizing truth' is debunked in favour of plurality. This dissertation will trace the gradual development of this 'plural' and 'hybrid' space in children's literature through the application of Homi Bhabha's socio-culturalism to the postcolonial modality to develop this argument, as found in Bangla and Irish juvenile literature.

3.6 Irish Supernatural versus Bangla Supernatural

The supernatural cosmos of folklore and fairy tales that informs the 'fantastic' in children's fiction abound in characters that are sometimes borrowed from mythology or a product of the authors ingenuity. They might be identified or addressed differently based on their cultural identities and their folkloric characteristics, their place of origin and dissemination, but they display striking and thought-provoking resemblances when contextualised into Irish/Bengali socio-literary milieu. The malicious or manipulative male fairies or leprechauns, characterized by their equivocal nature in Irish culture, overlap with the scheming demigods of Bangla literature. The giantess of the Irish folk narratives emulates the she-devil or demoness or *Rakshasi* in the Bangla folk narrative. The categorization and demarcation of ghosts in both cultures mimic each other. In Irish children's fiction, the ghosts range from the most terrifying to the most innocuous. Ghosts[15] are identified according to the deeds they are associated with, which are often as simplistic as spilling a glass of water or turning the milk sour. The *banshees* who summon death into a household reminds one of the evil spirit *nishi*, that seduces the victim to their death in a voice familiar to them. In Bangla children's literature too, the

[15] See Yeat's categorization of Irish ghost in 'Ghosts,' (1888, pp. 139-149).

ghosts range from the ferocious to the frivolous. They are also mostly household characters. The *leanan sídhe* of the Irish tales shares a strange familiarity with the *petni* from the Bengali countryside. They are both female ghosts who entice mortal men. The *demon bride* of the Irish folklore has a Bengali counterpart in the form of the *shakchunni*, the ghost of a young married girl yearning for conjugal bliss. It is necessary to find out how these supernatural constructions communicate with and within the constructions of child and childhood as envisaged by the authors while conferring with historical, societal, and gendered narratives.

3.7 India and Ireland: An Analogy

In 1912, W.B. Yeats wrote in the *Preface to Gitanjali: Song Offerings* by Rabindranath Tagore that:

> a whole people, a whole civilization immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though we had walked in Rossetti's willow wood, or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream. (1913, pp. xvi-xvii)

Yeats extols the superiority of Indian poetry and philosophy. He laments the 'broken' consciousness of the Irish and prophesies that with an 'unbroken consciousness,' the civilization of Bengal can ensure the dissemination of Tagore's verse even to the beggar on the road. It appears that Yeats seeks inspiration for the Irish civilization in the verse of Tagore, that moved him so. The simplicity of the verse, the call to nature, and the musings on the human and the divine find a resonance with the cultural consciousness of Yeats.

Ashutosh Bhattacharya writes about the Nordic influence on Bengal in *Bengal's Loka Sanskriti*. Practices such as drinking milk, consuming alcohol, gambling, stitching

were all introduced to the Bengalis by the Nordics. Nordic also influenced the Bangla language and has contributed towards the development of modern Bangla. The Nordic influence on Irish society and culture is not unknown. Therefore, it seems likely that there is a strong genealogical link between the two cultures. Interestingly, there are various synonymities discernible in the folklore adapted for Irish and Bangla children's fiction. These works are marked by their lyrical quality and the use of peasant poetry and colloquialism. English fairy tales also display the aforesaid characteristics but not quite as integral a part of the narrative as found in Irish. Colloquialism is present in English tales, mainly in the form of riddles or puzzles. Whereas, in Irish and Bangla tales lyricism appears as locutions of the prose; as if the prose breaks into a poetic interlude. There are various instances of this prosaic lyricism in folk/fairy-tale adaptations. For instance, Michael Scott describes Aefe transforming the children of Lir into swans in the following words:

> With a final flourish Aefe completed her incantation and reverted to the tongue of the People of the Goddess.
> 'And earth shall not hold thee,
> Fire shall ye fear,
> Water be thy element,
> And that of Air.'
> And as the blinding light dies off the lake, Daire, cowering in the reeds of the bank, saw that the four children were gone…and in their place floated four snow white swans. (1983, p. 67)

The folklore of Yeats predates Scott's, but his intention was to create an anthology of Irish folklore acquired from informants as opposed to Scott who adapted Irish myths for a juvenile readership. Similarly, in the fairy tale, "Pushpamala," by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, the author describes the state of mind of a distraught princess in the following words:

She fed her morsels to Sukh and Shari. Suddenly she heard the sound of a flute!
"Spread your branches, spread your leaves, O majestic tree,
A colony of birds crowd your branches, one can see
Pushpamala's truth has been set free,
Stand witness, thee!" (1913, p. 122)

These passages familiarize the reader with fairy tales adapted in the oral story-telling tradition. The prosaic and the poetic unite to give us the impression that we are listening to a narration at a *kathakatha* or oral performative storytelling event in Bengal or a session with the *senachai.* The bucolic, the mythical, the fantastic, the mundane, and the philosophical converge and emulsify to create a unique narratorial experience. There is an aesthetic superiority to folk narration and textualization in Irish and Bangla folkloric literature for children that has no kindred in European or Anglican literature of this kind.

The presence of female characters especially atypical ones offers another point of congruence. The overarching narrative is primarily hero-centric even those that are named after female characters, as in the stories from *Thakurdadar Thale* (1913). Howbeit transgressive female characters are also portratyed. *Pantaburi,* an old and senile woman becomes an unlikely hero in Upendrakishore Ray's folklore by outwitting a thief who steals her rice and so does the grandmother who hides herself inside a hollow gourd to teach the evil bear and tiger a lesson. Pushpamala garbs herself in masculine attire to conceal her identity as the prince's consort. She saves his life from attackers and escorts him safely to the palace. The cross-dressing is emblematic of the reversal of gender roles. Fedelma in Padraic Colum's *King of Ireland's Son* (*KIS)* is the fearless daughter of the Enchanter of Black Back-Lands, who helps her consort outwit her own evil father. Fiona and Scatha of the Shadows challenge traditional gendered narratives. Fiona outwits the manipulative Leprechaun and Scatha of the Land of

Shadows, is depicted as a fierce and revered trainer to mighty Irish warriors such as the illustrious national hero, Cuchulain. They are not merely defined by their subservience to the male characters or confined to domestic presence. These protagonists may or may not cater to the established literary and social registers or conventional portrayal of femininity, but they seem to command a distinct and impactful literary presence. Since this is a study in post-coloniality in children's literature, it is imperative to read the construction of femininity or female agency as it unfolds in the texts -- not only in terms of characterization and the feminine voice written into the narrative but also the unique relation of femininity and childhood that is explored in some.

Thematically and structurally some tales are similar, especially in the use of frame narratives. Frame narratives are not as prevalent in traditional European/Victorian folklore or folkloric adaptations in the way it is used in Irish and Bangla variants. The embedded stories add to the thematic dynamism and complexity. A case in point would be *KIS* and 'The Story of the Rakshasas.' Highlighting hierarchical and class differences between two heroes who are otherwise equal in wisdom and strength but of different parentage and lineage is a common theme across several chronicles such as 'Phakir Chand,' 'Life's Secret,' and 'King of Ireland's Son.' The aristocratic bearing of the princes is merely implied when they are addressed as the son of a certain 'king' but they lead pastoral lives as herdsmen or simple tradesmen in Irish folklore and are often shown to be content with domesticity in Bangla folklore, barring those deciding moments when they have to embark on a voyage abroad that will eventually lead them to a wife. Even the textual illustrations focus on the arcadian life of the Irish folk heroes and the homebound hero of Bengali folklore. These illustrations often depict the prince confined to his bed chamber rather than on horseback or in the battlefield. In the following illustration from 'Ruptarashi,' we can see the king and the queen sitting on

the floor and playing dice because they must keep an eye on a mouse who has become a source of nuisance to the duo. Their roles seem quite titular, and they bear resemblance to the common man and not to people of a royal lineage. Typically, they should have servants to perform these tasks for them. Similarly, in Pogany's illustration we see two princes engaged in a conversation but their attire or physicality, especially that of Gilly the Goatskin, the boy on horseback in the illustration, is emblematic of pastorality and the quotidian life of peasants.

Figure 1: A scene from 'Ruptarashi' from *Thakurmar Jhuli.*

Figure 2: An illustration by Willy Pogany from *King of Ireland's Son.*

The emasculation of the prince in Bangla folklore seems to be an embodiment of the *babu culture*[16] in Bengal. On both accounts, the particularity of the constructions, the Irish grazier/warrior hero or the Bengali babu prince, seem to either resist Anglicisation (Irish) or critique it (Bangla) in folkloric adaptations.

Equally critical is the importance of 'language' or the ability to speak. With reference to Michael Scott's characterization of Aefe and her reverting to the *tongue* of the People of the Goddess, there is an allusion to overcoming of linguistic barrier to communicate with the common man. Even in the folklore, 'Children of Lir,' the swans

[16] The evolution of the British word '*babu'* similarly demonstrates the rearticulation of colonial racial politics in changed material conditions…The origins of the more negative meaning of the word, as Christine Baxter points out, can be traced to the works of early nineteenth-century Bengali social satires. These early Bengali social commentators used the term *'babu'* to satirize the culture of the *nouveau riche* in Bengali society, the term associated with Bengali parvenus who had adopted Persianised and later Anglisised manners for upward economic and social mobility. See, *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century* by Mrinalini Sinha, (1995, p. 17).

speak in their 'own language.'[17] In stories such as 'Finola and the Dwarf' and 'GGBB,' speaking or speaking in one's one language as opposed to an imposed and alien tongue or the act of being silenced or losing the ability of speech become recurrent and salient themes.

In subsequent chapters, this dissertation will address these themes individually through close reading of several texts in juxtaposition. This dissertation focuses on Bangla and Irish/Anglo-Irish children's literature to develop a theoretical approach towards the study of fantastic in children's literature. Most of the contemporary criticism considers European/Anglican texts as their benchmark, a practice that waits to be redressed.

4. Literature Review

It was only in the later part of the nineteenth century that books for leisurely reading began to be published in Ireland. A general growth in the literacy rates, emergence of a curious reading public, and affordability of books gave rise to a surge in publications and publishing houses in Ireland. Prior to this, only certain publishers were allowed to publish in Ireland of the likes of the King's Printer, (Tony Farmar and Conor Kostick, pp. 2017) that led to a decline in publication outputs. Children's books for leisure reading started being published around the second half of the twentieth century due to the efforts of independent publishing houses such as Gill Books (1968) and The O'Brien Press (1973). The publication history of Irish children's literature is reflective

[17] "The third point is the reference to Irish as the language of the swan children… Here we may well think of the rapid decline of Irish following the advent of English rule. It is tempting to consider the motif of the Irish-speaking children of Lir was of great importance particularly to those who found the waning of Irish profoundly sad." See, "Beyond the Borders of Ireland: Ní Dhomhnaill, Jenkinson and The Tragedy of the Children of Lir" by Hiroko Ikeda, (2006, p. 50)

of the struggle for emancipation from British control that also underlies the purpose of their scholastic endeavours. Róisín Adams in her essay, " Jimín Mháire Thaidhg and Constructions of Childhood in Irish-Language Children's Literature in the Independence Period, 1910–1940," draws our attention to Irish language children's literature before and after the establishment of the publishing machinery of The Irish Free State, An Gúm (1925). *Constructions of the Irish Child in Independence Period, 1910-1940* (2018) offers insights into the publication history of Irish children's literature and the role of state-run publishers in constructing an image of an Irish childhood as a mouthpiece for the popularization of the Irish language. *The Politics and Poetics of Irish Children's Literature* (2009) by Nancy Watson is perhaps one of the very first studies in Irish children's literature that is little known outside of the country. Her study is pivoted around realist, historical, and fantasy novels by Ellis Dillon, Marita Conlon-Mckenna, Cormac McRaois, Mark O'Sullivan, Siobhan Parkinson, and Eilis Ni Dhuibhne. She is also one of the first critics to apply the study of postcoloniality to children's literature. Even on a broader scholarly spectrum, postcolonial criticism of children's literature is sparse. One of the most comprehensive works in postcolonial children's literature criticism *is Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature* (2007) by Clare Bradford that mainly consists of studies in Eurocentric imaginings of indigenous people, language as resistance in postcolonial text, formation of a postcolonial subjectivity, and intersectionality in children's literature from Canada, New Zealand, and America. *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context* (2000), that preceded Bradford's book, and edited by Roderick McGillis features a collection of essays on post-empire British children's literature and multiculturalism in post-colonial Australian fiction among others. In terms of approaching postcolonial reading of native and Anglophone

children's literature, these studies provide valuable information. The relationship between folklore and the rising tide of nationalism in Ireland has informed a volume of literary criticism such as Diarmuid Ó Giolláin's *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* (2000) and John. M.Reagan's *Myth and the Irish State* (2013), but adaptations of folklore and fairy tales for a specifically juvenile readership has not been examined as part of these critical enquiries. Ciara Ni Bhroin's " Mythologizing Ireland," published in *Irish Children's Literature and Culture: New Perspectives on Contemporary Narratives*, (2011) edited by Valerie Coghlan and Keith O'Sullivan, furnishes an overview of the publication of Irish myths and legends for children during the Cultural Revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Ireland, adaptations of the myths in contemporary fantasy fiction, and its relation to the Irish national project, but it does not include any specific studies in postcoloniality.

Contemporaneous to the publishing landscape in Ireland, publications for leisure reading in India arrived late, around the same time as in Ireland. The first printing presses in India were mostly privately owned like it was in Ireland. Indian publications were also heavily monitored by the British administration. In "A History of Indian Publishing: A Note on Sources," (1983), Francis W. Prichett underlines the regular surveys on the activities of the native press even around the second half of the nineteenth century. Since Calcutta in pre-partition Bengal was the capital of colonial India, some of the first Bengali publishing houses came up in the city. Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan accounts for the earliest printing presses in Bengal as early as 1777 and there were around 153 Bengali presses operational in the state.[18] In Bengal, one of the first publications to print children's literature was U. Ray & Sons established in 1895.

[18] See, Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan's *The Bengali Book: History of Printing and Book-Making*, (1999, pp.298-308).

At the turn of the twentieth century appeared Bhattacharya & Sons who published the first edition of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakurmar Jhuli* or *Grandmother's Bag: The Fairy Tales of Bengal* (1907). Several other printing presses were established in Bengal around this time such as Deb Sahitya Kutir (1928) and Mitra & Ghosh publishers (1934) that published children's books for leisure reading. As such the inception of children's book publications in Bengal preceded that in Ireland. Some of the earliest publications by U. Ray & Sons were children's magazines and periodicals. The proprietor of the press, Upendrakishor RayChoudhury wrote and illustrated most of the articles for the magazines himself. His intension was not only to promote indigenous Bangla literature in colonial India at the face of an impending imposition of English as the medium of instruction across schools in the country but also to bring literature of the West to the children of Bengal. The drive towards cosmopolitanism in Bangla children's literature began with RayChoudhury. Gargi Gangopadhyay's doctoral thesis "Reading Leisure: A Print Culture for Children in Colonial Bengal," (2012) presents a detailed study of Bangla periodicals and their contribution to the popularity of Bangla children's literature among the juveniles. Supriya Goswami's *Colonial India in Children's Literature* (2012) explores the connection between children's literature and colonial Indian history and some of its defining moments of unrest in British, Anglo-Indian, and Bengali children's fiction, including a critical study of RayChaudhury's 'topsy-turvy' literary imaginative for the child crusader. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay engages in a discourse on the deconstruction of myth; its relation to history; its influence on Bangla children's literature; constructions of childhood through schoolbooks and primers based on ineluctable binaries of the good boy (Gopal) and bad boy (Rakhal) and its sociological impact in *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic: Colonialism and Children's Literature in Bengal* (2015). Positing the texts within the theoretical paradigm of

postcoloniality, the book is an astute evaluation of Bangla children's literature and its modern evolution. *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India 1850-1945* (2005) by Satadru Sen is an investigation into the constructions of childhood within spaces such as correctional homes and boarding schools. It deals with the politics of childhood between 1860 and 1930 that sought to reimagine childhood in the cultural climate of colonialism and as a participant in the nationalisation process. The relationship between folklore, fairy tales, and nationalism is reconnoitred in Giuseppe Flora's article, "On Fairy Tales, Intellectuals and Nationalism in Bengal, 1880-1920" (2002) and adaptation of Bangla folklore forms the subject matter of Sanjay Sircar's "A Märchen and a Kunstmärchen from Bengal: "Princess Kalabati" and Abanindranath Tagore's The Condensed-Milk Doll."

The proposed study engages with the tome of several Irish and Bengali writers of children's fiction that includes, Ella Young, Padraic Colum, Edmund Leamy, Patricia Lynch and Martin Waddell from Ireland and Upendrakishor RayChoudhury, Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, Lal Bihari Day, Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay, Satyajit Ray and Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay from Bengal. These authors have been earmarked owing to their appositeness to the purpose of this study and to initiate a literary dialogue on less-known native writers, scarcely read outside of Ireland and Bengal, barring a few like Young and Colum, but nevertheless worthy contributors to the world of children's literature. *Flowering Dusk: Things Remembered Accurately and Inaccurately* (1945) is an autobiographical work by Ella Young that acquaints us to her life in Dublin and America. It's written like a collection of small snippets, often random, but offering a glimpse of her life and thoughts, affections, and apprehensions. Zack Bowen's biography titled *Padraic Colum: A Biographical Critical Introduction* (1970) is a compendious treatise on his life and works. There is a single chapter

dedicated to Colum's contributions to juvenile fiction, but it is a summarisation and not a work of literary criticism. Padraic Whyte's " Firing for the Hearth: Story Telling, Landscape and Padraic Colum's The Big Tree of Bunlahy," published in *Children's Literature Collection: Approaches to Research* (2017) edited by Keith O'Sullivan and Padraic Whyte does offer a criticism of Colum's authorial process. It comments on the text's ability to familiarize the child reader to the complex relationship between storytelling and landscape. Again, Whyte's essays published in *Story Time: Essays on the Betsy Beinecke Shirley Collection of American Children's Literature* (2016), evaluates Colum's contribution to American children's literature as a voice of the diaspora within the American canon. Phil Young's biographical text on Patricia Lynch titled, *Patricia Lynch Storyteller* (2005) holds a mirror to her tumultuous childhood, her feelings of estrangement from her homeland as a resident in London and how her personal experiences shaped her narratives. Albeit Phil Young refrains from critically analysing any of her fiction. There is a dearth of critical material on Martin Waddell.

This dissertation seeks to study the postcolonial at its intersection with the 'fantastic' in children's literature. As mentioned in The Fantastic in Theory the 'fantastic' can be differentially read as a genre or a mode of reading but for the purpose of this study the latter will be considered. The 'fantastic' as a mode of reading can represent a moment of hesitation actualized in a narrative and recognized by the reader or the hesitation can also be marked by alien or spectral presence within a text that momentarily befuddles the reader. The spectral presence is omniscient in both Bangla and Irish/Anglo-Irish children's literature. *The Ghost Story from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century: A Ghostly Genre* edited by Helen Conrad O'Briain and Julie Anne Stevens is an exhaustive exploration of the evolution of the ghost in short fiction. Several writers of repute such as Edgar Allan Poe, M.R. James, Robert Aickman,

Sheridan Le Fanu are brought within the purview of the study. But these authors appeal to the predicament of the adult. In terms of children's literature, Judith Armstrong's essay, "Ghosts as rhetorical devices in children's literature (1978), considers reading ghosts as narrative devices in children's literature on temporality. The ghost in children's literature of Ireland seems to be awaiting critical literary attention especially in the context of Ireland's colonial history as so does the Bengali *bhoot.*

All the works cited above have in some meaningful way informed the present study. But as reviewed, there are several gaps in the existing literature. This study not only strives to bridge these compelling gaps but also proposes a novel direction in the study of 'postcolonial fantastic' in juvenile literature that reads the representations of the fantastic in Irish/Anglo-Irish and Bangla texts within a comparative framework to reveal interesting parallels induced by shared experiences of oppression and trauma manifested in the authorial imaginings of postcolonial childhoods.

5. Methodology

The methodological framework for this study is based on textual analysis of primary texts, archival research, mining biographical and autobiographical resources, and discourse analysis. This study is based upon close reading of indigenous and Anglophone magazines and periodicals, adaptations of folk narratives and fairyt ales. An attempt has been made to focus on the texts and their interpretations. Magazines, periodicals, diary entries, and old manuscripts have been consulted to accrue required information on subjects that inform the research. For gathering information on the Bangla periodicals, journey to the National Library in Kolkata was necessary. To collect resources on Padraic Colum archival trips were made to The University of Binghamton in New York and the Kislak Centre at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The archives at The National Library in Dublin furnished resources on indigenous print

literature of Ireland. The autobiographical and biographical materials have facilitated a more intimate understanding of authors such as Padraic Colum, Ella Young, and Patricia Lynch. In discourse analysis context is key. The context determines how data is analysed and meaning constructed. As Gordon explicates, in discourse analysis, "it is the breath of contexts in which utterances are considered." (2009, p. 192) The authors and their works have been studied in relation to their social contexts, political ideologies, and literary techniques. Therefore, a study in text linguistics and the social context in which a certain discourse is embedded has formed a focal concern of this study.

Irish writing in English and English translations of Bangla texts have been examined in the thesis. In "Jimín Mháire Thaidhg and Constructions of Childhood in Irish-Language Children's Literature in the Independence Period, 1910–1940," Róisín Adams states that most of the Irish language texts and the Irish translations of English texts published by indigenous publishers such as An Gum, acted as agents of the despotic free state had only one objective: to promote the native language. These publications were not concerned with the content of the books they were publishing or their suitability for the juvenile readers. On the contrary, Anglo-Irish juvenile literature, some written by authors who lived outside the state, offered dynamic reading material to the children and the young adults. Therefore, this study will solely focus on these materials. The Bangla texts referred to in the study are mostly those that are already available in translations or have been translated for the sake of this study.

To respond to the first research question mentioned earlier, there are two aspects to this study that need to be foregrounded and contexualised within a theoretical framework:

- the literary 'fantastic' in juvenile literature,

- the colonial/postcolonial ‘fantastic’ in indigenous/Anglophone literatures.

Regarding the former, this dissertation will apply relevant theoretical and critical opinions on the ‘fantastic’, which have previously formed the discursive setting to adult literature and apply them to children’s fiction with a view that a methodology might emerge and serve as a tool for analysing juvenile literature. (See

The Fantastic in Theory) The theoretical frameworks provided by Todorov, Vax, Caillois, H.P.Lovecraft, Scneider, Bessièrem and Rabkin have informed the conceptualisation of the ‘fantastic’ in juvenile literature. As for the latter, this study attempts to examine such representations of the ‘fantastic’ and the supernatural that offer postcolonial critique of imperialism. Edward Said’s exposition of “sovereign Western Consciousness” (1978), Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak (2008) and Antonio Gramsci (1971) on subalternity, Homi Bhaba’s ‘third space of enunciation’ (1994) and Brian Friel and the theorization of Irish nationalism (1959) constitute the axis used to read the constructions of the ‘child’ and ‘childhood’ in Irish/Anglo-Irish and Bangla juvenile fiction through the agency of the ‘fantastic.’ Again, both the approaches entail psychoanalytical readings and their literary and cultural reportage. The distinction between home and the familiar but unhomely forms the fulcrum of the child’s fantastic experience in this study and is informed by the psychoanalytical enquiries into the Freudian ‘uncanny’ (1919/1925) and its manifestation in postcolonial children’s literature. The distinction between horror and pleasure in children’s literature is analysed in the light of Julia Kristeva’s insights into the ‘abject’ (1982).

Irish/Anglo-Irish and Bangla children’s literature criticism has always painted the canons in broad strokes. Criticism has focused on a range of topics, including the exploration of Irishness in Irish children’s fiction against the background of the Empire,

the use of traditional Irish tales to promote a distinct Irish identity, the critique of recycled tales for young Irish children, the study of translations of Irish children's literature, and its influence on the narrative, the Irish in American literature, etc. There have been generic studies in the development of childist criticism and children's contribution to the development of the canon. A common thread in Irish and Bangla critical studies is the juxtaposition of self-identity with national identity reflected in the children's writings (Ellis Dillon, Marita Conlon-McKenna, Supriya Goswami) but a comparative study has not been conducted yet. The thesis attempts to uncover the co-relations between the mythical, political, and literary imaginings of two disparate races cognate in their zeitgeist. The texts that are analysed in this study tend to destabilize the Anglo-centricism inherent in the 'sovereign Western Consciousness' through the dismantling of meaning, identity, and epistemic certainty. In Lyotard's "incredulity towards metanarratives,' (1984, p. xxiv) and Derrida's notion of the text where "every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace," (2016, p. 142) lies the theoretical recourse to this study that tends to evaluate those signs, traces, and motifs that direct the readers to new meanings and significations. When Derrida says "there is nothing outside the text" (2016, p. 142) what he essentially is saying is that there is no concrete reality that is not already textual. Therefore, this study is not founded upon any notions of reality that is immutable but on the significations of language as all cultural meanings, ideologies, and philosophies are products of language and not offshoots of any fixed idea of reality that exists outside of language.

6. Chapter Summary

Chapter One, "Children in Print: Leisure Reading and the Fantastic Connection," traces the growing popularity of leisure reading in Ireland and Bengal. The juvenile periodicals and public libraries in Ireland became the seat of pleasure reading for

children and little magazines in Bengal played the role of disseminating beyond-the-textbook literature to the juvenile readers. This chapter also briefly talks about the educational policies in India and Ireland and their impact on school curriculum. It reviews the conditions that led to the emergence of print cultures and the practice of leisure reading or recreational reading in Bengal and Ireland, especially for the dissemination of nationalistic literature. As Marie Kennedy points out in *Constructions of the Irish Child in Independence Period, 1910-1940*:

> The Irish school curriculum between 1910-1940, centered on the revival of the Irish language as the spoken language of the people and the inculcation of pride in a native culture defined exclusively in catholic and nationalistic terms, (2018, p. 2)

Parallely, Irish libraries, although trying to foster 'moral citizenship,' sought to provide literature of a distinctly 'Irish kind' in conjunction with 'the best of English language literature' reflecting the libraries dual role in fostering a strong sense of national identity coupled with a 'cultivated citizenry' based on essential bourgeoisie value,' as such encouraging an eclectic and hybridised space for children to experience literature. In Bengal, the children's magazines and periodicals, such as *Balak*, *Balyasakha*, *Kishor*, and *Sandesh*, encouraged leisure reading practices among children, which was seen as a departure from the pedanticism of textbooks, providing alternative reading experiences. These publications also tried to bring the best of the 'outside' world and their literature to Bengal. This study proposes that these initiatives consolidated the publication, distribution, and perusal of youth-centric literature that included fantastic and supernatural fiction. This chapter will look at these aspects of children's literature publication in Ireland and Bengal, as noted above, and establish its relationship to the growing investment in the 'fantastic' and a subsequent emergence of nationalist children's literature that at the same time, borrowed from and defied the

British literary models and Euro-centric universalism. Some of these articles which appeared in the literary magazines and quarterlies laid out the blueprint for the 'postcolonial fantastic' in juvenile literature.

Chapter Two, "The Fantastic Folks: The Supernatural in Folk Narratives," begins with a study of the fantastic in British and other European children's fiction (German, French, Italian) to determine its functionality and significance from the standpoint of narration/meaning-making and how it differs from the narrative/thematic modalities prevalent in Irish and Bangla juvenile literature. This chapter then attempts to read a selection of recrudescent folk tales from Bengal and Ireland and analyse how they have evolved and acquired new meanings with time. This section further examines the folkloric adaptations of three authors from Ireland and Bengal: Ella Young, Padraic Colum, and Upendrakishore Raychoudhury. Colum's adaptation of 'The King of Ireland's Son's' myth which was published as a children's novel in 1916 will be considered for close reading in this chapter. The other texts reviewed will include narratives from *The Celtic Wonder Tales* (1910) such as 'The Earth Shapers,' 'The Spear of Victory,' and 'The Coming of Lugh' by Ella Young. These texts are chosen because they transform myths and local folklore into politically charged, allegorical narratives on reclaiming the lost cultural glory of Ireland and familiarising the child with the concept of nationalism. The young heroes are written into these narratives in a way that Irish children can find themselves in the visage of the mythical heroes. The fantastic machinery has a transformative impact on the overall narrative. For instance, in Padraic Colum's adaptation, the image of a barren, stony, and crop-less Ireland is invoked time and again. An enchanter has assumed lordship of the island and disavowal of his commandments will wipe out vegetation and livestock from the country. British imperial occupation in Ireland and the subsequent famine and exodus of the Irish

populace compels the reader to search for historical references in the retelling of this Gaelic myth. In the introduction to the *Selected Poems of Padraic Colum* (1989), Sanford Sternlicht draws our attention to the representation of the working classes in his poems; the men and women of the fields, as he calls them, and how the ancient legends gave them the strength to live through the long years of suffering in Ireland. Colum has often been accused of pandering to the immigrant sentiments of the Irish and presenting a very outside/inside view of Ireland in his works. Sternlicht, on the other hand, illustrates how the ploughers, ballad makers, honey sellers, old women, scribes, and poor scholars represents the true aristocracy in Colum's poetry and not the West Britons who live in big houses. It is a perspective that sheds light on Colum's adaptations and the underlying motivation in acquainting the child reader to the reality of life as experienced in colonial Ireland. In this chapter, Colum's use of the frame narrative and the method of contemporising the folk-form will be analysed in the light of postcolonial theory. In the same manner Young and her adaptations of the Irish mythological cycle will be canvassed. The longing for the wretched home invaded by the ugly *Fomors* who have stolen the Cauldron of Plenty and carried it away is conveyed in Young's mythical tales. The episode involving the Tuatha Dé Danaans and Fomorians can be read as a tale of oppression and diaspora, if the Gods and the invaders who force them to relegate to the Otherworld are imagined as representations of indigenous people of the island and the sea-borne occupiers respectively. The folk narratives adapted by Upendrakishore Raychoudhury can also be analysed likewise. Raychaudhury has a huge body of work and two collections of stories viz. *Upendrakishore Omnibus, Volumes 1 and 2*, both of which will be used as primary texts in this dissertation. Upendrakishore draws heavily on Indian myths, like Irish folklorists who drew on Celtic/Gaelic myths. These Indian myths are further *bengalisised* to cater to the Bengali readers. One of the salient features

of these retellings for children is the use of humour and the transformation of seemingly serious mythical tales into jocose domestic anecdotes, like the stories of 'Agasthya' or 'Dhadhichi' and 'Pratitheyi'. *Goopi Gyne Bagha Byne* (GGBB), again, is an adaptation of an old village folklore about two simpletons, a singer and a drummer, and their supernatural encounter. The eponymous heroes seek supernatural assistance in averting an impending war between two powerful kingdoms by offering the esurient king and his oppressed and ravenous subjects something that few have in abundance and most perish without in a colonial economy; food. RayChoudhury was working on this adaptation at a time when India was under the Queen's rule and the country was struggling to supply men and resources to fight the British wars and there was widespread scarcity of agricultural produces and food. In this chapter, the lives and works of the authors are discussed in detail to understand how their experiences and ideologies could have influenced their works, especially in the light of the post-colonial discourse.

Chapter Three, "They Weep Some Time Worn Fairy Only ?: The Supernatural In Literary Fairy Tales," brings together a selection of appropriated traditional fairy tales to peruse the use of language, colloquialisms, native expressions, and local tropes employed to recast the traditional narrative. This chapter opens with a critical analysis of the fairy tales collected from native informants and documented in English as part of the first phase of the literary revival in Ireland and Bengal. Then it reads fairy tales composed by Edmund Leamy in *Irish Fairy Tales* (1890) and compares them to those written by Lal Bihari Day in *Folktales of Bengal* (1883), *Thakurdadar Jhuli* (1913) and *Thakurdadar Thale* (1909). This chapter considers the different ways in which the authors construct a 'fairy world' that subverts and demonizes the Anglican model while borrowing several structural and thematic elements from it as a mode of re-writing the 'Western meta-ethic.' Julia Kristeva's postulation of 'abjection' is used to read the

process of individuation of the child hero in the fairy tale adaptations. Kristeva's theory stems from the basic principle that children recognise themselves as separate entities by dissociating the 'self' from the maternal 'other.' The fearsome maternal (anti-mother) is a recurrent figure in Irish and Bangla fairy tales. The *abject*, as Kristeva describes it, is distinguished by its ambiguity because it terrifies the 'self' but also supplicates the *abject* for validation. The child's subjectivity is developed through the 'othering' of the fear-inducing maternal often embodied in the folkloric characterisation of the she-devil, rakshasa, giantess or the fairy. It also addresses the 'construction' of the child within narratives with nationalistic underpinnings emboldened by the deft and ingenuous use of the supernatural apparatus, suggesting a co-relation between the individuation of the hero and the formation of his national consciousness by associating the nation with the 'maternal.'

These narratives not only resist the meta-ethic of Western canonical fiction, but they also create new and discursive meanings. It is a process that begins with the Bengali story-tellers writing in English and eventually finds a more indigenous expression in vernacular children's fiction, directly influencing the nationalistic project. It is a narrative process that is followed and perfected by Patricia Lynch from the Irish tradition and Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay from the Bengali tradition. Mukhopadhyay and Lynch comment on female agency and their position of subalternity through indigenisation of the fairy-tale and re-invention and contemporisation of the folk narratives respectively. The incorporation of fantasy elements in folk retellings re-furbish old narratives and invests them with varied interpretive possibilities. *The Grey Goose of Kilnevin* (1939) and *Orla of Burren* (1954) by Patricia Lynch and *Kankabati* (1892) by Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay will be examined to understand how these authors construct childhoods/girlhoods that contend with their social peripherality or

liminality within the fluid dimensionality of the 'fantastic' to negotiate with their gendered identities and chequered national history.

Chapter Four, "I can See Me and I am Not Nobody: The Empowering Supernatural," focuses on two authors of children's fantasy, especially in their use of the ghost narrative. It begins with a review of Victorian and Anglophone (Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Indian) apparition narratives to establish some salient features of the genre in colonial/post-colonial literary traditions. The use of ghost fiction in Bangla satirical literature influenced several writers of children's literature. The use of the horror-humour conjunction, a legacy of Bangla satirical literature in children's fiction, is explored. Moving on, this chapter presents a critique of Martin Waddell a.k.a Catherine Sefton's *The Back House Ghost* (1974), *The Ghost and Bertie Boggin* (1980), *Bertie Boggin and the Ghost Again! (*1988) and *The Ghosts of Cobweb (*1992) read in contiguity to *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan* (1976) and *Pagla Shaheber Kobor or The Mad Sahib's Grave* written by Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay. These are essentially 'underdog' stories where ghostly interventions result in the subjectivation of the 'child hero.' Whereas Bertie, "the smallest Boggin in the house full of Bogginses," (1980, p. 9) is terrorized by his brother and sister, Max and Elsie, Burun, in *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan* is rebuked by his father for his dismal grades and ostracized by the family on his resounding failure. Both Bertie and Burun befriend a spectral being from the netherworld and the friendship leads to the children's self-sublimation. These texts construct the 'fantastic' through subversive laughter, humour, sarcasm ,and irony, giving rise to a unique space of articulation for both the authors and the protagonists. Moreover, it establishes the supernatural as an extension of the logical and the natural. The lines are blurred as fantasy and reality become contiguous and inter-changeable. Sigmund Freud's ideation of 'uncanny' or unhomely expounds the constructions of the

‘child’ who feels displaced, exiled and ‘othered’ within the regimentations of adult discourses.

Chapter Five, “Thus My Story Endeth, The Natiya Thorn Withereth: Realigning Perspectives,” concludes the dissertation. It links the several strands of the argument put forward in this dissertation to the emergence of a ‘postcolonial fantastic’ in juvenile literature. The ‘postcolonial fantastic’ is conceived in this study as an authorial tool to explore the wild and pluralistic possibilities of the juvenile consciousness to account for the author’s own counter-hegemonic and nationalistic visions. Reading children’s literature as post-colonial is problematic. Arguably, all children’s literature is post-colonial – most children’s books have an adult writer or an omniscient adult narrator. By that logic, children’s literature studies are studies in postcoloniality. As Roderick McGillis writes then, in “Postcolonialism, Children and their Literature,” that “children remain the most colonized persons on the globe,” (McGillis, 2000, p. 7), hence post-colonial reading of children’s literature must entail, what McGillis calls the ‘uncovering of the contstructedness of our cultural identity’ (12). This study reads the ‘constructed’ child in fantastic/supernatural fiction and comments on the nature and purpose of these constructions and their relevance in contemporary literary criticism of children’s literature. It attempts a revisionist reading of popular literature to show how it constructs the world for the children in postcolonial cultures by writing back to the Empire.

Chapter One: Children in Print: Leisure Reading and the Fantastic Connection

1. Overview

Our home is in the land of gold,

Tucked in the lap of India.

On her body flows the Mandakini in humdred streams,

A snow-covered mountain adorns her bosom,

And an endless ocean of surf waves washes her feet…

In weal and woe we stay together,

We tie the rakhi-knot of love on each other's hand.

Our country house is in the land of gold where nobody tires,

In the green lap of Mother India we happily live.

---Sonar Desh or The Land of Gold
(July 1913, pp. 65)

My country I have loved thee, but now we must part,

The home of my friends, and the land of my heart;

The deep rumbling river, the rock breasted shore,

My own native Glen, my Aileen Astore!

---The Convict's Farewell to his Country
(August 1829, pp.305)

These poems excerpted from two very popular periodicals from the pre-Independence era illustrate an outpouring of passion addressed to an imaginary mother(land). The former appeared in the first volume of the Bengali periodical, *Sandesh* and the latter in the Irish periodical *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine*. Although these magazines and

periodicals published articles for juvenile readership, they attracted an audience of every age group. These periodicals/literary magazines published materials ranging from fiction, non-fiction, and poetry to riddles and puzzles for entertainment and guidance. Periodicals/Literary magazines, such as *The Casket* (1797-1798) , *The Juvenile Magazine* (1814-1815), *The Select Magazine for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons* (1822), *The Dublin Family Magazine* or *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine or Literary and Religious Miscellany* (1829), *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine* (1860) and *Young Ireland: An Irish Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction* (1875) published in Ireland and *Jyotiringan or The Firefly* (1869) *Sakha* (1883), *Balak* (1885), *Sakha o Sathi* (1894*), Balyasakha* (1905), *Shishu* (1913) and *Kishore or The Young Adult* (1921), from Bengal offered a literary breakthrough: they paved the path for outside-of-textbook reading or leisurely reading and popularized recreational reading practices among the youth. Established writers and essayists contributed to these publications and offered a great range of reading material that the textbooks lacked. In this chapter, the juxtaposition of juvenile reading traditions and publication histories of Bengal and Ireland is not suggestive of any efforts at the homogenization of the Bangla and Irish experiences; rather, it sets out to present a picture of shared colonial reading cultures that resulted in the increasing fascination of the literary fantastic among the Irish and Bengali juvenile readership and the burgeoning of a national literature. The Irish and Bangla literary periodicals had different objectives for publishing certain types of articles. For instance, majority of the magazines printed by Christian Missionary Societies in Bengal had no underlying formal or religious agenda unlike the Irish publications. Albeit, some articles in Bangla periodicals/literary magazines, primarily scientific literature, seemed to give equal importance to deductive knowledge and Christian fealty. When compared, the curricular structure of Bengali and Irish schools

seems to have a lot in common, especially in their focus on languages, religious studies, moral education, and basic sciences. The educationists favoured teaching the Irish language over teaching of literature, even Anglo-Irish literature.[19] To understand how creative fiction made its way to the colonial children, one must understand the educational policies followed in these nations and their far-reaching impact on pedagogy and learning. This chapter will look into the educational policies prevalent in colonial India and Ireland and determine their role in shaping the curriculum in schools, the nature of textbooks and how literary magazines/periodicals marked a deviation from textual literacy. The chapter will then compare the role of indigenous Irish print literature and children's libraries in promoting local and 'secular' literature or world literature among the Irish similar to Bengali literary magazines and periodicals in India. The Irish literary magazines and periodicals (*Duffy's, Young Ireland*) acted as a precursor to the more liberal and secular literature for children popularized by the Irish libraries, that were at the same time, contributing to and belying established literary models of children's literature prevalent in Ireland. One of the defining features of publishing youth-centric literature was the deployment of fantastic narratives to pedantic and aesthetic ends; for example, teaching the child about nature in the form of a fairy-tale seen in Bengali literary magazines/periodicals. Irish periodicals, although under tremendous influence of religious nationalism, did encourage publication of secular narratives on the fantastic that promoted Irish-ness. Parallelly, Irish children's libraries played a defining role in bringing the best of Irish and world literature to the young people in the country by providing them a reading experience that challenged the stringency and mundaneness of schools. The libraries encouraged children to read folklore, fairy tales, and fantastic fiction. Leisure reading paved the way for fantastic

[19] See 'The New Order,' Titley. (1983, p. 97).

fiction to make in-roads into the reading practices of children and also endeavoured to challenge Anglo-centric and religious stereotypes that colonial education sought to perpetuate.

2. The Educational Policies in India and Ireland

Thomas Walsh has extensively written about the conceptualization of childhood for children and parents as the most important determinant for drawing up school curriculum. He makes an interesting observation when he says that the Irish conceptualization of the child transitioned from the Apollonian child who requires direction and guidance to develop their skills to the Dionysian child who needs disciplining and reformation for holistic development. And, in creating the ideal child, religious instruction seems to occupy a prime seat. He writes, "the state wished schools to be agents of socialisation, assimilation, politicisation, and reproduction while churches sought schools to be conduits of the faith and installers of religious loyalties and values." (2018, p. 27) Between the years preceding 1900 and following 1944, the Irish educational policies and statutes witnessed various changes. Titley states that a politically powerful Catholic church influenced the development of the Irish school system in the nineteenth century. The Church was desirous of yielding direct control over the education system: the schools, curriculum, and educational infrastructure. The State, under British rule, made several attempts towards the secularization of the Irish school system and tried to introduce reforms. But, every time, they faced strong and debilitating criticism and opposition from the ecclesiastical order. The national system of primary school in 1831 wanted to provide "joint secular and separate religious institutions to children of all persuasions" (1983, p. 5) The control also extended to the secondary schools. "Secularism and democracy in education were the ideological enemies" (11) of the Church and "they were championed by both major British political

parties"(11), the Labour and Conservative parties in England. The Intermediate Education Act of 1900 suggested the necessity of inspection in Irish schools, although, initially, as a temporary measure. It also proposed sustained involvement of the Department of Education to monitor the quality of education and teaching at these institutes. Unsurprisingly, the Catholic Church viewed this as a threat to clerical monopoly and vehemently opposed such State interference. Frank Dales assumed the responsibility of reporting on the current system of inspection in schools. In his report, he claimed that the Irish education system was decidedly inferior to its British counterpart. The Church realised that the successive British governments were inclined to overthrow the educational status quo in Ireland and bring about a secularization of basic education and that the only way they could avert this was by the formation of a Dublin parliament. In this way, the aim of the clergy and the Irish freedom fighters coincided. An Irish free state guaranteed the perpetuation of the educational status quo. Then came the year of the 1916 Rebellion. Titley writes:

> The resignation of the chief secretary in the aftermath of the 1916 Rebellion placed the Irish administration in the hands of less conciliatory men. It opened the door for reforms of a more drastic nature. Predictably enough, the Catholic church was unlikely to acquiesce in changes that threatened its interests. Appeals to national sentiment became increasingly the principal focus of its strategy. British sponsored reforms would place Irish education in "foreign fetters." On this occasion the government's efforts would be frustrated not only by ecclesiastical obstructivism, but by the rapidly deteriorating security question. (52)

The Macpherson Bill drafted by James Macpherson was one such measure to free Irish education of its denominational influence and religious nature. The British government tactfully coerced the Irish schools to follow the postulates of the Bill. The Bill proposed the formation of a single Department of Education instead of the National, Intermediate, Agricultural, and Technical Boards of education. The Chief

Secretary of the State was to act as the president of this body, and the vice-president of the agricultural department was to act as the vice president of this newly made-up board. A sixteen-member committee with county and borough level representation and members of the teachers' association and experts on education assisted the board. The Bill also promised denominational teaching in schools and better salaries for lay or non-clerical teachers. It seemed like the bill promised everyone something, but Macpherson had a clause that stated that the *states* will receive increased funding only on the event of the acceptance of the Bill which the nationalistic press termed educational extortion. Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe, perhaps, offered the harshest criticism of this coercion saying that Macpherson has forced the Irish children into submission at the point of a bayonet.

Apart from the members of the clergy, several others criticized British control of Irish schooling–Padraic Pearse being one of them. Pearse is also considered to be one of the orchestrators of the Irish Free State. An unapologetic Pearse offers a scathing criticism of the British interest in Irish education in the "The Murder Machine." (1916) He laments the death of education in Ireland. He states that the English have established a simulacrum of an education system and the object of that system is opposed to the object of education itself. He also suggests that English education is repressive, demotivating, and enervating; adding no value to the child's intellectual development. The primary aim of English education is fashioning servile English clones. He believes that the English are too wise to impart meaningful education to the Irish, so that the Irish can never become a threat to their supremacy. In this article he proposes a robust education system is built upon the pillars of religion, patriotism, literature, arts, and sciences. The character and conduct of children are formed in the presence of an educational environment found on these precepts. Apart from the paramount importance

he accords religion and religious studies and moral sciences, he also emphasises the need to bring Irish back into schools and make it a “first language” and the medium of instruction.

Pearse’s summation of the object of English education in Ireland is reminiscent of Thomas Babington Macaulay’s *Minutes.* Macaulay was a British historian and politician known for his *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) and the notoriety it garnered among the Indian natives. In the *Minutes* he vehemently opposes the study of ancient Indian languages, such as Arabic and Sanskrit; proposes English, and not the native tongue, as the medium of instruction in schools; and shows a blatant disregard for the indigenous literature of India. In the *Minutes*, he expresses the need to educate the people who must learn English to understand the great texts of the West because they are better than indigenous literature. He also states how inferior and crude the Indian languages are, and that they are ineligible for translation. The Indian languages faced the same condescension and neglect as native Irish. In India, this gave rise to the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy. Macaulay was an Anglicist who believed in the superiority of the English language and the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools. The Orientalists upheld the importance of imparting education to the natives in their native tongues. In India, too, there developed a deep distrust for English education and a growing need to popularize writing and reading in vernacular languages. But, the Christian missionaries played conflicting roles in India and Ireland.

In Ireland, the Catholic influence attempted to override British literary and cultural influences and the clergy controlling the school curriculum opposed reading and writing of Anglo-Irish literature. Conversely, the Christian missionaries in India introduced the populace to the best of the Western literature and its translations. But this happened amidst an atmosphere of suspicion and an aversion of the natives to the

Christian missionaries, who represented a unique culture and religion, which was alien to them. The primary aim of these missionaries was the conversion of the poverty-stricken natives of India who were fighting several religious and casteist prejudices in the country. India, being a multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural country, meant that such attempts at homologisation would be met with repulsion. The religious scuffle that formed the backdrop to the creation of Irish Free State parallels that of the religious struggles of the native people of India against the onslaught of Christianity. The literature of this period in Irish and Indian history also bears testimony to this influence and an attempt at resisting it.

The indigenization of the curriculum was the natural response of the educationists in the free state of Ireland and that of India. In *The Curriculum: A Comparative Perspective* (1989), Holmes and McLean address the debates that surrounded the introduction of indigenous Indian culture into the school curriculum, before and after independence. They demonstrate two principal arguments in favour of indigenisation stating that educational content should reflect the culture and community of the students, otherwise it's detrimental to the child psyche. They also foreground the importance of the school curriculum in developing national identity in newly independent states.

As we have already seen, the primary aim of the school curriculum in colonial and post-colonial India and Ireland was the strengthening of the national fabric and the preservation of religious values. In India, too, the Dionysian conceptualization of childhood dominated the curricular discourses at primary and secondary school levels. The emphasis shifted from practical learning to didactic literature and memorization. Rabindranath Tagore, in his short story, *Tota Kahini or The Parrot's Training* (1944), depicts the plight of a bird who was fed on scriptures leading to the loss of the

creature's natural abilities of singing and flying as a metaphor for the plight of Indian students losing their individuality because of the modern education system.

In *The Gopal-Rakhal Dialectic,* Shibaji Bandopadhyay links the popularity of didactic literature to the relation between the Panopticon[20] and the colonial subjects of the British. The ideal reformatory or panopticon, as proposed by Jeremy Bentham, would foster national integration, suppressing mass dissent. This elaborate unit works under the biopolitical state machinery for the so-called betterment of the individual, leading to the formation of a disciplined and controlled society. Children were not exempt from this vision, rather children and workers were seen as ideal candidates for such a social experiment. For the state to function as this massive reformatory, it needed to first establish that the natives were barbaric and ignorant and then initiate them within the disciplinary machinery of the state. With English as the medium of instruction, schools became the basic units of this biopolitical control: the school or the symbolic cage incarcerating the *tota* bird. Again, the absolute control of the state necessitated a powerful dismissal of other modes of communion or togetherness such as religion. So, the first step towards this objective necessitated an attack on popular religion, religious practices, and native literature that extensively drew its material from religious stories and myths. In Ireland, the State opposed the Catholics and in India, the

[20] The term Panopticon coined by Jeremy Bentham has been used to describe the relationship of the people in a British dependency with the imperial centre of power. In the words of Bentham, "The panopticon is not an ordinary prison, in which the warden as a rule exposes himself to the eyes of the prisoners as much as possible because he knows discipline of the prisnors depends on his real presence… in the panopticon, the inspector exposes himself to the eyes of the prisoners as less as possible: all of his powers over the prisoners derives from his invisibility, or more precisely, his 'invisible omnipresence.' Therefore, it can be inferred that the prison operates in anticipation of the inspectors arrival. It is therefore an indirect form of control, similar to English education of the indigenous and ethnic minorities, that the imperial government embraced in their dependencies. See *The Panopticon Writings,* (1995, pp. 9-10).

Hindus and Muslims. The imperial government designated the natives as slaves to superstitions and creators of bizarre narratives replete with supernatural characters and manipulations of historical facts. This was an essential measure at vilifying indigenous cultures and establishing their inadequacy in maintaining a high standard of morality. In a *History of British India* (1817), James Mill categorically rubbishes the Hindu religion, mythology and even literature composed by Hindu writers. Throughout Mill emphasises the importance of 'utilitarian' science as the only form of education that would benefit the ignorant people of the country. Mill believed an English education alone cannot guarantee the success of the empire-building agenda of the state. Mill was also unconvinced about the role of poetry or literature in educating the people. Macaulay suggested that it is only through English education imparted in the English language that the state can create deserving and disciplined inmates of the 'Panopticon,' the obedient slaves of the British excellency. He said neither Christian faith nor Western science would affect the natives. It was English literature that possessed all the qualities that could cure the natives of their superstitions and educate the upper class, upper caste Bengalis. It is interesting to note, how the primary targets of this reformatory process were the individuals in upper class society, which stems from the dual aim of retributive and utilitarian education that the East India Company espoused through the implementation of educational policies proposed by the Company. The charter of 21st July, 1813, can be considered as the inception of modern education in India. The charter allowed missionaries to open schools in the country. The Forty-Third clause of the charter stated that a sum of one lakh rupees must be set aside for the revival and improvement of literature and encourage the study of sciences among the learned natives of India[21]; a clause much criticized by Macaulay in his *Minutes.* Macaulay was

[21] See J.C. Aggarwal's 'Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education,' (1983, pp.1).

of the opinion that the postulates in the Charter were vague and did not specify the nature of the literature that the Company wanted to promote among the natives. He opined that the word 'literature' could mean Arabic or Sanskrit literature and that the study of Indian classical literature would be a colossal wastage of the State's financial aid. Nevertheless, it would take another ten years for this aid to be put to use for the purpose designated in the Charter. The Charter also bestowed exceptional freedom to the Christian missionaries to promote education in India. Since the missionaries were on a proselytizing mission, it was important to them that their schools operated at the grassroots and included children from all classes and castes unlike the primary agenda of the Company and the advisors such as Macaulay who wanted to target the upper classes who would be keener on an English education. Therefore, the chosen medium of instruction for the missionaries was the vernaculars and they did much to translate English texts into these vernaculars to increase their acceptability among the natives. The Central Committee of Public Instructions that came into effect in July 1823 also advocated classical or oriental learning. They established many vernacular educational institutions in India such as the Calcutta Madrassa and the Sanskrit College based on the recommendations of the Committee. Colleges recruited oriental scholars to translate English texts in native languages. The committee also suggested introduction of English classes in educational institutions. The Anglicist/Orientalist debate had peaked. The debate was put to rest in 1835 after Lord William Bentinck announced a policy, on the recommendations of Macaulay, stating that the unused educational aid which increased to a sum of ten lakh rupees a year could only be used to disseminate the study of European literature and sciences and propagation of English education, yielding a formidable blow to the cause of the orientalists. Lord Harding's resolution in 1844 further weakened the strength of the classicists when the Company made it easier for

candidates educated in institutions established for the promotion of English education better eligible for government employability. These policies and state undertakings cumulatively affected the enrolment ratio in vernacular schools and schools for English education, tilting the scales in favour of the latter -- albeit some state governments encouraged the development and operation of vernacular institutions in states such as Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. These schools ran despite dwindling attendance. In the year 1853, with the renewal of the Charter Act of the East India Company, Sir Charles Wood, the then president of the Board of Control, finally addressed the medium of instruction in schools and proposed that vernacular was the most befitting medium of instruction for primary schools and that English should be reserved as the medium of instruction at a secondary stage of education in the country. Wood's recommendations brought about a change of perspective among the natives and the British alike and introduced a more egalitarian plan of education among the natives. His recommendations also emphasised an increased attention towards the education of the girl child. For a very long-time higher education remained the prerogative of the upper classes and the upper castes.

The State realised that the upper classes had free time to spare (leisure) and commanded a considerable influence over the lower classes (domestic helps, employed workers). Therefore, they were seen as ideal candidates to become government affiliates. As expected, the upper-class Bengali, mostly Hindu (a community that came to be identified as the Bengali *bhodrolok* or the respectable Bengalis), welcomed English education and with ample resources and time to spare, travelling to England for higher education gained momentum among this class. After they returned, they were more than happy to serve the British government. It would be only after the Second World War and the introduction of the Sergent's report that free compulsory education

would be introduced for all the children between eight and fourteen that elementary education would reach the grassroots. Therefore, Bangla literary magazines/periodicals were products of some of these upper-class Bengalis who found themselves guilty of British appeasement and marked a dynamic literary psyche that was at the same time awed and challenged by the English.

3. Primary Education in Bengal

In 1818, The Calcutta School Book Society was founded. The primary aim of the society was to prepare and publish books in English and Oriental languages for perusal in educational institutions. The society also saw the collaboration of educated Bengalis and Englishmen, sympathetic to the cause of education in Bengal, providing the Bengal Presidency with additional funding as solicited by The Calcutta School Book Society. The society also declared that it had no underlying religious agenda in its undertakings, yet the society continued to support religious organisations, such as Gaudiya Samaj, Tract Society and The Christian Knowledge Society, and published books that were openly religious. The attempt at publishing vernacular literature through these societies stemmed from the inherent belief, as expressed by Holt Mckenzie in the annual convention of the School Book Society, that if European education reaches out to the children of India through the medium of Bengali, it will only increase their curiosity in learning the language used in the primary texts.[22] Therefore, heedless of the society's proclaimed rationale of secularity it continued to publish materials that entailed a fusion of "English education and Christian good breeding"(120), such as Bengali translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* as well as books for the use of 'domesticated' (122) Bengali girls, such as Madhushudan Mukhopadhyay's

[22] See The Gopal Rakhal Dialectic: Colonialism and Children's Literature in Bengal, (2015, p.119).

Sushilar Upakhyan.

In the colonial period printing was a, more or less, private affair. In the indigenous education system, the masters would use their own guidebooks to teach and there was no such thing as a textbook for the students. The founders of schools would commission the writing and printing of textbooks. Due to the School Book Society (SBS), textbooks could be published in greater numbers and circulated among students in Bengal. Madanmohan Tarkalankar wrote the primer series, *Shishu Shikha* or *Teaching the Child* (1849/1853) for the girls of Bethune school. He followed the footsteps of Khetromohan Dutta, the first author of Bengali primers. These books were different from the existing textbooks for children or books published by SBS because they meant to simplify the learning of basic Bengali language. These primers were written to acquaint the child with the Bengali alphabets and their usage. The primers such as Tarkalankar's followed the pattern of the English primers. The difference in Tarkalankar's primers from that of the existing ones lay in their marked simplicity and musical or alliterative quality of the sentences. Although written with the objective of teaching *shuddho Bangla* or conversational Bangla, his phraseology was heavily influenced by the Sanskrit used by the upper classes. The texts were interspersed with colloquialisms and had excellent poetic quality to spark the children's imagination. These primers were no less pedantic and moralising than those of SBS's publications, but were aesthetically superior and youth-centric.

It was Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, who commercialised the primers that were to become a staple in the curriculum of modern Indian elementary schools. There is a debate around the influence of Tarkalankar on Vidyasagar's primers, *Barna Parichay* (1855). The similarities are unmissable. Vidyasagar borrowed a lot of ideas from Tarkalankar, later sanitising the *Shishu Shikha* series. Vidyasagar retained some of

Tarkalankar's ideas, but the poetic quality of his text was lost in *Barna Parichay.* The text was prosaic and insipid. There were no passages on nature or rural life and mainly constituted a list of dos and don'ts to educate the child. His books meant to instruct the child on identifying alphabets in the form of morality lessons. The narrator of these texts mimicked strict masters disciplining children. Some of the most defining features of *Barna Parichay* were negation of childish behaviour, establishing the good boy/bad boy binaries, and a reinforcement of the philosophy of the Panopticon.

In *Barna Parichay* Gopal and Rakhal form two sides of the behavioural spectrum. According to Sibaji Bandyopadhyay Gopal-Rakhal dialectic acts as a sort of prototype in Bangla text-book literature. The construction is based on the idea of the good boy who is obedient, studious, invariably first in class and the bad boy who is disobedient, inattentive to studies, and fails in class; an idea dominating the textbook definition of childhood and the Bengali cultural consciousness. The fourth chapter of this dissertation offers a reading of Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay's *GGB,* as a counter-argument to the Gopal-Rakhal dialectic. The Gopal-Rakhal dynamic is also in keeping with the Benthamite rulebook vision of Bengali educationists like Vidyasagar. *Barna Parichay* is unapologetically didactic. Part one of *Barna Parichay*, the book of alphabets and elementary Bengali is divided into several *Paths* or Lessons. Some of the phrases used are: "Ram, why are you laughing? or Don't run around in the sun." (Vidyasagar 1855, p.42)

Again, a passage in the text says:

> It is late. Let us go and study. I have put on a dress. You must get ready too. I have taken my books. Where are your books? Come, let us go, we should not be late. Yesterday we were the last to arrive and could not hear all the lessons. (44)

The passage above is followed by another:

> See Ram, you made a lot of noise during your class yesterday. If you make noise in class it disrupts the process of learning, no one can hear anything. I am warning you, you must not make noise in the class hence forth. (45)

The most interesting aspect of these lessons is that these texts are supposed to aid the child in learning a language. It is quite clear from the nature of the lessons, tone of admonishment of the narrator, and the number of times the importance of school and studying is emphasised, that the text wants to construct an obedient and compliant child. The narrative is conditioning the child into submitting to the Company's imperial mission through vernacular school education. It reiterates the process of constituting the ideal workforce for the state machinery. *Barna Parichay* rebuffed childlike behaviour. The natural urge of a child to laugh or run in the sun were reprimanded and considered unbecoming of a 'good boy.'

In the meantime, several education societies, missionary, and non-missionary, ventured into the children's literary magazine publications space. In 1850, the monthly magazine *Satyapradip* was published. *Streelok*, *Jyotiringan*, *Abodhbandhu* followed. Bandhopadhyay points out that these publications were "replete with unashamed and undiluted eulogies of the British." (133) What we understand as Bengali literature was undoubtedly the product of the elite Bengali community, most of whom were foreign educated men from influential and rich families with their own printing presses and who believed that an English education or the imitation of English culture would facilitate the overall progress of the Indian people. The narratives that these textbooks and magazines upheld betrays glaring omissions. The religious minorities, the indigent classes, and the women are conspicuous by their absence. The narratives are sanitised and homogenised. Despite several drawbacks, to create alternate reading material for children some literary magazines began to innovate. The metanarrative remained unchanged, but literary magazines also started experimenting with their content. The

Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 changed juvenile literature. The mutiny started among the Indian ranks in the British army who suspected that the cartridges they were being asked to detonate at wars, which required the soldier to manually chew off the top of a cartridge, were greased with beef and pork fat. This hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindu and Muslim soldiers alike and they turned mutinous. The mutiny soon spread among the common people and took a formidable shape. But it was not an organized rebellion, and the British were able to successfully subdue the rebellion. As it was the very first form of a rebellion of the people against the Company, it resulted in the formation of a very strong anti-British feeling among the common people of the country. This attitude was also reflected in the children's literature of the nineteenth century. Interspersed among articles lionizing the British were voices of resistance, a resistance that became discernible in the choice of articles published for children, a relaxation on the didacticism of state affiliated curriculum, and a change in the way the child and childhood was being constructed in Bangla juvenile literature. The dynamic nature of the juvenile literary magazine is manifest in the introductory passage of the first volume of *Sakha* published in 1883. The first editor of the magazine, Pramadacharan Sen was a schoolteacher. He realised that there was a dearth of good writing for children and he invested his meagre earnings in the publication of the magazine, choosing a life of penury and frequent starvation. In Bengal, children's literature also emerged from a place of personal interests and struggles. The editorial January 1883 reminds the readers of this magazine, that Indians customarily summon God before venturing into something new. True to the custom the editors of the magazine are invoking God to assist them in compiling a magazine that will educate and instruct children. In the absence of a precedent, the magazine sets out to enlist the support of educated contributors to that end. The aim of the magazine is to become the *sakha* or friend of the

child. This objective is a departure from the textbook narrator of the primer universe who only wants to admonish and not befriend the child reader. The editorial is also compliant with Indian customs and traditions. In this edition of the magazine there are a few guidelines for the readers. Apart from specifying the annual subscription rate and number of illustrations the readers can expect in the magazine, the editors also mention that if the young people want to contribute essays they will be happily accepted and printed in the magazine if they are of a good quality. This also marks a significant development in the outlook of children's literature because the magazine also enabled the children to write their own narratives. *Sakha* covered a diverse range of topics. Not only did the plight of the indigent class found an expression in the magazine but also woman or woman-centric topics appeared frequently. For example, through a story that appeared in the May 1883 issue, cautioning readers of the dangers of unregulated liquor trade, the juveniles are made aware of the plight of women like Radhalata, belonging to the working-classes, who must suffer abuses at the hand of an alcoholic husband along with her children. Again, articles such as *Sharbottam Chhatri* or *The Best Student* and *Meyera Amader ke* or *Who are girls to us?* contributed to the constructions of 'girlhoods' in juvenile literature. Lacking any representation in primers or schoolbooks, the girl child as a consumer and a contributor appeared in the pages of these magazines. *Sharbottam Chhatri* published in the January issue revolved around Shabitri, an accomplished schoolteacher who recognizes the talent in a young girl, the daughter of her cook, choosing her over other girls to tutor the younger students. This is not only brave in terms of creating a strong female character but also talks about upward social movement and empowering the girl child. Although it was not unnatural to find elaborate eulogies of *Our Queen Victoria* and *Lord Ripon*, there were articles such as *Surendra Babur Karabash* or *The Incarceration of Surendrababu*. The article in the

June 1883 issue states at length about Surendranath's contribution in uniting the Bengali community, the community which has forgotten the true meaning of nationalism. It critiques the role of the British administration in India and credits Surendranath, the editor of the *Bangali* magazine for calling out the complacency of the Bengalis. Acknowledging few merits of British influence in India, the author rationalises the need for Indians to take charge of their own motherland, indicating that Surendranath must not be jailed for raising his voice against British injustice. The article ends with a fervent appeal to the destitute children of Mother India to shed a tear or two for the motherland with the hope that someday the children of India will adorn the jails of the country, that their efforts will bring glory to the nation, and that they will make the great Bengali community greater. This article can be seen as one of the earliest attempts in print literature at decolonizing the Anglicist narrative.

Another popular feature of the children's magazine was the mythological and supernatural narratives that were published. In the domain of the supernatural, too, female characters found some prominence. *Hiran Kanna* written by Sourindramohan Mukhopadhyay dabbled with the good girl-bad girl trope but stereotypifies feminine behaviour and nature. It was published in the April 1915 issue of another magazine called *Mukul or The Bud.* (1895). The handsome girl is depicted as obedient and victimised when the jealous half-sister is portrayed as ugly and hence deserving punishment and a gruesome death; a fate she shares with her mother. The death of the evil sister and mother enables the upward social mobility of Hiran Kanna. Despite the gendered narrative, the story gives primacy to female characterisation which was a rarity in nineteenth-century juvenile school and recreational literature alike. The fairy-tale trope is also used by some authors to impart science and biology lessons to the children. These lessons were published in *Sakha* series and were called *Grandfather's*

Tales in the likeness of traditional fairy-tale storytelling but only to raise the scientific acumen of juveniles or in general raise their awareness about nature.

The eighth volume of *Mukul* had a sub-category called *Ashade Golpo* or *Supernatural Tales*, featuring stories such as *Tin Bor* or *Three Wishes*, a supernatural tale about a farmer who provides shelter to a fakir or ascetic who has magical powers and grants him three wishes for his generosity. It is a supernatural tale with a moral. In *Brahman o Brahmoni* or *The Brahmin and his wife* the Brahmin is described as stupid, lazy, and inferior to the wife, who throws him out of their house -- a popular fairy-tale trope that mocks the Brahmin's intelligence. *Bhola Chasha* or *The Farmer named Bhola*, recounts a day in the life of a boy from the indigent class who is scorned by the *babu chheles* or the privileged sons of the *babus* for doing menial jobs such as digging mud or picking grains. Since he performs menial jobs, he has a very good physique. But unlike stereotypical representations of brawny boys as stupid, Bhola is depicted as a meritorious student. He is physically and mentally superior to the sons of the *babus*. The *babu chheles* are jealous of him but he does not fight them. He has a physical scruffle with them only on the account of rescuing a younger boy from being bullied. Unconventional and unique characterizations found a place in these magazines alongside stereotypical and stock portrayals.

By the 20th century, primary education in West Bengal experienced several changes. In 1969, the United Front government in post-colonial India, introduced *Sahaj Path* as a primer in the first and second standard school curriculum in West Bengal. In 1981, the Left Front government in Bengal discontinued *Sahaj Path,* composed by the poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore and planned to introduce a new primer. The government assigned a committee of educationists to compile the text. They felt that *Sahaj Path* was more of a reader than a primer and asynchronous with the realities

of the times. The move was also touted as a necessary means towards universal literacy. Many intellectuals criticized this move. They felt this change was unnecessary and swore by the academic value of the primer. They felt that the new primer was a device of the Left government to create "little communists" in the state.

In "Politics of Primary Education in West Bengal: The Case of Sahaj Path" that appeared in the 1981 issue of the *Economic and Political Weekly*, Poromesh Acharya refutes both these schools of thought and highlights a basic flaw in the assumptions: universal literacy is an impossibility in a state where there is widespread class and caste disparity and that the literary value of *Sahaj Path* is irrelevant in its acceptability among the labouring classes of Bengal who can neither relate to nor completely understand the sophisticated Bengali language and idioms in the text. He writes that in 1954 a music and drama group visited a village near Shantiniketan, the site of Viswa Bharati University founded by the Tagore, the author of *Sahaj Path*. They staged a performance for the local people, which included songs written by the laureate. That also included a drama about a shoe-shine boy from the town. The locals in the adjoining towns were known to have enjoyed these performances. Interestingly, the drama failed to resonate with the villagers. The organisers had to replace the planned performance with an *Alkaf* or folk performance to placate the audience and salvage the show. Although texts such as *Sahaj Path* are replete with rural scenes, Acharya is of the opinion that there is a disconnect between the content and the language of textualization. The sophisticated Bengali in the text was influenced by the very difficult Sanskrit language, mostly the language of the Brahmins (upper castes) and primers were written in the likeness of their English counterparts. It specifically catered to the privileged classes, unlike pre-British Bengali literature that was composed, read ,or sung by the rural, labouring indigent, and mostly non-Brahmin, non-Hindu communities. The representation of

diverse communities and dialects originated in the Pre-British Bengali texts like the *Panchalis* or the *Mangal Kabyas.* Contrarily, Bangla primers aimed at a certain homogenization of class/caste/religious experiences. *Barna Parichay* being a case in point. But unlike *Barna Parichay*, *Sahaj Path* deviated from the beaten path. Although the second, third and fourth parts of the primer can be categorized as readers and not primers per se, they are marked by a simplicity of language and diverse cultural representations. We can see the text as a representation of the 19^{th-} century society, not only because of its diverse characterizations but also as a reflection of the classism inherent in the society at that time.

Both *Barna Parichay* and *Sahaj Path* homogenised the Bengali experience. But the dichotomies and binaries that inform the worldview in *Barna Parichay* are absent in *Sahaj Path.* The *paths* or lessons in the reader can be evaluated based on our understanding of the lessons. It could be seen as a mere representation of the religious and cultural plurality of a people or as the perpetuation of hierarchies in the society. For example, in the third lesson in *Sahaj Path, Part* 2 (1930), the narrator introduces a group of boys on their way to clearing a bush. He suggests taking Bhingi along with them. Bhingi appears in the paragraph like an after-thought and his profession, of that of a sewage cleaner or a menial labourer, is outlined. It is difficult to ascertain the author's intention in specifying Bhingi's profession or not having mentioned him earlier when he presents the other boys and men in the group such as Banga babu and Ananga. The portraiture could have been entirely incidental (meant to teach children about different professions) or reflective of deep-rooted class prejudices of the people from that time. However, unlike *Barna Parichay* these lessons had characters from different ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds. Characters from working-class backgrounds were often portrayed in a tokenistic manner but at times they also appeared as central

characters in a lesson. The indigent people appear as servants or helpers to the upper classes, for instance, poor Durganath who appears in the fifth lesson of the second book. The passage describes him as the hapless man who has lost his house in the flood. It is again, a very relatable experience of people living in the coastal regions of Bengal and belies the Left Front excuse of discontinuing the text because it is dissociated with reality. Perhaps, its predominantly rural appeal failed to resonate with the urban children and hence the government first wanted to replace it with a more contemporary text, but then agreed on both the old and the new texts in the school syllabus after facing criticism. In the same lesson, the author paints a scene where the master is walking in a raincoat and his attendant Turki Miyan is following him. Unlike *Barna Parichay, Sahaj Path* had several non-Hindu characters especially Muslim characters, and not all were represented as lower-caste or servants to upper-caste Hindus; for example, *Tele O Jole* and *Abdul Miyar Golpo*. The former has a famous judge, Seikh Jalaluddin, as the main protagonist, who attended the court of emperor Sher Shah. It is about his intelligence and unique style of dispensing justice; the latter is about a brave sailor, Abdul, and the story he tells a young boy about the times he had single-handedly killed a tiger and an alligator. There is also a representation of the daily struggles of the labouring classes such as the construction worker who lives in the village but travels to the city to earn her living as a daily wage earning professional. The author describes her experiences in the form of a rhyme. The poem corroborates her daily journey, from the time she wakes up in the morning and rides Tamij Miyan's bullock cart to work in the city where she labours from the morning into the afternoon to the evening when she must return home. She builds walls and hammers the roof while crooning a melody. She can see the cars down below, the salesmen banging utensils to attract attention of the buyers, the fruit sellers and the boys running home in the evening. As the day ends, the crows fly east.

That is when her work ends for the day, and she returns to her quaint village where her little hut beside the pond awaits. The description is vivid and emblematic of the life of a construction worker. One might find the passage guilty of romanticizing the labouring class experience or just a lesson to remind one about the perks of employment and an active worklife. This lesson might strike a chord with the children from the labouring classes, but it does not directly address them or their lives. It is also true for all the other lessons in *Sahaj Path*, which present vignettes of daily life or nature but from a distinctly adult perspective irrespective of the class, caste, or religion they address. Again, the twelfth lesson in the second part of the primer acquaints the child to thought-provoking situations and characters. It is written in the manner of an adventure story with a lesson to impart in the end. Whereas *Barna Parichay*, mostly read like an instruction manual, *Sahaj Path* introduced children to literature. Although the story fits into the classist narrative of most of the other lessons, it also marks a departure from the stereotypes. Here, the servant is the saviour. It is based on a doctor and his brave servant, and the narrative describes the great physical prowess of this man, Sambhu. The doctor Vishwambhar babu is travelling in a palanquin to attend to the sick child of a station master along with his servant, Sambhu. His palanquin breaks down in a forest and they are attacked by a gang of bandits. In the absence of a rifle and with the help of a mere stick, Sambhu defeats all of them. Once he has successfully overpowered the bandits, the doctor asks Sambhu to bring him the first-aid box so he can provide them with the medical treatment they need now that Sambhu has successfully taught them a lesson for a lifetime.

During this time school textbooks aimed at imparting practical knowledge and eschewed folkloric or supernatural narratives. *Sahaj Path* defied this tradition to include several folklores and fantastic stories from foreign and native traditions. The one about

Meghamala in the third part of *Sahaj Path* falls in this category. She is described as a girl from the heavens accursed to be born as a mortal to poor parents with the condition that the day she can prove that she has been a good daughter to her foster parents and bring them the utmost source of happiness she will be permitted to travel back into the heavens. The child-centrism of *Sahaj Path* sets it apart from Vidyasagar's *Barna Parichay.*

Interestingly, the 20th century not only marked a departure from traditional textbook literature but also encouraged leisure reading with the advent of children's magazines that were an improvement over the existing ones, particularly the avant-garde, *Sandesh.* Unlike *Sakha* or *Mukul, Sandesh* focused on creating a niche juvenile readership -- a magazine that children will pester their elders to buy them. The distinct child-centralism of the magazine also paved the way for constructions of childhood as we see in modern day Bangla children's literature. Although the contributors to the magazine were not entirely free of class and caste prejudices of the times, the editorial objective was to rediscover print literature and most importantly indigenise it. Therefore, folkloric content, original writing, humourous, and satirical articles replaced the pedantism and obsequiousness of the earlier publications that often reflected, Bangalis' servile attitude to the British. Upendrakishore RayChoudhury was the first editor-in-chief of the magazine. He used to write for children and *Sakha* and *Sakha o Sathi* featured several articles composed by him. In 1895 he began his own press, U Ray & Sons and under its banner started publishing the monthly magazine, *Sandesh* in 1913. Unlike the other magazines published earlier *Sandesh* gained popularity for its paper quality and bright illustrations. The Bangla word *Sandesh* has a dual significance. It means both a message and sweet, exemplifying the teleology of the magazine. Interestingly, the first article in the series is a folklore. Upendrakishore was a master

appropriator of the folklore and will be discussed in the ensuing chapter in detail. Suffice to say here, with the subsequent issues of *Sandesh*, Bangla children's leisure writing achieved new milestones. It followed the pattern of *Mukul* and *Sakha* but the range and diversity of content expanded manifold. The informative articles on science or history transformed into works of literature in the pages of the magazine. In the Introduction to the compilation of the articles published in the 1914 installation of *Sandesh*, Parthajit Gangopadhyay writes that the magazine differed completely from all other previously published magazines. A departure from the hackneyed publications, the magazine reflected the extent to which the editor thought about the children while putting the magazine together. The magazine soon became popular among the children. Although, the glossy pages, colourful illustrations, and beautiful photographs enhanced the magazines appeal to young readers, its repute rested vastly on its literary value. The well-written articles on science writing, folkloric adaptations, science fiction to fantastic fiction, riddles, and mesmerizing rhymes held a massive sway over the imagination of the readers, both young and old.These magazines became exemplars of populist literature for juveniles with their conversational story-telling technique, coupling of information with wit and humour and attractive layout.

But one of the most significant contributions of this magazine was popularizing the fantastic in Bangla children's literature and introducing nonsense literature. The titles of the articles also bear testimony to the child-centrism of the narratives. An article on hot water spring is titled 'Adbhut Fowara' or 'The Strange Fountain.' If the author would have called the article simply "A Hot Water Spring" or "Hot Water Springs Across the World", it would not have intrigued the child enough to attempt a read but focussing on the strangeness of this so-called fountain, the article immediately grasps the child's attention. There are several articles which focus on such fantastic

occurrences in the world and then provide a logical or scientific explanation of the phenomena.

Folklore and fairy tales often appeared in *Sandesh* such as 'Dwaityer Ketli' or 'The Giant's Kettle,' 'Phulpori,' 'Banor Rajputra or the Monkey Prince,' 'Buri Rakshashi or the Aging Rakshahsi' etc. 'Dwaityer Ketli or Giant's Kettle' is a humorous adaptation of a Norse folklore published in November 1913 issue of *Sandesh.* It is based on Thor's encounter with a giant who had a kettle that Thor wanted to borrow for preparing a massive feast in his kingdom. When Thor visits the giant who was the owner of several such kettles, he comes across his daughters who suggest that Thor must run away with the kettle as soon as possible or the insolent giant might slay him with his grimace. Re-writing popular mythological stories in a manner that is most amusing to children and using expressions and phrases that they can understand even when they are reading a folklore from a different culture or ethnic origin became characteristic of Upendrakishore's artistry. Again, 'Phulpori' is a fairy-tale written as a two-way conversation between the children and the author in the November issue. It is inspired from the oral tradition of Bengal. Phulpori, the fairy used to live among the island folks. *Phul* means flower in Bangla and this is the story of the flower fairy. Till the time the fairy lived among the islanders, there was a profusion of foliage on the island, but the moment she leaves for her heavenly abode the island becomes barren. The wise old islanders realize that the island can only revive if it is blessed by the fairy. They seek the fairy in her abode to bring back the fairy flowers that would restore the island to its past glory. We can see the fairy as symptomatic of natural resources that are essential for maintaining the ecological balance of the island. Realising that natural resources are the real wealth to mankind, old people of the waste no time in endeavouring to restore it. They entreat the flower fairy for her benevolence and bring

back eternal flowers that will sustain life and beauty on the island. Upendrakishore employs the fairy tale format to present an ecocritical article for a young readership. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey demonstrates:

> European Enlightenment knowledge, natural history, conservation policy, and the language of nature-the very sciences and systems of logic that we draw from today to speak of conservation and sustainability-result from a long history of the colonial exploitation of nature," (2014, p.324)

the flower fairy's sudden departure from the island can be seen as an allegorical representation of the eco-catastrophe brought about by colonialism. (2014, pp.324)

Again, the 'Banor Rajputra or The Monkey Prince' is a popular fairy tale from Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakumar Jhuli.* Upendrakishore adapts the narrative in the November 1913 issue. The story entreats children to appreciate the uniqueness in everyone and refrain from belittling the one who might seem weak or different. The youngest and the most neglected wife of the king giving birth to a child who turns out to be a monkey is a common trope in Bangla fairy tale. The monkey is ostensibly lionised. It is suggested that the monkey, surpasses his half-siblings (who are all humans) in intelligence, humility and empathy. The monkey's half siblings have tutors when they have little interest in accumulating wisdom. The monkey, on the other hand, eager and enterprising, asks his mother to bring him books and teach him herself. Although the mother is surprised at first, she soon realises that her monkey son is a quick learner. In the existing versions of this fairy tale the monkey is described as an innocent and simple creature who is duped again and again by his half-brothers but he continues to do good by them. In this narrative the monkey's character is drawn out with care, specifically emphasising his intelligence and endearing nature. When he learns that his half-siblings will embark on a sea voyage to find themselves pretty brides, he expresses his wish to accompany them. The queen, his mother, is astonished

and tells him that no pretty girl will marry a monkey. He promptly informs her it is not a bride he seeks but the thrill of adventure and visitations to new countries. Knowledge and experience are dearer to the monkey than pursuit of wife. It is also a very modern adaptation of the old tale. By a sheer accident and a silly superstition, a princess is made the monkey's consort. But when the princess discovers the inherent goodness in the monkey, she proudly accepts him as her husband and realises that it's his intelligence, ambition, and compassion that makes him far superior to the homo sapiens. In the existing fairy tale versions, the princess plays a subsidiary role and laments her union with a monkey. The author deviates from that narrative tradition by making her perspicacious and giving primacy to her opinions. Therefore, the monkey prince not only takes the form of a fairy tale but also assumes a symbolic dimension.

Many Bengali authors have written about ghosts or supernatural experiences for children. Traditionally, these tales were written in the adventure/horror genre. RayChoudhury and his son, Sukumar Ray, the editors of *Sandesh,* wrote apparition narratives in the spirit of the 'carnivalesque' meant for a dedicated juvenile readership. Interestingly, Bangla folk literature informed this kind of humorous writing within the supernatural space. Many of the supernatural characters found in Bangla children's books originated in the folkloric and mythopoeic past of Bengal. In the book titled *Satyajit Ray and the Ghosts In the Story* or *Satyajit Ray O Golper Bhoot* (2019), Prosenjit Dasgupta establishes a basic difference between the ghost stories of Satyajit Ray and those of Upendrakishore and Sukumar. He argues how characterisation of ghosts becomes important in Upendrakishore and Sukumar because of their child-centric approach to writing and with the intent of associating the subversive potentiality of 'fantastic' with the humorous and the satirical rather than the fearful and the psychological that is found in many of the ghost narratives of Satyajit Ray. Several

kinds of ghosts join the RayChaudhury pantheon such as *pecho* or the spirit of an owl that assumes a human form or *chorachulli*, the ghost of a thief who had an accidental death. The ghosts are varied and the comical association with these fey creatures create a unique and imaginative literary world for the children. The ghost narratives that appear in *Sandesh* draws on the 'fantastic' that reverses the established social order and resists hierarchies.

" Bhooter Ojha" or "The Ghost Buster" is a poem by Sri Bijoychandra Majumdar that appears in the March, 1913, issue of *Sandesh.* The poem deals with the consequences of a reversal: When the exorcist is exorcised. A group of ghosts, having lived in terror of the buster, who would command them to run daily errands for him like carrying of his palanquin, decide to exact requital for his torments. On a fateful day when the ghostbuster falls asleep in his palanquin, the ghosts wring his neck and kill him. Although the poem condones violence and murder, it makes a statement against oppression and authoritarianism. The ghosts are merely figurative and symbolise the powerless proletariat, the beasts of burden for the palanquin-riding *babus.* Therefore, the ghosts perform an act of rebellion and not murder. The narrative is meant to evoke laughter. This poem is in the tradition of Bakhtin's 'çarnivalesque' where he describes the scenes of beatings in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*,(1894) where violence is accompanied by cachinnation to arouse the audience to revel in grotesquery as the social order falls apart.

The poem, "Buri Rakshashi" or "The Old Rakshashi" that appeared in the April issue is also subversive. In Bangla folklore the *rakshashi* is a man-eating, shape-shifting creature and human beings are meant to be afraid of her. In this poem, she accidentally inhales two elephants and must depend on the intelligence of a man to save her life. The wise man agrees to help but on the condition that she will never feast on a human again.

After the *rakshashi* agrees, he shoves tobacco dust (a popular method of tobacco consumption in Bengal) into her nostrils which result in a massive sneeze and the elephants tumble out of her nose. The poem ends in the humorous conclusion:

Since the day the Rakshashas chose a vegetarian spread

Human lives knew no dread

The country breathed unafraid

The natiya tree bends

My story ends. (April 1913, pp. 361)

In the October, 1915, issue of the magazine, Upendrakishore's most well-known short story, *GGBB*, was published. It was later turned into a film by Satyajit Ray. This text will be reviewed in detail in the fourth chapter; suffice it to say that the supernatural apparatus in *GGBB* paved the way for a re-evaluation of Bangla literature and its representation of colonial psychosis. The ghost stories published in *Sandesh* also effected a re-imagination of the folkloric supernatural in Bangla children's literature. In these stories the benevolent or the friendly ghost is often an extension of the 'disenfranchised' protagonist. It is also a recurrent theme in Bangla juvenile literature. The 'ghosts' representing the displaced and dispossessed 'other' appears frequently in these narratives. For example, in the story published in the June 1915 issue, "Kujo r Bhoot" or "The Hunchback and the Ghost", we see how a poor village artisan, Jola, is ridiculed by one and all because of his physical deformity. He is a hunchback. His talent as a basket weaver is completely overshadowed by the uniqueness of his physicality and he is continuously laughed at and ignored. After a long day's work, he decides to rest in the part of the village that is avoided by the village folk. This place is dark, filthy and at another extremity of the village. This is also the spot where a group of ghosts, who speak in a North Indian dialect, and not Bangla, live in an old and dilapidated house.

When he wakes up from his nap, he hears them sing. He is taken in by the music and starts singing along. The ghosts are impressed, and they carry him to the house and spend the night singing and dancing with him. It is interesting to note that the ghosts singing in a non-Bengali dialect is noteworthy. It is possible that it is a statement on the practice of regionalism in our country and the sense of estrangement in a people who constitute a minority, relegated to the margins, living as shadows or ghosts of their real selves. That Jola tries to join in, attempting to assimilate, is cherished by the ghosts. While dancing Jola experiences a physical transformation. He is surprised to see that his hump has vanished. The physical transformation is also symbolic of a psychological change. The burden is not only lifted from his back but also from his mind. When a local old woman hears this story, she sends her son to the very same spot to earn the benevolence of the ghosts and get his hump removed which is even bigger than Jola's. The boy turns out to be a wicked one and disrupts their revelry by joining in before his turn. The old woman's son breaks the rhythm. He is not respectful of their rights, and he must pay the price for his insolence. The ghosts punish him by adding Jola's hump onto his. In the story the 'ghosts' are as helpless and despondent as the protagonist himself. In this context, it is necessary to add the stories by Upendrakishore makes use of several colloquialisms familiar to the people of Bengal. There are several words or terms that are popular in Bengali households addressing people from particular regions of the country, such as the Hindi-speaking population from Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh, mostly migrants to Bengal from these parts of India who are called *khotta*. In the editorial of the May, 1913, issue of *Sandesh*, the author shares an anecdote about a Bengali babu living in Allahabad who wished to buy the magazine and asked his *khotta* servant to get him a copy. In the *khotta* language the word *sandesh* means news and not a kind of sweet as it is known in Bangla. The *khotta* identity of the servant is

emphasised to substantiate the cause of confusion of the servant on being given the errand. The word here, we can presume, was not used by the author to belittle the servant's regional identity. There are many other stories in this magazine based on Bengali servants too. This term and a few others which are considered inappropriate today were used quite locally in colonial India and the use of these terms in the author's work might not have been an outcome of a personal bias or prejudice.

Upendrakishore experiments with characterization in *Sandesh.* He re-interprets the folkloric stock characters, mostly within the supernatural ambit, and creates narratives that are child-centric and caters to child-centric constructions of childhood. For example, 'Dwaityer Raja or King of Giants' in the 1913 November and December issues depicts friendship between giants and humans. Giants are generally seen as enemies of humans, especially in local Bangla tales but here the giant helps the princes slay a *rakshashi* who was killing men and animals in their kingdom and calls himself the friend of the kind-hearted. The giant's daughters are described not as ghastly abhorrent creatures as its prevalent in folkloric literature but as beautiful and attractive. The plot hints at a marriage alliance between the giant's daughters and the princes. RayChaudhury adds a surprising plurality and diversity to his literature.

Child-centric constructions of childhood are at the core of these writings. They are evident from a considerable number of articles that appear in the magazine. Whether in the form of poetry or prose, the articles question the very concept of childhood and the rationalising of the child. The October, 1915, issue begins with the poem, "Who is a child?." In the poem, the poet writes that the one you hate and despise for being a child might grow up to surpass you all. No one knows how the ugly duckling will transform into a beautiful swan by the grace of God. The child does not care about your hatred

but is full of love and wisdom and is busy with their own activities. Even the child can spread beauty around like the fragrance of a budding flower.

Child-centrism is also the hallmark of Sukumar Ray's nonsense verse, *Abol Tabol.* Nonsense literature had already made inroads into the Victorian literary scene with the likes of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. It is probable Carroll's Alice was a source of inspiration to RayChaudhuri. Often these poems talk about strange people, animals, and ghosts. Each line of the poem rhymes with the next and sometimes sounds like a tongue twister. The simple rhyme scheme makes it easier for children to memorize them. These are humorous poems but also critique society and social customs. For example, there is a poem about a man who believes that someone has stolen his moustache and replaced it with that of a milkman's. The people around him try to educate him about the illogicality of the suspicion but he refuses to relent. We can interpret the poem in several ways. What stands out though is its critique of society and how people sometimes force us to see ourselves through them and instil self-doubt. The world designates such people insane or delusional. Sometimes people think about children this way too.

From *Bharati*, published in 1877, to *Sandesh* in 1913, and later Bangla periodicals for children, such as *Anandamela* in 1975, the aim was to promote leisure reading in the vernacular, provide a platform to native writers and foster a sense of nationalism and love for the people, traditions, and literature of one's country. But it was also to make available Western literature and philosophies to the readers so they can perceive the best of both worlds. There were several articles on other colonised nations and their triumphs and struggles. These magazines were anything but regional in the curation of the articles. Gargi Gangopadhyay in "Imperialism and Nationhood in

Children's Books in Colonial Bengal" (2018) attests to the internationalism of the children's magazine project in Bengal when she states that:

> Both in their language and the vision of childhood they projected, these late nineteenth-century and early twentieth century periodicals served as models for later vernacular children's magazines such as *Shuktara* (The morning Star, [1948]) and *Anandamela* (Carnival of Joy, [1975]), which maintained, underneath their glossy pages and new incorporations, the structure and conceptual design of their Victorian predecessors. (Gangopadhyay, p. 73)

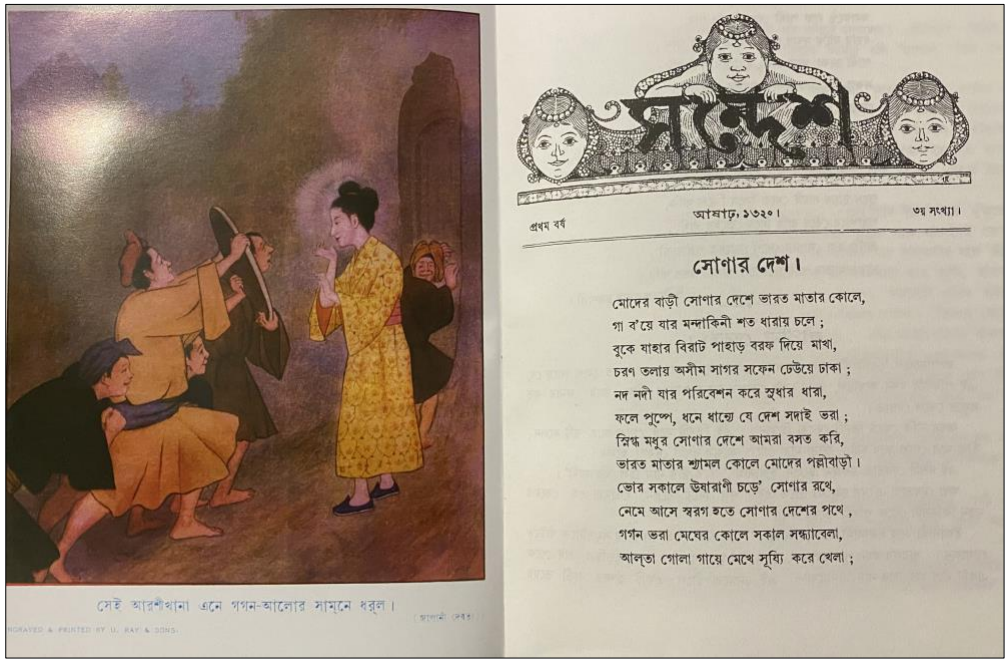

Figure 3: The layout of *Sandesh.*

The influence was not limited to British culture but extended to European, African and Asian cultures as well. There are several articles on legends of foreign countries or essays on sea voyages and expeditions undertaken by foreigners. For instance, the article ‘Japani Debota or The Japanese God’ from the July 1913 issue is a fascinating tale on the birth of Japanese Gods such as Izanagi and Izanami and their children. Again, ‘Maldonada’ in the November issue is based on the eponymous heroine, a Spaniard, living in the South American city of Buenos Aires. Spaniards were trying to occupy South America. The natives of South America, the Indians, guarded the outskirts of Buenos Aires. They trapped Spaniards in their homes and forbade their movements. Due to lack of food the colonizers began to die. The dead bodies started piling up in the city and wild animals were attracted to the stench. They began marauding the city for fodder. People were forced to leave their house for food. A brave girl, Maldonada, stepped out on a fateful day in her desperation, only to be intercepted and withheld by the Indians. After a while, the Indians had mercy on her and released her to the government in exchange of a ransom. The people in government began suspecting the girl of spying against the establishment because they found it incredulous for the barbaric Indians to spare a Spaniard. They tied her to a tree in the deep of the forest and left her to die. They expected to find her dead in a few days but were surprised to find her alive with a puma as her sentinel. They decided she must be innocent for her life to be saved so miraculously. She was released. Although it reads like a simple story of courage and luck favouring the innocent and the brave, it is more than just a legend. The author intends to expose the ills of colonial expansion, animality in humans and the humanity of animals. By creating a narrative based on colonial exploitation and resistance, he not only acquaints the readers of its impact on common

people, irrespective of their placement on the colonist/colonised spectrum, but also urges the young readers to contemplate on their present status in a colonized nation. For a magazine that has often been accused of pro-Anglicanism, and sometimes rightly so, Maldonada marks one of several points of departure. As Gargi Gangopadhyay points out in her article discussed earlier in the chapter, the 'exploration narratives' were also responsible for instilling the Western spirit of adventure in the children from the East. The travel narratives transported children to foreign countries and enabled them to vicariously travel beyond the shores of their country. The *Manu* or the ancient legal text of the Hindus prohibited sea voyages, which meant these children might never know what lies on the other side of the ocean. The author of 'Himer Desh or Country of Snow,' serially published in the July and August 1913 issues, begins his article by stating that he is writing for children who might not find the opportunity to travel due to various reasons. Therefore, for them, he has composed a treatise on expeditions undertaken by travellers in search of new territories such as the likes of the Norwegian traveller, Othar, who travelled to the Poles. He also writes about Henry Hudson who wanted to discover China but discovered parts of North America instead. Juxtaposed against wanderlust for foreign countries is a salutation to the mother land, its villages, rivers, foliage, and family values. 'Sonar Desh or Golden Country,' published in the July 1913 issue, is a poem by Dhirendrakumar Chakraborty that compares India to a country that is as rich and valuable as gold. The poem goes on to describe the rivers that flow through the country and the mountains that adorn it. He sings of the fertile soil of India and the beauty of the village home where everyone lives like a unit, brothers and sisters do not fight and there is peace and prosperity. The poem is easy to read and understand. It has a AABB rhyme scheme, generally used in nursery rhymes and paints

a magnificent picture of the motherland, with the unmistakable objective of instilling the spirit of nationalism in the youth of Bengal.

In several articles, we see commentaries on colonial experiences. ‘Africa Desher Bon or The Forests of Africa’ is a non-fiction prose on pygmies and the misconception about them in the civilized nations, published in the December 1915 issue of the magazine. This is a very important article because it not only acquaints the reader with a different culture and a people who have been through their own colonial struggles but also essentially introduces them as intelligent and industrious people who are widely misunderstood because they don’t look or behave like the people from the West. The author shares an anecdote about two pygmies visiting England and identifying an ancient African animal, Heladotharium, from a photograph. Similarly, ‘Bilat e Sikh Shoinya or Sikh Soldier in a Foreign Country’ written in the form of a letter by a Sikh soldier to his father from the battlefield, published in the May 1915 issue is at the same time informative and heart wrenching. The Sikh soldier describes the battle he is fighting as an officer in the English army against Germany. He tells his father about his wartime experience, the death of a fellow Sikh soldier, Sardul Singh, from a blast, and the pile of dead bodies accruing in the battlefield -- bodies that the people later burn in succession in the dead of the night. He describes the German ladies who do not cover their faces unlike the women he is used to seeing in his country and tells his father that these women are so fearless that they are not even afraid of ploughing the fields strewn with landmines. His British general then asks him to warn the ladies and he complies trying to describe to them what will happen if the bombs go off, although they do not understand each other’s language. It is a vivid portrayal of colonial expansion, violence, and estrangement and its impact on native soldiers.

Therefore, through the thoughtful sifting of articles, the editors of juvenile magazines in Bengal provided the readers a platform that fostered and encouraged multiculturalism and polyvocality.

4. Leisure Reading in Irish Culture

Mary Hatfield's explorations of Irish middle-class childhoods in the nineteenth century points to a substantial increase in child population during the 1821 census, resulting in "an enormous expansion in educational provision, a growing commercial market for children's goods, and a professional and intellectual interest in child development" (Hatfield 2018, p.11) from 1800 to 1860. Her research also reveals how the conceptualisation of childhood in Ireland differed from its British counterpart owing to the Irish children's rather late entry into labour markets and the idea of childhood becoming synonymous "with having an education, material goods, and parental care." (2018, p.13). Unlike Victorian England, Irish middle classes[23] saw their children as 'social capital' and a means to upward social mobility,[24] same as in India. The approach to childhood, literacy, and education of Irish juveniles can be said to be predictive of the objective and subject matter of Irish print literature that was somewhat of a deviance to Victorian standards. Furthermore, the question of religious divide also influenced the

[23] The concept of the middle class in Irish society is not as easily understood as it is in the British context because of the late impact of industrialization in Ireland, The difficulty of categorizing the 'bourgeoise' in a predominantly rural society with access to education with leaving behind the farm for a city life, being the only markers of status and social ascendency, added to the dilemma. But like in other colonial societies, it is the middle class that championed and promoted print literature in Ireland with surging literacy rates, more children attending schools, and the formation of political consciousness. This also led to the unique co-existence of literary and oral cultures in Irish society, where print literature and oral literature replenished and informed each other. See the 'Introduction' to Mary Hatfield's Growing Up in Nineteenth Century Ireland: A Cultural History of Middle Class Childhood and Gende,. (2018, pp.13-20) and 'Popular Print and Popular Culture' from Niall O' Ciosain's Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850, (1997, pp.185-203).

[24] As far as concerns social class, the parliamentary reports on poverty in the 1830s give the impression that even the very poor in most areas had access to some sort of schooling, and that it was given priority within overall family strategies. (Ciosain, pp.25-51).

indigenous publications. The banning of Catholic education[25] from 1709 to 1782 created a socio-political divide. Protestant elites enjoyed exclusive access to state education and Catholic children were relegated to attending illegal fee-paying hedge schools. This eventually led to the establishment of the National School System (1831) at the time, which was but a more orchestrated attempt by the British Empire to control its "closest colony" (Walsh 2016, p. 8). The emergence of different kinds of schools promoting conflicting religious ideologies resulted in differential and denominational education imparted to Irish children in the nineteenth century, problematizing standardized conceptualisations of childhood. But across schools, there wasn't any stark curricular difference. While the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic) were focal to the school syllabi followed in all of these institutions (2016, p. 46), hedge schools were known for their use of chapbook literature (Ciosain 1997, pp. 96-97) and charter schools, for their proselytising literature. Again, the use of chapbooks for education was unique to the Irish schooling experience. Since chapbooks were cheap to print and locally procured, they were more accessible to the poor Irish population. These books were not always religious but included several topics such as tales of wonder and magic, of highwaymen and rouges which were at odds with Victorian curriculum[26]. The

[25] Elsewhere in Europe (France, Italy), the Church had played a supporting role to the feudal order being eventually overthrown by the revolutionary forces. In Ireland, though, Catholic ministers were being 'outlawed and exiled,' following the Protestant Ascendancy, resulting in the Church and the peasants constituting a united front against the landlords (mainly English/Anglo-Irish). For more see, Titley, (1983, pp. 3-5).

[26] In practice, this meant that an extraordinary variety of books was used, and even within a single school, each pupil might have a different book. The 1825 report lists over 400 different texts used in schools in counties Donegal, Kildare, Galway and Kerry. These were catechisms (16), religious works (97) and 'works of entertainment, histories, tales etc.' (30I). This last category contains all of the best-known titles in popular literature, such as *The Seven Champions of Christendom* and *Irish Highwaymen*. These texts had a higher circulation than most of the others in the

national school system was established to homogenise these disparate educational practices, facilitate basic literacy, and non-denominational teaching among the poor. But their neglect of Irish language and literature indicated a denial of impartial education. While a child-centric curriculum was still a matter of a distant future, this study argues that juvenile print literature published by indigenous presses responded to the need for alternative reading material for the youth of Ireland that was age-appropriate and democratic. Granted that periodical literature for juveniles in Ireland primarily reflected Victorian sensibilities in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially publications that were originally printed in England and distributed in the colonies, those that were a product of the indigenous presses in Ireland marked a departure from their British counterparts. It is suggested in here that the child-centric approach adopted by the editors of these periodicals and magazines led to the emergence of a more robust and distinct Irish voice in print literature produced in Ireland, especially around the 1850s. At the same time, it also proposes that the Young Ireland Movement[27] and a renewed interest in antiquities resulted in an explosion of supernatural tales and fantastic stories in juvenile periodicals bearing nationalistic undertones. Several short stories that appeared in these publications served as a precedent for future adaptations of Irish folk literature and fairy tales. During a period of burgeoning nationalism, these recreational trends signalled a shift toward child-centrism, a corrective to the extreme religious sentimentalism of the Victorian era, and a

list (Guicciardini's *History of Italy*, and *The History of Tythes: their influence on agriculture and population were two*) and their use in schools must have been very frequent. (Ciosain 1997, pp. 49-51)

[27] A nationalist movement that took shape in the 1840s. See, James Quinn's *Young Ireland and the Writing of Irish History*.

critique of imperialism. As stated earlier, missionary work influenced Bangla print literature in the early part of the nineteenth-century but it was not as pronounced in India as in Ireland. For, example, the 1883 cover of *Sakha* portrays domestic scenes from a quintessential Bengali household and in the centre is an image of three ladies, reading a book. One of these ladies is dressed in a gown, presumably a missionary.

Figure 4: The cover page of the January 1883 issue of *Sakha* depicting a missionary.

These Bangla magazines acknowledged missionary influence on the spread of education in India but deterred from publishing explicitly religious material. Therefore, the emergent child-centrism in Bangla print medium was primarily a reaction against the imperialistic control of educational policies and practices unlike Ireland where religious fanaticism necessitated secular approach to juvenile education and literature besides the magazines' more nationalistic impetus.

5. Indigenising Juvenile Print Medium and Critiquing Colonialism

Several scholars of Irish print culture and publication history such as the doctor, writer, historian, and abolitionist, Richard Robert Madden and the Trinity librarian, Charles Benson have discussed that despite having a rich oral tradition and a society well-disposed to literary and intellectual recreations, Ireland's colonial status emerged as a formidable impediment for the growth of printing and publishing industries in the country. The Act of Union, passed in 1800 resulted in the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, leading to the extension of copyright laws prevalent in England to Ireland, establishing greater colonial control of the Irish press and eventuating a death knell for cheap reprints[28]. It was only after the Catholic Emancipation in 1829 that the tides began to turn as far as publishing was concerned. Existing scholarship on periodicals printed and distributed in Ireland before 1830s is limited to accounts of Madden contained in his two volumes of *The History of Irish Periodical Literature, from the End of the 17th to the Middle of the 19th Century* (1867) and those of Christopher Clinton Hoey, a regular contributor to magazines like *The Irish Builder* (1867-1929) and *The Irishman* (1858-1885), but they do not particularly account for those published for a juvenile readership. The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals: 1800 to 1900 lists the *The Casket* (1797-1798) edited by Lynch and Callaghan Hearne and R.A. Milliken and printed in Cork as one of the earliest pre-emancipation juvenile print literature known in Ireland. Again, *The*

[28] Before the Act of Union of 1801 and in the absence of copyright laws in Ireland, reprints of books and magazines published in England were easily available in Ireland. Although, Catholic and non-conformist printers and booksellers were already banned from printing devotional literature. These led to these establishments relying on chapbooks to rattle the imperial government. (Ciosain 1997, p. 53)

Juvenile Magazine (1814-1815), created by Thomas Fisher, and the *The Dublin Family Magazine* or *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine or Literary and Religious Miscellany* (1829) printed by William Curry Junior and Sons are not listed in the directory but are accounted for in the Irish National Archives (National Library of Ireland) as some of the extant indigenous publications to appear before or around the time of Catholic Emancipation which were not imitations or reprints of British magazines. Owing to the strict laws controlling the printing of books in Ireland, not all juvenile periodicals printed in England were circulated in Ireland. Of the few that were reprinted in Ireland, the majority were magazines imparting moral and religious lessons. In congruence with the contemporary trend in nineteenth-century Britain, which also included Ireland, juvenile print literature was supposed to " improve and instruct the young." (Drotner 1988, p. 21). The early nineteenth-century juvenile periodicals in Britain and those that were printed until about 1850s were published by Tract societies and Sunday schools who "agreed that reading was of central importance in the moral edification of the young." (Drotner 1988: 24). The articles published in *The Youth's Magazine; or Evangelical Miscellany* (1805) and *The Child's Companion, The Children's Friend* and *The Child's Magazine* which were all launched in 1824, spoke of the conflict of good and evil, the importance of reading the Bible, choosing a life of piety over that of affluence, understanding the difference between sin and virtue, and showing unwavering fealty to God and family. Often these publications included articles on natural history, astronomy or botany to achieve a semblance of child-centrism and secularism. For example, of the British magazines published in London and reprinted in Ireland, this change of editorial policy is discernible in one called the *Select Magazine for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons* (1822). The opening piece in the first issue of the first volume of the magazine is a verse from the Book of Genesis,

followed by several stories like ‘The Infant’s Grave,’ a cautionary tale of the consequences of an Unchristian life leading to a woman’s separation from her infant (Image) and ‘The Faithful Little Girl,’ about a little girl’s zeal for missionary work of the Anglican church.

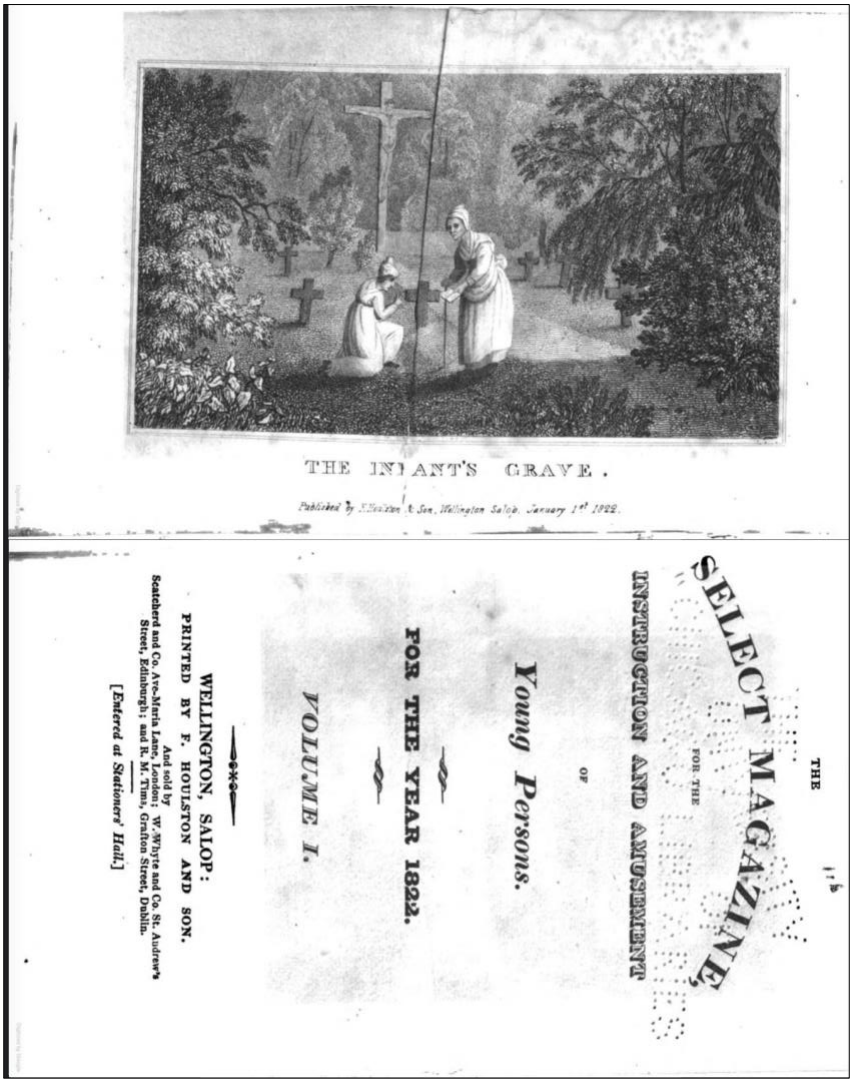

Figure 5: The cover of *Select Magazine.*

The latter is particularly striking in its use of racialised language, for example while reasoning with her mother about her future plans, Lucilla declares, “Because I might go abroad too, and preach to the poor black people.” (Jan 1822, p.21) At the same time by including secular material such as an extract from Capt. Parry’s journal, a contemplative piece on chemistry and educational articles such as ‘Table of Very

Simple Freezing Mixtures' alongside stories of atonement, infant's death and evangelical missions in colonies, the editors sought to balance religious melodrama with educational articles that they thought would engage juvenile minds. The ethnocentrism and gendered narrativization seen in the first issue are revised in the subsequent numbers. For example, 'Courageous Female,' is based on the adventures of a slave girl who saves several lives from a calamity, demonstrating a positive view of female agency and a person belonging to a lower station in life. Again, unlike the article in the first issue where Lucilla's mother quite conveniently pre-supposes the hostility of the 'blacks' towards the missionaries in keeping with colonial stereotypes applied to indigenous people, 'Industry of an African Slave' presents an opinion piece on an African slave in America who relentlessly strives for his independence at the face of several disappointments. Now if one looks at the contemporary indigenous publications a considerable difference in their editorial preferences is noted. The 'Prospectus to the Juvenile Magazine' published by its proprietor, Thomas Fisher, in 1814 "promises a rich and palatable selection of matter" filled with "entertaining, brilliant, profound and profitable ideas" with the inclusion of literature and poetry and occasionally "essays of a serious cast" soliciting generous correspondences from the readers. (January 1814: 1-2) When compared with the 'Address' to the *Select Magazine,* which calls the magazine a "select fund of instruction and amusement" that does not distinguish between learning and pleasure and believes that "much of the latter is procured by means of the former," looking to publish on subjects ranging from "Stars and Planets," "Nature," "connection of Morals with happiness of Society" and "Doctrines of Christianity," (January 1822, p.4) the distinction is obvious. Whereas the editor of the *Select Magazine* emphasises 'learning,' Fisher is keen on representing the 'thoughts and ideas' that come to the young minds. In the correspondence published as an address to the editor of the *Select*

Magazine, titled "On the Influence of Encouragement," the author, Cecil, solicits the "attention of those Parents and Instructors of youth through whose hands your successive numbers will probably pass, before they reach the ultimate objects of their destination," (March 1822, p.159) trivialising the agency of the juvenile in the selection and perusal of leisurely reading matter. Conversely, similar notes to the editor of *The Juvenile Magazine* reflected a genuine interest in the youth and their preferences, inquiries, and musings. The articles that appeared in *Select Magazine,* including the more secular ones, had a stern, admonishing, rather impersonal tone, suggestive of an adult voice and perspective rather than that of a young person. But the articles and correspondences that appeared in Fisher's magazine were humorous, intimate, and written in a light-hearted conversational style representing juvenile utterance. Sometimes the name and age of a contributor were also mentioned as in the case of the poem written by young Princess Amelia during her illness, and another named "Dream" by an unnamed girl of 14 that appeared in the first volume of the magazine. Childhood inflictions, death, and children's attitude towards death have informed much of Victorian literature. As M.F. Thwaite points out:

> Long drawn out death scenes (a typical feature of Victorian fiction), such as the fate of the little boy bitten by a mad dog, were apparently a source of a horrific or inspiring enjoyment, for what did all the protracted sufferings matter, if the little victim died with the words, Happy! Happy! on his lips? A celestial home, a heaven as beautiful as fairyland, awaited these young souls. (De Vries 1967, p. 9).

In the two poems mentioned earlier, this 'enjoyment of death' is replaced by introspection and contemplations on life. When Princess Amelia writes, 'When I could dance or sing no more/ It then occurred how sad 'twould be/ Were this world only made for me,' (January 1814: 9) she expresses her sorrow and disappointment at her imminent death, imagining a world only made for her. The young girl in "Dream," on

the other hand philosophises about the importance of "Youth and manhood," which are but "seasons of joy and pleasure, that is the time to provide for the cold winter of age, to store up the honey of good actions," (January 1844, p. 14), after she dreams of the four seasons of life during her illness. The Horatian injunction of 'carpe diem' is implied in the ruminations of the girl. As opposed to the representation of women in tract society publications or Victorian print literature, the female correspondent, their opinions, and literary endeavours were greatly encouraged by the editor, highlighting another point of convergence with Bangla periodicals. As stated in the previous analysis, Bangla school textbooks ignored the female child, but Bangla print medium beckoned them and gave primacy to their talents and their stories. In the first issue of *The Juvenile Magazine*, Fisher invites "Ladies who are good enough to favour him," to put their thoughts on paper because he would want to " by no means prevent a female genius" from "producing their [sic] charming compositions." (January 1814, p. 8) For example, Julia's description of a day of a party not only articulates the meditations of a young mind but also sheds light on several contemporary issues about education and parenting. Instead of adult opinions on children, Julia's letter to the editor is an opinion piece on the behaviour of adults. One Miss Ridge, presumably a governess, decides to read Rosanna Mills to a gathering of young people, despite Julia proposing 'popular tales' for the occasion. Soon children are overcome with ennui at the reading of Miss Edgeworth's book and Miss Ridge requests Julia for a more entertaining one for the next session. Julia then asks the editor to suggest some reading material for the idle hours, stating that good counsel, especially "mild authority of the parent contribute to the regular and true happiness of children, both in business and pleasure." (July 1814, p. 4) This letter from a young girl does imply that pre-twentieth century adults really failed to understand the child. In her essay, " Juvenile Readers and Victorian

Periodicals," Carol. A. Bock claims that in the course of her study she has found no proof to support Sheila Egoff's[29] assumption that " highly imaginative stories such as fairy tales and tales of the supernatural" are more suitable for children. She prods further to claim that even if such an assumption rings true for children, imaginative material would not have been much useful to juveniles about to enter "early stages of individuation and socialisation." (Bock 1999, pp. 135-136) Julia's first-hand testimonial can be extended as evidence to contend Bock's inference.

The letters written by the magazine's female subscribers presented varying and interesting viewpoints. For example, one girl observes that when a boy writes letters to his friends and family he tries to sound clever, assuming that his parents "will despise a history of his pleasures" when she is most certain that the parents of a boy "delight in hearing of his amusements as well as his learning," (March 1814, p. 24) debunking contemporary notions of parental motivations in prioritising austerity and instructions over the childish manners of juveniles.

Even articles by adult correspondents were not purposefully instructive or pedantic. For instance, the letters by Zachariah Inman and Bridget Wilkins are on basic human nature but they are anecdotal and humorous, written in a style that will resonate with the juvenile readers. Zachariah wonders why is it that women stare at him all the time although he is not particularly young or handsome. Bridget on the other hand shares a letter from her sister who fails to understand the peculiar behaviour of her daughter after the arrival of a young tenant in their house. The inclusion of amusing anecdotes was particularly striking in the magazine. Thoughts on love and conjugal

[29] See Sheila A. Egoff's Children's periodicals of the Nineteenth Century: A Survey and Bibliography, 1951.

understanding were also considered for publication. In one article, the young boy Jeremiah Truelove writes to the editor about the changes in his beloved after she returns from the city and entreats the editor to "give a hint to the ladies to carry their own little articles, lest they lose their lovers by not doing so." (September 1814, p.17) Even those articles or correspondences which were instructive in nature like 'Industry and Idleness,' 'Contentment,' or 'The Art of Being Happy,' were playful and witty. The magazine had an 'Original Poetry' section that solicited original compositions. Articles extolling Christian virtues talked about realistic expectations and desires, not the extremism of religious fervour. For instance, the article, "To the Boys of Ballitore School," on the passing of a teacher compares the teacher's reaction on his deathbed to that of a rich man at his, to underline what it means to be a true Christian. Whereas the teacher's last thoughts were on doing away with anything in his house that measures time, the rich man laments the missed opportunity of enjoying his five thousand pounds.

The conflict between rational moralism and romanticism was never as pronounced as in the nineteenth-century. Topics pertaining to folklore or the supernatural were parried judiciously by the periodical/magazine editors. Those which did appear were admonitory or bodeful such as the story, "Harry's rash wish, and how the fairies granted it."[30] In the story, Harry wishes there were no babies in the world, perturbed by the constant cries of his infant sister and in his dream the fairies wipe the earth off children. The supernatural beings are described as "a strange lot" who engage in some ceremony that "terrifies" little Harry. He meets an old man who tells him how

[30] Printed in London by Frederick Warne in 1888. See, Bibliographical Notes in Leonard De Vries book, *Little Wide Awake: An Anthology of Victorian Children's Books and Periodical.*

fairies harm "silly folks by granting their silly wishes." (De Vries 1967, pp. 73-78) As De Vries points out in his Introduction to *Little Wide-Awake: An Anthology of Victorian Children's Books and Periodicals* (1967), the arrival of Hans Anderson stories or the nonsense limerick of Edward Lear around the 1840s did flag a change in what was deemed suitable for juvenile consumption, but moralism and religious bathos dominated the narrative in juvenile print culture. In contrast, publications such as *The Juvenile Magazine* and *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine or The Dublin Family Magazine,* went against the tide and drew attention to Ireland's pagan and supernatural past. In the article, "Account of an Excursion to Poolafouca," the editor describes a visit to the fall of Poolafouca in Wicklow with some boys of Ballitore school, informing readers about the legend behind the name of the fall. He writes, "The romantic features of this scene must have always made an impression, from which it has derived its name, signifying the hole of the Demon, or Pouca," addressing it as a "sort of familiar spirit that used to be a very important personage in the popular superstitions of the Irish." (July 1814, p.5) Circumlocutarily, this article orientates the readers to Irish folklore and its geographical associations. 'The Historical Sketches of Ireland,' published in the May 1829 issue of *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine*, is a piece on Irish antiquities corroborating the legend of the Druids and the Druidic ceremonies. It speaks of the "refined and spiritual religion of the Druids," (May 1829, p.75) before the coming of Christianity. It is also hinted that the Celts would have destroyed all the remnants of this pagan religion had it not been for the advent of Christianity and the effort of the monks to preserve what was left of it. Therefore, in the pages of these magazines, we see the rise of the Irish voice through the publication of articles with typically Irish (not British) themes, including supernatural tales (which became synonymous with Irish national identity and postcolonial nostalgia) and legends as well as religious and educational

articles, anecdotes, personal letters, for the distinctly Irish juvenile reader. In Amicus's note to the editor published in the first issue of *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine,* lauding the intentions of the editor for ideating this magazine, the author writes:

> "Our metropolis has long lain in the back ground, in this respect; but now it seems to be emerging from the thraldom of circumstances, and its *patriotic literati* may be allowed to hope it will go on progressively improving, till it bears some share of affinity with that of its lesser neighbour kingdom, whose literary productions are so many." (April 1829, p. 5).

He also states in the same article that, "Ireland's children are confessedly not inferior in mental endowments to those of any part of the British Empire," (1829, p.3) and perfectly capable of producing their own. The daily outpouring of British and Scottish religious and literary works in Ireland does not signify that Ireland "should forbear an attempt at having her own." (3) It is evident from the exploration above, these magazines served as a precursor to those that appeared in the second half of the nineteenth-century in Ireland, especially after the Young Ireland movement and the emergence of a distinctly nationalist press.

The Catholic Emancipation in 1829 exacerbated imperial anxiety. The National School System which was developed two years later with the purpose of tightening the imperial noose around Irish children, resulted in a lot of resentment among the Irish populace, who were mostly Catholics. There was a gradual heightening of the martial and imperial tone in juvenile literature and an almost frantic call to embark in missionary work in British colonies. In Victorian England children were being taught, "Play up Tom Green, 'God Save the Queen,'/And 'Rule Britannia' too;/With colours gray we'll march away,

/And rival Waterloo!"[31] and magazines published by the Anglican Church such as *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* (1844) perpetuated images of depravity and barbarism in British colonies such as Africa and India, calling upon the youth to embark on missions to convert heathens. These publications were entirely agenda-driven and made no efforts to either amuse or instruct the youth. Contrarily, magazines such as Fisher's *or The Dublin Juvenile Magazine* promulgated realistic and humane images of Asian and African people and customs. For example, a contributors attempt at versifying a scene from Clarkson's History of the Slave trade came out in September issue of *The Juvenile Magazine* where a mother laments the death of her children who have been preyed upon by the 'savage man-hunter.' What is note-worthy here is imputing the term 'savage,' traditionally used to denote natives of colonised nations, to the coloniser. The sudden increase in the number of evangelical publications was likely an outcome of the spike in indigenous publications, critiquing imperialism and portraying the afflictions of Irish people. To illustrate, "Morning," was a call to Erin to awaken from her "long night of darkness and gloom!" (April 1829, p. 11) and "let conscience, truth, and reason" (11) have their way and "The Convict's Farewell to his Country," (August 1829: 305) published in *The Dublin Juvenile Magazine* articulates, a young man's, (wrongfully implicated in the 1798 Irish Rebellion against the British) undying love for his Aileen Astore. Again, magazines such as *Erin's Hope: The Irish Church Mission's Juvenile Magazine* (1844) promoted Roman Catholic faith, missionary work, and spoke of the sorry state of the Romanists in Ireland, posing a threat to the imperial government

[31] Published by J.March in 1850. See, Bibliographical Notes in Leonard De Vries book, *Little Wide Awake: An Anthology of Victorian Children's Books and Periodical.*

owing to its reactionary nature. Therefore, these magazines had laid the groundwork for secularisation of the print medium and adoption of a distinctly nationalistic tone.

6. The Magical Homeland in Juvenile Print Culture and the Tide of Nationalism

Duffy's Hibernian Magazine (1860) and *Young Ireland: An Irish Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction* (1875) offered a great range of reading material to the Irish youth. According to Elizabeth Tilley, James Duffy, the publisher of the *Duffy's* series, successfully combined 'commercial interests with patriotic work' (2020, p.118). His association with the Young Ireland organisation as one of their major publishers was seen as an extension of his patriotism. His ability to maintain the low price of his publications even during times of turmoil in Ireland, denoting they could continue to appeal to even the poorest members of the readership, meant that he contributed to 'the creation of the amorphous idea of "nation"' (Tilley 2020, p.121). Moreover, with the *Fireside Magazine*, (1850) and the *Illustrated Dublin Journal* (1860), he meant to secularise print literature by limiting literature that contained 'any matters of a political or sectarian character' (Tilley 2020, p. 123). Instead, he showcased the literary works of upcoming Irish authors such as Gerald Griffin and William Carleton. In fact, the sales of the *Illustrated Dublin Journal* increased manifold due to his efforts at secularisation. In this way, the print culture in Ireland had a significant impact on the intellectual and literary advancement of the nation. This impact, is argued, also trickled down to the juvenile readership and specifically fortified the place of fantastic literature. Victorian educationists were keen to "avoid inflaming the imagination, or exciting the restless spirit of adventure" (Edgeworth 1891, p. x). Until now, popular tales, which included tales of the supernatural and the wondrous, were not considered for publication in juvenile magazines. As such, the role of *Duffy's* and *Young Ireland* played an important role in addressing this chasm.

Duffy's Hibernian Magazine was a monthly journal of literature, science, and art. Following on from the earlier publications discussed here, religious articles and sermons continued to appear in the magazine, but they were fewer in number, and literature had a much greater presence. The first issue, for example, carried a 'Literary Notice' on the 'History of Ireland, Ancient and Modern, with Copious Topographical and General Notes by Esq. Martin Haverty,' a work that eschewed the 'sectarian spirit' to 'document results of recent archaeological research' on the island of Ireland (July 1860, p.48). It stated that the Catholics and Protestants should be equally benefitted by this account because it presented an unbiased view of the country, its past glory, and present struggles. In the pages of *Duffy's* one could see a strong interest in the theme of homeland: its geography, economy, culture and history. As illustrated on the cover page of the magazine, the lady with the harp can be understood in the context of the United Irishmen of the 1790s for the romanticisation of the harp symbol and the female personification of Erin (Ireland).

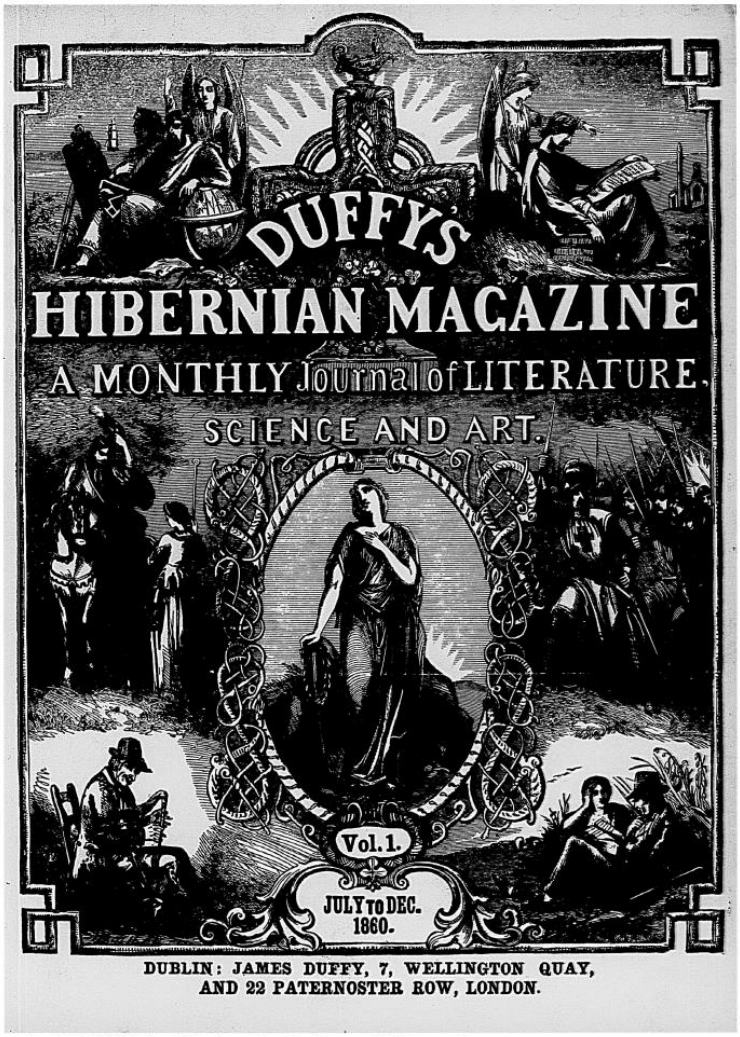

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Figure 6: The front page of *Duffy's* with Erin in the centre.

In 'Ireland: An Opening,' D. B. Wehs discusses the several trade opportunities for Ireland with France and America for the creation of a commercially viable economy. Other issues featured biographies of scientists, travellers, politicians, and patriots along with opinion pieces on state, government, education, and social life. Mythical tales of Ireland and Irish Gods and Goddesses also appeared in the magazine and so did the tales of the fantastic. As for example, 'The Poor Fairies' provides a fascinating account of the long war of the mythical fairies and the witches in Ireland. *Duffy's* was a timely precursor to '*Young Ireland*, the publication that altered the juvenile magazine landscape in Ireland and went on to define the leisure reading experience of the Irish

youth. What stood out across several of its installments was the relatively secular tone of the magazine and a definitive absence of religious overtones. It cost only a penny and it also ran a correspondence section called 'Letter Box,' which helped to maintain an intimate channel of communication with the readers and ensure its popularity. Like *Duffy's*, the topics in the magazine ranged from local history and mythology to legends and fiction from all over the world. Fantastic tales emerged as one of the biggest highlights of the publication. The presence of the fantastic or supernatural apparatus in these tales not only seems to embody the child's colonised status (by virtue of their relationship with the adult/state) but also seems to be embedded within a broader anti-imperialistic narrative. An analysis of some of the short stories that appeared in the magazine corroborates this assertion. In 'Irish Witches and Witchcraft,' Christopher Green offers an overview of the witches in Ireland and reflects on how the march of civilisation has jeopardised the credulity of supernatural beings, such as fairies, witches, goblins, and ghosts, among the Irish peasantry. The article reminds the readers that the supernatural is an integral part of Irish culture like other so-called barbaric races, when the author writes, "but the mysterious beings peopling the dark district beyond the river Styx, or the mighty genii or magicians of the "Arabian Nights" were never the offsprings of ignorant and degraded minds" (March 1879, p.148) but a product of their vivid and fertile imagination. He proceeds to describe how there has been a systemic attempt by the British to deny the Irish their supernatural past. Objectifying national consciousness through the fantastic and the mythical is a trope that many Irish writers of juvenile fiction, such as Padraic Colum, Patricia Lynch, and Ella Young, have implemented in their narratives.

Subsequent publication included several adaptations of folklore and fairy tales such as Susan Archer Weiss's retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast.' This is a modern re-

telling of the classic fairy tale on erroneous first impressions and the power of apology. Another story, 'The Fairy Queen and Kilmoodan's Daughter,' juxtaposes Irish myth and history to create a striking narrative on the nation, national pride, and duty. The supernatural machinery weaves the two strains of myth and nation into a powerful narrative device that possibly contributed to the development of a recurring trope in Irish children's literature and appropriated folk narratives, as proposed earlier in this dissertation. In the story, on the day of Eileen and Gerald's wedding, Gerald is abducted by the fairy queen. A prophet informs Eileen that her husband is alive and in the fairy queen's castle. She must convince the queen of the binding nature of her affections by crying at the entrance of her castle until she succeeds in melting the queen's heart. Eileen's father is afraid to let her journey through the forests because the 'merciless' English soldiers are everywhere and are at war with Ireland. But Eileen braves the threat outside and sets out for the journey with her trusted aid, Oona, and through her persistence manages to please the fairy queen and liberate Gerald. The queen asks him to choose between the eternal bliss of the fairy-land or the miseries of the earth and he chooses the earth and the sorrows of his ancestral land. The dangers at the fairy-land seems inconsequential to Gerald in the face of an English invasion and unafraid of the reality of these worldly trials he chooses his nation over the fairy-land. The supernatural events in the story bolster the nationalistic metanarrative.

Another fairy tale in *Young Ireland* presents a child who is intelligent, compassionate, and different from others. He is inquisitive about the ways of the world and loves to wander alone rather than play games with children his own age. The narrative constructs childhood in a way that gives primacy to the self-sufficient, thoughtful child, a reflection of child-centrism. In the story, a water dragon seeks the child's assistance in burning his discarded skin to prolong his life. The dragon was a

creature of air accursed to roam the waters as a water-dragon. If not for the burning of the skin every year for seven years, the creature would have perished in this form, as contrived by a higher power. The child's unwavering faithfulness releases him of the spell and he leaves behind his skin on the seventh and final year of his punishment for the child, which if worn would bestow him with fish-like qualities that will help him rescue an abducted princess and become king himself. This is symptomatic of the trope of the supernatural as an extension of the 'disenfranchised' protagonist. The boy here is depicted as an orphan and "utter stranger in the village," (August 1879, p.505) growing up at the mercy of a local farmer. The dragon living an equally baneful life mirrors the child's pitiful existence at the mercy of a greater force. They assist each other in extricating themselves from the clutches of slavery and misfortune.

Abduction by the 'good people' or fairies is common in Irish folk literature. 'Joanny the Fairies' by Brigid in the September 1879 issue is based on this immensely popular theme (pp.583–5). According to the tale, a young couple, Tim and Joanny, are torn asunder by the fairies who abduct Joanny in the dead of night. When an acquaintance spends the night at the couple's house, she discovers the silhouette of Joanny entering the children's room. Tim's reaction is one of disbelief. Confronted by the shadow of his wife, he learns about the gambit for Jaonny's rescue from J spirit. The supernatural backdrop informs the central conflict in the plot, which arises between the poor farmers and the landed aristocrats, the Jeffers. There is a description at the beginning of the story where the author introduces the Jeffers and their wrongful treatment of the poor people of Blarney. The Jeffers and their ilk have guns and pistols and shoot the farmers at their will and then try to win them over with a sheep or a fat cow. These people live in castles and are hated by the commoners. But since Joanny's tryst with the fairies and her return she is feared by all and, for the first time, Tim finds

the courage to fight a lawsuit against the Jeffers to claim a disputed land that was wrongly taken from them. It is not only a story about the resistance of oppressive forces and overcoming physical and personal challenges, but it also ends on a note of distrust for colonial forces and nostalgia for the past glory of Ireland, before the advent of the foreigners and the railroads. It is not just the theme that reflects the anti-colonial sentiments but also the use of colloquialisms such as *dhoorshe-dhorse, three-an-a-keylie, dhea guolth* etc.

7. "Our Boys" and a Turn Towards Hyper-nationalism

One of the outcomes of the transformation of the Irish education system after Ireland's Independence was the systemic attempt at indigenisation of school curriculum. The post-independence curriculum stressed further the propagation and perpetuation of nationalistic literature. In *Education and Celtic Myth: National Self Image and School Books in 20th Century Ireland,* (2012) Padraic Frehan discusses at length the limitations of the English readers that were used as textbooks in the post-independence period, akin to the situation in colonial Bengal. As already mentioned, a trenchant distrust grew among the Irish Catholic hierarchy because of the imperial governments disregard for Irish culture and literature. The Christian Brothers withdrew their schools from the state education body. This led the organisation to introduce its own books. These books served as templates for English Literary Readers but they promoted Catholic hyper-nationalism. The reading lessons focused on Irish authors Irish geography and history that were extremely critical of the government policies. He states:

> What was particularly important in the Christian Brother textbooks was the combination of material of religious and native Irish interest- historical, mythological, and lyrical. All these components helped to inculcate patriotic and nationalistic sentiment and image in the pupils as well as promoting the concept of

> a Celtic Catholic Ireland across the educational environment in general and as a consequence across society as well. (2012, p.185)

This approach was to all intents and purposes seen as anti-colonial but compromised the quality of education at schools, which themselves became blatantly propagandist in nature. These textbooks encouraged a very narrow view of national consciousness that marginalised all other cultures and languages that were not Gaelic speaking or Catholic or overtly nationalist. Periodicals such as "Our Boys" (1914), published by Christian Brothers, who were also the prime educators in Ireland at the time, were sold at schools and also independently. They were ancillary to the textbooks but they were intended for leisure time reading. The magazines were glossy and contained copious pictures and advertisements unlike the older periodicals and magazines. The purpose of the magazine was to create something exclusively Irish and 'offer alternatives to *The Gem, The Magnet, The Boy's Own Paper,*' (Keogh 2015, p.701) and similar British magazines. The overarching aim of the publication was, however, to instil a sense of pride in one's national identity among Irish youth. The publication ran articles on mythology, folklore, ballads, Irish politics, social life, and fiction but would pivot around topics that celebrated the martyrdom and heroism of boys.[32] With time it became evident that the Irish readers were scarcely content with the in-ward looking approach of the editors. It was impossible for the Christian Brothers to shield Irish youth from foreign influences, especially American culture. Many Irish people had emigrated to America since the Great Famine and the emigrant population had a huge cultural impact

[32] Boys will be boys, but they can be martyrs too. They were so in the early days of the Church…. They were so by hundreds in Ireland – two hundred in one persecution drive in County Cork alone, Russia and Mexico have this today…. Do not forget that all 'Our Boys' are potential martyrs. It may yet be the unspeakable privilege of some to become actual ones, from the September 26 issue published in 1935. See, Keogh (2015, p.711).

on the homeland. It was difficult to insulate the youth from the influence of 'liberalism, materialism and modernity.' (2015, p.716) Although the intellectual needs of Irish youth continued to be monitored by religious organisations involved in government roles, it was difficult to ignore the possibility of attaining an equipoise between the forces of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The public libraries offered a space that could be potentially conducive as a meeting point of these diverse ideologues. The free public libraries in Ireland were primarily built to promote national identity, encourage reading for entertainment but also introduce the "progressive trends from America and Great Britain…for the establishment of dedicated spaces for children to read and study." (2018, p.68)

Maire Kennedy in her article, "A Treasure-House for Young: Free Irish Libraries and the Irish Child," sheds light on the role of public libraries in the construction of the Irish child and childhood. Just like the periodical, "Young Ireland", the aim of these libraries was also to encourage the study of literature that would have a civilizing impact on the children and put forward reading materials, poetry, narratives, non-fiction that will serve as an alternative to schoolbooks. The libraries were based on American examples and sought to correct the limitations of the school curriculum. The reading culture that these libraries wanted to foster was one that would satiate the curious mind of the child and not weigh it down with pedagogy. The Library Association, established in 1904 released a journal in 1905 called "An Leabharlann" or "The Library" which had as one of its objectives the need to shape young minds that will not only serve their country but also serve their own intellectual and creative needs. What "Young Ireland" or free public libraries in Ireland achieved was to mobilise a definitive shift towards child-centrism. The entertainment and advancement of the child were now given precedence over the child's national responsibility. These libraries

encouraged children from an early age to develop reading habits and provided enough flexibility and options in the availability of reading materials. This leisure reading practice at libraries was touted as an alternative to the school experience:

> When the children's library opened as part of the New Pembroke Urban District library in 1929, talks were specifically chosen to stimulate 'the children's imaginative sense' and 'no attempt was made to cover ground likely to have been already covered in school.' Themes included 'mythology, folk-tales, romantic history, poetry, travel, music.' (2018, p. 77).

The books that were selected for these libraries also point towards a tilt in the direction of entertaining fiction and non-fiction, such as adventure stories, travelogues, and fantastic fiction. 'Folk and fairy tales appealed to a wide spectrum of readers' (2018, p.81) and fairy tales were among the most borrowed books at these libraries. Again, native and non-native, Irish and international classics, all kinds of books, were available within these reading spaces. Another significant offshoot of the library system was the realisation that the children needed original writing in Irish or Irish-themed fiction instead of translations that gave rise to *An Gum*, a publication house set up by the Irish government after Ireland became independent. Therefore, within the pages of the juvenile magazines and the expanding spaces of the family and public libraries, fantastic fiction found a foothold in Ireland.

In Bengal too, a parallel culture gained prominence and was also motivated by the objective of providing native children best of the East and the West. Gargi Gangopadhyay writes about the Bengali Family Library in the 1850s:

> Apart from periodicals such as Sakha, Sathi, and Mukul, entertaining children's literature was scarce in mid- and late-nineteenth century Bengal. During 1850s, "The Bengali Family Library" series, which was created primarily for women and children by the Vernacular Literature Committee with the aim of promoting "a

> sound and useful Vernacular Domestic Literature for Bengal," began publishing works like *Robinson Crusoe, Paul and Virginia, Lamb's tales from Shakespeare, Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales." (2018, p.73)

Some of the books mentioned by Gangopadhyay were also part of Irish library catalogues. The leisure reading culture in Bengal and Ireland owed much to the foreign classics and their influence on young minds.

Therefore, within the pages of the literary magazines and the expanding spaces within family and public libraries children's literature gained popularity in Bengal and Ireland. Apart from a historical concurrence, the thematic similarities in the articles published in these magazines also point towards the creation of a leisure reading practice that sought to dismantle the colonial influence in these states through a balanced approach towards indigenisation and globalisation. What also emerged because of the renown of these platforms was a preoccupation with the fantastic. Fantatsic/apparition narratives for children began to be imagined and written in unique and ingenious ways and assumed a distinct significance vis-à-vis postcolonial children's literature.

Chapter Two: The Fantastic Folks: The Supernatural in Folk Narratives

1. Overview

The recent years have witnessed a renewed interest in the study of folklore. The role of Italian folklorists in the development of fairy tale as a genre has already been discussed earlier in Folklore and Children's Literature. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were inspired by the Italian folklorists to produce something similar for the German readership. They had several collaborators who supplied them with the stories, which they subsequently compiled and edited for publication. Their work was so meticulous and methodical that it set a precedent for future scholarship in folk literature. Their intention was to inscribe the orally transmitted tales 'in language'[33]before they were erased from the collective memory of the Germanic race.

In those places (South Asia and Ireland) where the oral form of folklore has defined their zeitgeist, the 'spoken' word has found primacy over the 'written'. In fact, literary trends could not entirely supplant the oral practices. In these cultures, where the interest in folklore has predated that in Germany or France, the oral folkloric tradition has persevered. Therefore, one can safely presume that, when some cultures were interested in transfiguring the written form, some others were still trying to restore and uphold the oral folkloric tradition. In a conversation between Seamus O Duilearga and T.K. Whitaker on Irish folklore, the former says:

> The written saga is but a pale ghost of the tale that once was told, and the personality and the polished artistry of the medieval storyteller can only be guessed at by the student of the written word who has not had the privilege of hearing the

[33] These selections from the "Kinder-und Haus-Marchen" includes stories which are prime favourites with children. In language as in thought they are carefully graded to the most youthful readers. See, "Preface" of *Grimm's Fairy Tale* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimn, (Turpin 1903, p. 4)

> living voice of the modern reciter of Irish wonder tales, the democratic descendant of the aristocratic storyteller of a thousand years ago. (Dundes 1999, p.159)

In the same interview he emphasises that "art of folk-tale is in the telling." (160) He shares the experience of listening to a re-telling of a German *Kunts-marchen* which he thought had more affective engagement with the audience when performed than read in person. He calls the farmers and crofter-fishermen, the "sole custodians of the oldest *unwritten* literature and tradition of the west" (158). Whitaker opines, what the Grimm brothers were to German folklore, Duilerga was to Irish folkloristics. Duilearga calls the *shanachies* or Irish storytellers, the "only real authorities on Irish tradition" (158) A story, he says, ideally "consists of three parts: the tale itself, the reciter and the audience" (160) The audience form one of the pillars of the story because their reaction to the recital will decide the fate of storytelling. The story is not only about the content but also about the performance, the poetry, and the music. He talks about the colonial impact of the English language on oral performative storytelling and how the death of the language affected the Gaelic storytellers and their place in Irish society. In the interview, Duilearga recounts his travails across Ireland in search of storytellers and the different storytellers he met and stories he heard being performed. He found the written form of folklore subjacent to the oral art of the *shanachies*. Their repertoire of *marchens* (fairy-tales), and *seanchas* (legends) reflected the profound wisdom and philosophy of the illiterate people of the soil that it purveyed.

In "An Uncertain Coming of the Book," (2003) Anindita Ghosh ascribes a curious influence of written literature on Bangla oral storytelling, as well. In her essay on the emergence of print culture in Bengal and the process of sanitising the crude and colloquial Bangla to the polished Bangla of textbooks under the influence of colonial governance, she writes:

> Print did not necessarily bring about a displacement and marginalization of earlier prevalent performative traditions and communal reading practices: its impact as a civilizing tool was considerably compromised. (25)

Ghosh here, hints at a coexistence of both forms. Like Duilearga she does not comment on the superiority of one over the other but draws our attention to the strong influence of the oral variant of storytelling on Bangla literature and culture. According to her, the performative traditions became a potent vehicle for the dissemination of simple and colloquial Bangla that came to be associated with the "literate lesser clerical and commercial groups" (32) and "the poor low-caste masses" (ibid). The literature that came to be written in the colloquial/unpolished form of Bangla language were primarily based on oral ballads and religious stories. These literary genres constituted *panchalis*[34], *mangal kavyas* etc. These ballads and stories were meant to be performed/recited. In this way, the written ceased to remain restricted to the literate audience. Often, someone who knew how to read would recite these compositions to illiterate masses who would then produce them from memory.

The ritual of performative storytelling in Bengal commenced as early as the sixteenth century with the Vaishnava missionaries. This was a religious movement meant to convoke *bhakti* or a sense of devotion in the listeners. A more popular

[34] *Panchalies* or rhythmic couplets set to music, based on mythological themes and favourite epics featured prominently on such occasions, as did a particularly popular genre of religious literature in the form of lengthy narrative poetry spun around local dieties known as *mangal kavyas.* See, *An Uncertain Coming of the Book: Early Print Cultures in Colonial India*, (2003, pp. 23-55).

derivative of this movement was the *kathakata* tradition. In "The Performer and the Listener: *Kathakata* in Modern Bengal" (1994), Gautam Bhadra writes:

> A *kathak* is a performer who is different from a *Pathak* and a *Vyakhyata*. His performance is usually held in the evening. He invariably speaks in the vernacular. He compiles his own text out of many sacred and accepted texts; he retells the story, interspersing his own narrative with suitable songs and poems and popular tales. He makes a number of variations, juxtaposing various versions of a tradition, and at the same time remaining true to the main structure of a well-known plot. The stories are taken from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Bhagvata or the Visnu Purana. Each incident which makes a narrative whole is called a *pala*, such as *Shubhadraharan pala*, *Taranisen pala* or *Akrurgaman pala*, all these would be written in the respective punthis (manuscripts), to be read according to the demands of the audience. (244)

Similar to the Irish storytelling tradition, the Bengali *kathakata* also sought an active participation from the audience. Bhadra, in his article, states that the listening activity in a *kathakata* recitation was as important as the performance. In fact, it was very well-organized and systematic. The audience acted as the critics. There would be a *dharaka* or a judge who excoriated the performances; the *srabaks* or listeners constituted the primary audience who often interjected by asking questions and motivated the *kathak*. There would be two sessions: a noon and an evening session. Sometimes there would be a battle of the *kathaks*, a particular performance that the audience thoroughly enjoyed in those times. These events were commissioned by wealthy or influential households or patrons and performed on special occasions such as part of religious ceremonies. The Indian society has always been highly partisan and dominated by class/caste considerations. Since certain occupations were associated with certain castes, the role of the *kathak* has traditionally been played by upper-caste

Brahmins.[35] Lower-caste people could not lead these performances, but they could attend one in the capacity of audience. After the end of the performance, everyone in the audience irrespective of their social position was expected to give some *pyala* or some form of alms to the performer as a token of appreciation. The Marxist critic Debi Prashad Chattopadhyay has opined that a *kathakata*, by virtue of being narrated by the upper caste, was a medium of pleasing the ruling class and controlling the illiterate peasants with upper-caste propaganda. Again, Antonio Gramsci in the essay, 'Observations on folklore,' uses the term 'subaltern' to refer to the folk. According to Gramsci not only peasants but people who are at a 'lower rank' under the hegemonic control of the elite form the 'subaltern group,' which includes the 'literate lesser clerical and commercial groups' and the poor people of lower castes, mentioned earlier. This definition is more inclusive of class, caste, and gender considerations than the narrow economistic Marxist definition of the 'subaltern.' According to his theory, the ruling classes use folklore to keep the lower classes subservient. In 'Observations,' Gramsci is concerned with the possible ways popular class can use elements handed down by the ruling class to opposite ends that contest the agenda of the dominant class.[36] Here Gramsci is suggesting a re-inscription of dominant culture and morality. The process of contemporization and transformation of folklore addressed in this chapter follows the Gramscian postulate of creating an autonomous culture that unsettles the

[35] There are four main castes/varnas based on *Manusmriti (2nd/3rd Century BCE)* in the order of their social position in the Hindu society: Brahmins or priests, Kshatriyas or warriors, Vaishyas or agriculturalists, and Sudras or labourers. There is a fifth varna, the Dalits or untouchables who were excluded from the four-fold caste system. To understand the concept in depth, see 'Hereditary Occupations,' in Emile Charles Marie Senart *Revival: Castes in India (1930):The Facts and Systems,*1930.

[36] See Gramsci's Observations on Folklore by Alberto Maria Cirese from *Approches to Gramsci,* (1971, pp.212-213).

hegemonic relations in a given society. Endorsing Gramsci, Bhadra asserts, "construction of meaning is an autonomous process" (1944, pp. 254) He shares an anecdote on the amusing interpretation of a poor Muslim peasant of a recondite *Kathakata* session, suggesting that, at the audience level meaning-making is often independent of propaganda or the intention of the narrator. Conversely, one might argue that the adaptability and interpretability of the folk narrative render it a formidable tool for contesting socio-cultural stereotypes in a postcolonial society.

There were several other oral narrative performances that were prevalent around the sixteenth century and were re-invented and to some extent commercialized in the years to come. *Patachitra* or ekphrastic storytelling was among these. The narrators/*patuas* were itinerant storytellers who used scroll paintings as a visual representation of the stories they presented in front of the audience. These were sourced from Indian Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharat*a, and local narratives about popular Gods and Goddesses. These *patuas,* though, were a marginalized section of the Indian society, neither Hindu nor Muslim and considered to be of a lower caste. Sometimes the stories they chose for their performance limned their own experiences and interpretations.

That performative storytelling has stood the test of time and is still practiced in certain parts of these countries, especially in the countryside, proves that printed literature could not entirely erase these primitive interactive artforms. To understand the history of folklore in Ireland and South Asia, particularly Bengal, one has to trace it back to their oral cultures and the profound impact the history of orality and performative storytelling had on the upsurge of folklore in these countries. It has also majorly influenced the composition of popular juvenile literature. Storytelling as a performative art/performer-listener interaction, its lower-class roots, the relationship

between storytelling and the mendicant community (mostly owing to the poverty of the storytellers who depended on gifts from the households they performed at and the audiences for a livelihood) are some of the factors that bind the Irish and the Bangla traditions in more ways than one. In "Vagrant Voices: A Self-Portrait" (1973), Padraic Colum shares his experience of growing up with his grandmother in County Cavan, and his recollections of the *shanachie*, a storyteller and a local historian. He would sit by the fire, a stick in hand, rhythmically narrating stories that the neighbourhood boys and girls would gather to listen. It is the performance, reminisces Colum, that was engrafted in his memory. The storyteller is a mainstay in a Colum narrative. In Bengal, too, children accompanied their mothers to the storytelling sessions. Unlike other Western or Asian cultures, such an impact of the oral performative traditions in Irish and Bangla cultures has forged a unique connection between the two, especially in the light of their history of colonialism and its impact on the native tongue. This curious relationship has also transformed the way literature for children was produced. For one, oral culture has the potential to draw out the enthusiasm and wonder of the juvenile audience as it is more accessible than print and easier to understand. Second, the amalgamation of prose and poetry in children's literature can be seen as a reflection of a hybrid oral and print influence on popular literature trying to salvage the essence of orality in print.

2. European Folklore

It is the nature of folklore to tap into basic human qualities, that is at the same time universal and culture-specific. Existing literature and cultural exchanges have also contributed to the genesis of folklore. When the Grimm brothers started working on the fairy tales, there was no concept of a unified German nation. The tales were largely

regional in origin. The intention was to establish a distinct cultural identity of the Teutonic race through the first-ever fairy tale collection of its kind. At most, the tales sought to establish certain characteristics exemplified in them as distinctly German.[37] The anthropologist Vladimir Propp has broken down all tales into 31 narrative units and proposed that irrespective of their aetiologies, social and historical contexts, the tales are a combination of the same 'narrative units'[38] or *narratemes.* Evidently, this structural approach is contestable, but it does explain to some extent the universal appeal of the folklore across races and cultures. The exchange of themes across cultural and national boundaries can also be attributed to the mythical correlations among races that are discussed in detail for comparative analysis of Irish and Indian mythospheres, later in the chapter. All these factors have resulted in identical categories and functions of a tale type of British, European, or Asian origin. The authors who collected or adapted these tale types have assigned cultural subjectivity to these 'narrative units.'

This chapter juxtaposes Irish and Bangla with British-European tale types. But before laying out the differences it is important to understand the common foundations of all folklore. Anthony William Thoms merits himself on using the term "folklore" for the first time in 'Choice Notes' from *Notes and Queries Folklore Column* (1872)[39]. He was inspired by the Grimm's application of the word *volkskunde,* in their works. *Volkskunde* means folklife and can be defined as essentially peasant ethnography. Ironically, research has revealed that they hardly ever involved themselves with the ethnographical work[40] and had a network of informants spread across the country who

[37] See 'Cultural Nationalism: The Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales' from *Roots of German Nationalism*, 1978.

[38] See 'The Tale as a Whole' by Propp, (2009, pp.xxi)

[39] See the introduction to Stephen Miller's *Notes and Queries Folklore Column,* (1849-1947, p. vi).

[40] See preface by Jack Zipes in The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, (2014, pp.1-9)

supplied them with the narratives. Several other factors that contributed to the growth of folk and fairy tales during the turn of the nineteenth century were the rising tide of nationalism, the increase of literacy, growth of universities, formation of folklore societies and commissions, and recognition of folklore as an intellectual field of study. The very first edition of *Kinder-und-Hausmarchen* was released in the year 1815. There were six more editions of the collection and what is interesting is that the first edition is perhaps the most honest and authentic representation of the stories they received from their sources.[41] Some stories from the first edition were omitted and some were not reprinted in the subsequent editions. In the introduction to *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales* (2013), Jack Zipes points out that the smaller edition of the book, *Kleine Ausgabe* (1825), was intended to please the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie-pleasing attitude is also discernible in some of the omitted tales from the first edition. One of the stories, "The Children of Famine," quite dramatically demonizes poverty.[42] It is based on a mother's cannibalistic attitude towards her children owing to the scarcity of food in the household due to an ongoing famine. The story is stark in its portrayal of a poverty-stricken childhood and brutal view of parenthood. Territorial wars had ravaged parts of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resulting in food shortages. The stories on famine might have been influenced by that. Parent brutality is also a core feature of the "Abandoned Children," sub-type, ATU 327A of the folklore genre.[43] The parents of Hansel and Gretel decide to leave them behind in the thick of the woods because they are no longer able to provide for them. Regardless of their parents' abandonment, they find their home safer than the cruel world without and try to find

[41] See Introduction to The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, (2014, p. xxxiv).

[42] See The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, (2014, p. 456).

[43] See https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html

their way back home. By all intents and purposes, the reason for removing "The Children of Famine" while retaining similarly themed stories could be the portrayal of a mother's unnatural tendencies. Such tales had the potential to tear apart the basic fabric of society and civilization. Many critics have pointed out that the Grimms' commitment to authenticity was restricted to the first edition. The later editions were more like adaptations than veritable representations of the originals. Several stories from Italy, France, England, Poland, Moravia, Romania, Philippines, etc fall under the abandoned children tale-type. In "Little Thumb," the pronouncement is very lucid, "There came a very bad year and the famine was so great that these poor people decided to rid themselves of their children.[44]" References to *An Gorta Mór* (1845-52) or the Great Irish Famine is found in Irish oral cultures in the form of songs or anecdotes, but no definitive tale type emerged out of it. The allusion to famine and food scarcity is mainly found in modern adaptations of popular Irish folklore and legends. Another tale type that is quite prevalent in the European context focuses on child brutality. Tales of brutality are a mainstay of folklore and legends across cultures, but child brutality or children casually killing other children is evident in all other European traditions bar ring Irish. In Irish folklore, jocularity finds primacy over brutality, familial relations over household discord, and maternal affection over parental indifference. The family unit has a powerful presence in the Irish folk literature. Another significant point of departure is the mythopoeic nature of Irish folklore. Romantic regionalism is also evident in German/French folklore. In fact, both German and French folklore can be seen as a movement against the fear of standardization due to loss of the tales' national or local texture. The Grimms' replaced fairies with magicians/witches in the later

[44] See https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html

editions of their book, as in “Rapunzel,” because they felt fairies belonged to the French tradition. There is always a pronounced will to preserve parochial conformity in these cultures, compared to Ireland, which could be attributed to the country’s acceptance of diversity, while being regionally and religiously true to the Irish spirit in folk literature. For example, there are allusions to African and Asian cultures in Padraic Colum’s folkloric adaptations. The tale-type 510B or “The father who wanted to marry his daughter” is a common tale type found in parts of Europe, Ireland, Scotland and also India. If one is to compare the different tales that have been preserved in each of these cultures, we will see that the Irish narration of the tale is far more interesting, as far as the narrative mode is concerned (can be attributed to the storytelling tradition in Ireland), and there is also an attempt at a more detailed approach towards characterization. The characters of the prince and the princess sound quite humane and practical. The Indian version of the tale type is quite straightforward and short compared to the other two variants and here the father is merely testing the daughter’s chastity and moral character before getting her married off to someone else. Another point of concurrence between Irish and Bangla folklore is the abundance of religious themes in folklore. Religion played a big part in the construction of identity in both Ireland and India and their folklore bears the imprint of the same.

3. Victorian Folklore

In the introduction to *Folklore and the Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (2008), Jason Marc Harris refers to the works of John Beattie and Henrika Kuklick, well-known anthropologists, to show how the upper-class British society considered the poor and the children as uncivilized and primitives. Victorian society saw women and children as essentially savages. If they happened to belong to the lower order of society then they had absolutely no social standing in the eyes of the upper classes. Therefore,

in certain ways, the demonization of the British poor formed a kind of a bridge between British and other indigenous/Anglophone cultures and the representation of women and children in popular literature, especially children's literature. Despite these assertions, Robert Chambers[45], in his studies on popular antiquities, attests to the fact that primitive cultural norms and superstitions also existed among the upper ranks of British society. The rural network of folklore provided an alternative voice to Victorian modernity. Although the literature of the early Victorian period was characterized by realism, around the 1840s, we see the emergence of Gothic fiction (Emily, Anne, and Charlotte Bronte), the revival of romance (Alfred Tennyson, Robert and Elizabeth Browning), the popularity of sensation novels (Wilkie Collins) and science fiction (H.G. Wells). Two things that continued to be a mainstay in Victorian literature were the influence of folklore and the representation of class hierarchy in British society. Harris opines, "Politically, folklore could be used either to unite or divide cultural distinctions of class," (2008, p. 16) stating that the folklore movement could have become an attempt at homogenising class differences and conflicts but that was not to be. The nineteenth-century folklorists highlighted these very conflicts and tensions that could have otherwise been homogenised akin to German folkloric practices by the Grimm Brothers. Harris, in his study, has brought together folklore and fantastic literature of Britain, Scotland and Ireland. According to Harris, R.L. Stevenson, William Sharp and Sheridan Le Fanu represented the folklore of various classes, nations, and cultures in their works, dealing with class exploitation, imperial xenophobia, use of folk beliefs for mercenary purposes, exploitation of the poor etc. Harris quotes Bengt. Holbek in his essay to

[45] In Robert Chambers' *Book of Days* there are several superstitions and stories that were prevalent among the upper classes of the British society such as the legend of Glastonbury about the enchanted a miraculous thorn and a walnut tree, (1864, pp. 758-759.

demonstrate fairy-tale symbolism and the 'eucatastrophic function' (23) of these narratives in real communities. The purpose of the fairy-tale, according to Holbek is the evasion of political authority by representing real-life problems through fairy-tale symbolism and create an atmosphere of fulfilment through a happy ending by realizing a mode of community daydreaming, where everything resolves in the end and a sense of justice and morality prevails. Fairy tales across cultures have served the 'eucatastrophic' function, representing harsh and unsurmountable difficulties and resolving them miraculously with an optimistic ending. Mostly the supernatural apparatus would come to the rescue of the protagonists. This chapter argues that in adaptations of indigenous folklore, unlike other European narratives, the fantastic or supernatural 'narrative code' plays a meaningful role, especially in creating an 'autonomous culture' of the people as opposed to the rationale of the 'official culture.'(Sassoon, p. 232. Having foregrounded the unique elements of Irish folkloric adaptations, the similarities inherent in Irish and Indian mythological exposition and their influence on folkloric adaptations for juvenile readers will be addressed.

4. Comparing Folk Mythospheres

In *The Indian Theogony: A Comparative Study of Indian Mythology from the Vedas to the Puranas* (1970) Sukumari Bhattacharji writes, "Indian mythology was not a static affair; neither was it a luxury; it was linked with the vital spiritual urges and needs of the people, who projected their most haunting dreams, hopes and cravings into their myths." (1970, pp. 12)

Bhattacharji's statement is key to understanding of the role of mythmaking in folklore and folklore-based literature. She is implying a relationship between mythmaking and a coping mechanism among humans. She echoes Sigmund Freud in her psychoanalytical approach to spirituality and religion. She talks about the creation of a mythosphere, a

mythical world where human realities are acted out and Gods communicate with humans through rituals and symbols. These mythosperes are different across cultures and she attributes any similarity between Indian and non-Indian myths to either diffusion or Carl Jung's 'collective unconscious.' (Jung 1968, pp.42-43.) For instance, the Hindu mythosphere is markedly different from the Judeo-Christian and Islamic mythospheres but there are several overlaps in pagan pre-Christian European and Hindu mythospheres. Bhattacharji attributes the overlaps to the Indo-European legacy of the Indian theogony from the Vedic period. For instance, the practice of associating specific natural landmarks with local folklore is found in Indian and pagan European mythospheres. The Icelandic saga of Helgafell or the Holy Hill, a knoll resembling a burial ground, becomes associated with the mythological Otherworld from Irish folklore.[46] Thorolf, the first settler from Norway saw the knoll, proclaimed its holiness, and declared his desire to retire there in his afterlife. Consequently, Helgafell became the legendary path to the Otherworld. Similarly, it is said that during the great migration of the rishis or saints, Agasthya (one of the saints) was migrating northward when Shiva, a Hindu God, ordered him to change his route. The sun implored him to convince the mountain, Vindhya to re-consider its vertical ascent that was obstructing his path. Agasthya agreed to an interview with Vindhya, and in reverence, it bent its head. Agasthya requested the mountain to remain as it were, until he returned from Shiva's abode. Agasthya never returned and Vindhya still stands with a bowed head. Hilgafell is an allusion to migratory practices and 'othering' of migrant experiences. Adjacently, the

[46] See, Myths and symbols in pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions, (Davidson 1988, p.14, p.115, p.116).

legend of Agasthya[47] is symbolic of man's experience of diaspora and acceptance of a new world order. The legend of Codal and Eriu is also like that of Agasthya. Eiru was the fosterling of Codal and as she was growing up on the island. The hillock on which she was living was also increasing in size. Had it not been for her request to her father to dissuade the hillock from expanding any further, Ireland would have been covered in mountains.

There are two ways of life that are recognized in the Hindu mythosphere: the Vedic and the non-Vedic way of life. The Vedas denote four collections of hymns which are considered sacred to the Hindus. The Vedas have guided the saints and the kings alike. The Vedic philosophy is the philosophy of a pre-God era that explains the creation of the cosmos and all the Gods in it. The people who refused to identify with the Vedic philosophy were deemed barbarians or demons. As Hindu society began moving towards a caste-based system, where the brahmanas who claimed to be the first teachers of the Vedic philosophy and executors of the Hindu rituals started to solidify their position at the top of the social ladder, hierarchies came into being, and there was discontent among people due to the Brahmans' monopolisation of the divine practices. This is also the time when myths started being interpreted differently and the higher Vedic ideals were debunked in favour of folk traditions, gods, and goddesses. These deities were human-like in their thoughts and actions. They became a part of popular culture and started appearing in the folk narratives of the common people. As Bhattacharji rightly points out, the influence of the non-Vedic population greatly altered the Vedic theogony. Ethnic and cultural intermixture also resulted in the evolution and

[47] The legend of Agasthya is described in pages 606-610 in the first volume of Upendrakishore RayChaudhury's *Upendrakishore Raachanashamagra*, 1987.

co-existence of several pantheons: Indo-European, Vedic-Brahmanical, Epic-Puranic[48]. She writes, "new modes of social or religious life were absorbed slowly but surely, this did not happen without considerably altering the character of the Vedic religion itself and largely casting it into an indigenous mould." (5)

In this manner, the folk deities, those who were not of a cosmic origin but of a local origin and bound to the common man, the home, the local lakes, forests, communities, mountains, and riverbanks gained prominence. This phenomenon was also influenced by the rise of alternative religious practices that challenged the corruption and oppression of the Brahmans. Bengali folk literature presents a synthesis of cosmic and local mythologisation. These narratives also influenced writers of Bangla children's fiction. Legends, characters, symbols, and rituals from the Indian mythosphere, thus made their way into Bangla folklore and fairy tales.

Similarly, in Irish folk literature we not only see the influence of Norse and Celtic mythospheres, but also the creation of an essentially Gaelic mythosphere akin to the Indian prototype. The Tuatha Dé Danaan or the people of the Goddess Danu; angelic creatures who came to Ireland and defeated the early settlers, Firbolgs, sea-raiders and evil Fomorians, are also found in *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, or the Lore of Places.[49] They are variously described as magicians or deities in Irish folklore. The Irish Goddesses are imagined as well-rounded humans, revered, and feared in equal degrees, bestowed with maternal instincts, and aligned to a natural resource or a particular geographical location. The maternal Goddess as destroyer, protector and benefactor

[48] See *The Indian Theogony* by Sukumari Bhattacharji, (1970, pp.1-22).

[49] See CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts: a project of University College, Cork College Road, Cork, Ireland—http://www.ucc.ie/celt.

forms the bastion of Indian mythology too. The Indian Goddesses also have ecological and geographical significations. This is a feature that does not correspond to any other mythological traditions, particularly Greek and Roman.[50] Although Marie Louise Sjoestedt insists that the Celtic mythosphere is vastly different from the Indo-European mythosphere, the mutability of the boundaries of the natural and the supernatural does appear as a distinctive feature in both Celtic and Hindu mythospheres. The advent of Christianity in Ireland resulted in the spread of monotheistic practices across the country, relegating the pagan Gods/Goddesses to folk memory. In India, polytheism persevered despite the influence of monotheistic religions. Another cardinal difference lies in the apparent lack of an esoteric or cosmic philosophy behind the creation of the Irish mythosphere.[51]

In this chapter, the ways in which the mythological symbols and rituals came to be incorporated in Irish and Bangla folklore for children will be discussed. The role of the supernatural/fantastic is intricately linked with these symbols and rituals. The works by Padraic Colum and Ella Young are informed by the appropriation and transfiguration of several Irish mythical characters, symbols, and rituals. The language is simple yet poetic and the stories have an epic quality that will be of interest to juvenile readers who are called upon to search for their own reflections in the figures of these demigods and ancestral heroes.

[50] See H. G. T's review in Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society.

[51] They are straightforward enough and show no esoteric or mystic origin or tendency, anymore than do similar myths among savages, nor do they set forth philosophic theories of retribution, such as were evolved by Pythagorean or Indian philosophy, see *Celtic Mythology* by John McCullock, (2004: pp. 29-30).

5. Re-telling the Celtic creation myth for Children

Adaptations of Irish myths for young readers and the discussion around their literary value is a very recent development according to Ciara Ni Bhroin. In "Mythologizing Ireland," she assays works of contemporary writers of fantasy such as Marie Heaney, Una Leavy, Malachy Doyle, Orla Melling and several other authors. She is of the opinion that the Anglo-Irish Protestant writers have been widely studied in connection to folkloric adaptations of Irish myths and dilution and Christianization of supernatural elements found in these narratives. She has also critiqued the lack of interest in adapting the Mythological Cycle among Irish authors in post-Independence Ireland and their "tendency to underplay the pagan Celtic supernatural in Irish mythology" (Coghlan and O'Sullivan, p.9) that appears to denounce the Christianising mission of postcolonial Ireland and project Gaels as invaders, a notion unacceptable to many nationalists who saw the Irish as victims of British conquest. As such, the literature of Ella Young, a Presbyterian by birth, and a nationalist by choice, seems like a departure from that of its Protestant predecessors. Her best-known works are based on the Mythological cycle and they also critique conquests and marauders. Leavened with the spirit of the Revival, 'rich in Romanticism like her Pre-Raphaelite predecessors' (Sallee and Matthews 2011, p.12) Young's literature tries to re-align the mythical Irish past with contemporary issues of ecological peril eventuated by modernity and the anti-imperial 'imaginative repossession of the land,' (21) in children's literature from the Revival era.

Ella Young was born in 1867 in Fenagh, near Ballymena, Co. Antrim. She travelled around Ireland, talking to people, and collecting folklore. She was a poet, a folklorist, a rebel, and a mystic. At various stages in her youth, she has been involved in reactionary activities against the British government. Her involvement in the 1916 uprising, the war of independence in Ireland, and the war that ensued after the signing

of the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921 that resulted in the partition of Ireland are not unknown. One of the most prominent features of her children's folklore is the primacy of the Celtic creation myth and Celtic theogony. To understand the relevance of her mythological interpretations, an overview of the Celtic/Gaelic mythosphere is desiderated.

According to J.A. MacCulloch, the author of *Celtic Mythology* (2004), several mythic tales from the Celtic and Pre-Celtic eras have overlapped in the synthesis of aboriginal and Celtic legends. He suggests that the Celts from Gaul and other parts of Europe also had rich mythology, vignettes of which could be found on several archaeological inscriptions scattered across the continent – although, no written record of it could be traced. These Celts were the Continental Celts. The Insular Celts, those from Ireland, Wales, and North-Western Scotland, had no rock inscriptions to corroborate their mythology but had copious literature on it. How much of that which has been written down as mythology has any real source in history is unclear. It is probable that most of these narratives are imaginary and inspired from other cultures that the people encountered through trade or acquired from the settler communities. MacCulloch exhorts that Roman influence and influence of Christianity were two factors that led to the dilution of the myths. What remains of these myths are fragments preserved by *filíd* (poets) and some Christian monks. He attests that only a few heroic cycles could elude disintegration, such as the Cuchulainn and Fionn cycles but others became shadows of the original epic narratives. Most of these materials can be found in manuscripts, such as *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, *Book of Leinster* and *Book of the Dun Cow,* written in the 11th and 12th centuries, but consisting of stories from an older period. Unlike the *filids*, who were poets interested in preserving the pagan mythology of the Irish people, the annalists were interested in documenting the pseudo-history of

the Irish. They were the true orchestrators of the euhemerizing process. They attempted to account for the people who came to Ireland, as colonialists, or remained as settlers to be assimilated with the native population, resulting in the presence of various races in the island, from their unscientific historians' perspectives. Although there is no historical proof of the origin of these myths preserved by *filíd* or annalists, history does attest to the Celtic and Viking invasion of Ireland. So, there are several popular legends on the history of settlement in Ireland. One of the legends attributes the line of settlers to the descendants of Noah (Biblical) but another annalistic belief is that the settlers arrived from Spain.[52] There is some historical evidence of trade between Spain and Ireland. The legend has it, that first came the Fomorians who were then followed by the Firbolgs, Fir-Danaans and Galioin. Then came the Dé Danaans (spelt as Dé Danann and used as a plural variant of the term in McCulloch and as Dé Danaan in *Celtic Wonder Tales* by Ella Young, as a singular variant and Dé Danaans as the plural variant), who were Gods and possessed magical powers. Finally, came the Milesians who then defeated the Dé Danaans, claimed the island and became the first ancestors of Irish people. Most were superhuman clans but the Dé Danaans were superior in their magical powers. The conflict between the Dé Danaans and the Firbolgs has also been represented in Irish myth, as that between the incoming Celts and the aborigines or the natives, although Firbolgs were not natives but settlers and both the clans were considered descendants of the same mythical people.[53] Young's *Celtic Wonder Tales* (1910) focuses on the legends of the Dé Danaans, Fomorians, and the Milesians. It is interesting to note that she chooses the conflict between the Dé Danaans and the Fomorians as the foundation of her tales. The euhemeristic approach of annalists in

[52] See *Celtic Mythology*, (McCulloch 2004, p.40)

[53] The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory, (Carey 1994, pp.7-8)

documenting the history of the Irish people has already revealed how myth can be interpreted and several traditions can be accounted for. In this chapter, we will particularly consider a postcolonial interpretation of Young's *Celtic Wonder Tales*.

Ella Young's revolutionary activities, her opposition to the Irish Parliamentary Party that supported home rule in Ireland within the confines of British domination and the ascendancy of the despotic Free State Party, had made it difficult for Young to evade persecution in Ireland. Republicans everywhere were being imprisoned or forced into exile. In such a situation she decided to accept the invitation to a lecture tour in America in 1925, never to return. One of the foundational thoughts in Salman Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands," is the migrant/exiled author's desire to reclaim his 'homeland' through his literary pursuits: "It may be writers in my position, exiles, or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back" (Rushdie 1991, pp. 10). The writer of the diaspora is always struggling with this loss, of this discontinuity of the present from the past and this mordant sense of alienation. Rushdie believes that this geographical and cultural sequestration sometimes provide the author unexplored possibilities of reclaiming literature. "The Earth-Shapers," the first story in Young's *Celtic Wonder Tales*, is based on a similar concept of the reconstitution of the earth, re-making of a glorious past lost to the Celtic Gods to redefine the future of the country. The Earth in this text stands for Ireland where the Gods Angus, Brigit, Dagda, Nuada, Ogma, Gobniu have descended. The Earth was 'in the pit of chaos," (Young 1910, p. 4) and infested by enemies/monsters but it was still singing. The migrant author's first impulse at any form of literary reclaiming is hope, claims Rushdie. This hope is reflected in the Earth singing amidst chaos. The Gods who have come down to re-make the Earth also represent the Tuatha Dé Danaan. According to Irish mythology, the Dé Danaan not only possessed supernatural powers but they

were also associated with cattle and agriculture. Ireland's fertility has often been alluded to in Irish legends. British rule resulted in the exploitation of her fertile soil. The Gods here, represented in the clan of the Dé Danaan want to restore and rebuild the earth. The earth is fraught with dangers, threatened by occupiers who want to destroy it. This conflict could be seen as an allegorical representation of Ireland's need for rediscovery in the light of British occupation. It is interesting how it is not just any God, but its Brigit, the Goddess of poetry who decides to shield the earth with her protective mantle. Young was a poet and we see in her story the figure of a Poet Goddess singing the song of the Earth, communicating its meaning to the other Gods, and providing the Earth with her protective armour. This is also symptomatic of the important role of literature and the arts in postcolonial Ireland. The tale is in keeping with the spirit of the Celtic Revival and a call to consolidate a national identity for Ireland. The Gods see Ireland and decide to settle on the island as they realize its infinite beauty and appeal. It's the Dé Danaan who name the island, Ireland. By giving the island its name, identifying its immeasurable potential, the abundance of its natural resources and the need to restore its lost cultural glory the Gods are seen actively participating in the construction of a nation. They are shaping a country and giving the responsibility of claiming its future and upholding its integrity and sovereignty on the young shoulders of heroes such as Angus. Structuring the narrative around Dagda and Angus like any other father and son, familiarizing the juvenile reader with the mundane and humane side of the Gods and then conceiving the young boy as the Irish hero, the author constructs a vision of childhood that stands on the pillars of nationalism and patriotism.

When the Gods descend to Earth, they bring with them the Sword of Light, the Spear of Victory, the Cauldron of Plenty and the Stone of Destiny. Nuada places the Spear of Victory in the centre of Ireland. But the "mis-shapen things of darkness"

(Young 1910, p.15), who come from the sea begin to encircle the sacred island. They surround Ireland from all sides. These are the Fomorians. They are looking for the Spear of Victory. They start screeching to disrupt the peace of the Gods. The Gods think they would tire of it, but the Fomorians are persistent. So Nuada, takes the Spear of Victory and thrusts it at the Fomorians. The king of the Fomors, Balor, grasps it and keeps it in his own country, depriving Ireland of its protection. Young writes:

> The spear was in the lake then. Great clouds of steam rose about it from the black water. Out of the hissing steam Demons of the Air were born. The Demons were great and terrible. There was an icy wind about them. They found their way into Ireland. They took prey there in spite of the Dé Danaans . They made broad tracks for themselves. The Fomors followed in their tracks. It was then that misfortune came to the Dé Danaans . The people of the Fomor got the better of the Dé Danaans . They took the Cauldron of Plenty and the Magic Harp from the Dagda. They made themselves lords and hard rulers over the Dé Danaans , and they laid Ireland under tribute. (17)

It is interesting to note that there are several ways in which this passage can be interpreted. Since the story was written at a time when Ireland was under the British administration and amidst sporadic acts of resistance for emancipation (1800, 1803) the *siege* of Ireland by the Fomors and their conflict with Dé Danaans, who embody forces of assimilation, revival, and divinity, seems to represent a symbolic struggle between British occupation and Irish self-determination. The relationship of the Fomors with the sea is particularly interesting. Postcolonial studies have emphasised the social, political, historical, and ecological significance of the ocean. The studies also foreground histories of colonization, expropriation of territories, imperial struggles, enslavement of people, exchange of goods and knowledge, involvement with contemporary postcolonial societies, giving rise to decolonial literatures and academic discourses. Stephan Helmreich in *Sounding the Limits of Life: Essays in the Anthropology of*

Biology and Beyond (2016) discusses the concept of nature/culture divide in terms of water or oceans. He writes:

> Water as nature appears as both potentiality of form and uncontainable flux; it moves faster than culture, with culture often imagined in a land-based idiom, grounded in the culture concepts origins in European practices and theories of agriculture and cultivation. (94)

Hence water becomes both a source of sustenance, pleasure, travel but also one of poison and disaster and open to exploitation, control, and colonization. Therefore, the sea appears prominently in postcolonial literatures as facilitators of colonization and territorial encroachment. As such the demon's particular connection with the sea or origin in waters could have been re-imagined by the author as an allusion to the advent of British colonial forces to Ireland. Again, the two things that the Fomors take from the Dagda are the Cauldron of Plenty and the Magic Harp. This Cauldron is the source of food for the Irish and the Magic Harp, art, and music. The taking away of the cauldron and the harp can also be seen as a deliberate attempt by the sea-settlers to deprive the people of Ireland of food and resources as well as art, culture, and language. As a poet and an environmentalist herself, it is not unlikely that Young appropriates the folklore in a way that it reflects the real struggles of the Irish people. According to the Irish myth about the Milesians, it is said that Ith, a son of Mile, gazing from top of a tower saw Ireland and decided to travel to its coasts. He was welcomed by the kings of Ireland to settle a dispute. But he so praised the fertility of the Irish terrain that the kings suspected that he wanted to occupy the island. They were alarmed and they killed him. The Milesians then came to Ireland to seek revenge and defeated the Dé Danaan to become

the first ancestors of the Irish people.[54] This story from the legends proves that the people of Ireland were always wary of colonizers looking to exploit the fertile soil of the island. The history of Ireland is incomplete without the consideration of the 1840s famine in Ireland and its far-reaching impact on the population. The failure of the potato crop and the refusal of the British government to halt exports from Ireland during this crucial period, resulted in a death deluge that had far reaching effects on the land and its people. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find the food metaphor recurring in Irish literature. The colonization of Ireland not only contributed to food shortage in Ireland but it also adversely affected the Irish language and culture. Young, who had herself learnt the Irish language to maintain the authenticity of the narratives she accumulated, ardently believed in the cause of its preservation and perpetuation. In her autobiography, she expresses her profound concern for the loss of Ireland's language and culture.

Supriya Bhattacharjee has written extensively on the "the god-making impulse" (4) of the Indo-European mind. She says that this impulse did not stem from any form of fear or apprehension but from awe and admiration. Therefore, these cultures created gods who were closer to mortals. They were far from perfect and had their own frailties and insecurities. Furthermore, the myths already provided folklorists with material that they could exploit to highlight these qualities within narratives that almost made the gods replaceable with mortals. These narratives talk about the lofty matters and mighty gods and young heroes within settings that are socio-culturally familiar and have some relation to history, albeit in a fantastic ecosystem. In several of these narratives the fantastic assume symbolic significance. The way these narratives are preserved and recorded depends greatly on the storytelling style of the collector. This is true for every

[54] See, *Celtic Mythology*, (2004, pp.77-78).

tale passed down orally. Young's use of dialogue and humorous repartee in her collection will instantly appeal to the young reader. The conversations between the gods or specifically between the father and son, Angus and Dagda, are strikingly banal and amusing. For instance, in "A Good Action," the Fomorian invasion has stripped Dagda of all his regal privileges and his son finds him sitting in ragged clothes. Angus teases his father and suggests he should find some work to occupy himself instead of ruing the loss of his stature. Dagda is quick to reply that he is a God and therefore needs no advice from anyone. The juxtaposition of the lofty and the mundane is characteristic of both Irish and Bangla folkloric adaptations. The premise is such that a juvenile reader will be drawn into the story. Just as there was a transition in Vedic mythography with the increasing influence of other races and religions, MacCulloch has largely written about the influence of Christianity on Irish mythography that saw a declension of Gods to kings and chieftans. In Young's adaptation the Gods appear as Gods but they also emulate the common men. They retain their supernatural qualities, but their struggles are those of the laymen. Much of the exaggeration of mythic narratives is eschewed for simplicity and ease of narration. The folk narration style is used to marry the epic fantastic to more contemporary problems which civilizations have been battling for ages but finds a heightened signification in the backdrop of the existing socio-political situation of Ireland when Young was writing. The Gods like the humble humans were plagued by the atrocities of the settler communities, fear of aggression, loss of resources and the threat of an existential nature. As a continuation of the discussion on the role of the fantastic in the literatures of decolonization, this chapter analyses the magic powers and appearance of magical creatures in folk adaptations. The character of a Pooka appears to demand the company of Angus. Angus is not very keen, but the Pooka somehow convinces him to make him his minion. The Pooka in Irish mythology is a

shape shifter, a trickster, and a harbinger of misfortune. The Pooka can assume any shape or form to trick humans. Young consciously upends the stereotypical representation of the Pooka and develops a character that bolsters the fantastic machinery in the narrative. The Pooka plays a pivotal role in aiding Angus and Dagda teach Balor's son a lesson in humility. This is also an example of the mythical appropriation found in Young's work. The Pooka maintains all its notoriety but for an uncharacteristically noble purpose. He helps Angus enter Balor's son's body in the form of a good action. At the very moment when Balor's son sets out to announce Dagda and Angus's arrival in the land of the Fomorians, Pooka drops a bunch of acorns into his mouth. Angus finds this opportunity to enter his body as a good thought. This part of the story also has a lesson for children, and it follows the traditional morality pattern in folk literature. After Angus enters Balor's son's body, it seems like the evil in him is somewhat subdued as he spares Dagda's life. But true to his nature, he demands his allegiance to him. This passage is also reflective of the author's use of humour and repartee in a folk re-telling to communicate to her young audience that sometimes even good thoughts might not result in the complete transformation of evil. Dagda's use of the magic harp to evade conflict with the Fomorians is emblematic in several ways. The moment he calls out to the harp it leaps across to him. The very moment he starts playing the instrument, the Fomors lose their mobility and power of speech. Then he begins to play a strain of music and it has wondrous effects on the country. The iron country, as the author describes the region, where the Fomorians are now settled, barren and lackluster, suddenly blossoms with grass, flowers, and apple trees. White birds appear from no-where and the wind from their wings blow the apple blossoms to the ground. The Fomorians succumb to stupor and slumber. Dagda and Angus decide to leave the Balor's country with the harp. As the music starts to wane off everything

begins to disappear. Angus requests his father to leave the apple-tree behind as a reward for one good action of the Balor's son. This narrative not only stresses on the importance of good thoughts and corresponding actions but it also provides a unique antithesis to warmongering: music, art, and literature. Music also inveighs hegemonic discourse in Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury's folklore, 'GGBB,' as we will be seen in the ensuing study. Literature for children in the 18th century stressed the importance of practical and sententious education. The intent was to impart knowledge of a utilitarian kind. The emphasis on the publication and writing of folklore for children created a space for the artistic and the imaginative to thrive. Young's lyrical prose, poetic interludes, interspersed with witty dialogues and weaving of a fantastic microcosm in her children's narratives establishes her intent to re-shape juvenile literary aesthetics.

"The Coming of Lugh" in *Celtic Wonder-Tales* can be seen as, perhaps, one of the most symbolic tales in the collection. It proposes a marriage of myth and nationalism. The myth becomes a medium for communicating a strong nationalistic theme. A child reader will identify with the hero who must return to his roots to serve his wretched country. The reference to Ireland and the need to protect and resurrect a lost Ireland is a recurrent theme. This way nationalistic aspirations are instilled in the child who might not otherwise have understood the importance of the nation. Even when the young Lugh is being taken away by Mananaun MacLir to his own country and he asks the child to have one last look at the mountains and rivers of Ireland and say his farewell, the author writes that tears well up in the child's eyes and he pledges to come back to his country one day. Clearly, the author wants the child reader to identify with such strong nationalistic emotions. Mananaun's summation of the plight of Ireland under the Fomorians seems like a mythological expression of contemporary history of colonization and enslavement in Ireland:

> Every night when darkness had come into the sky, Mananaun wrapped himself in his mantle of power and crossed the sea and walked all round Ireland, stepping from rock to rock. No one saw him, because his mantle made him invisible, but he saw everything and he knew that trouble had found the Dé Danaans . The ugly, mis-shapen folk of the Fomor, had come into Ireland and spread themselves over the country like a pestilence. They had stolen the Cauldron of Plenty and carried it away to their own land, where Balor of the Evil Eye reigned. They had taken the Spear of Victory also, and the only one of the four great Jewels of Sovreignity remaining to the Dé Danaans was the Stone of Destiny. It was hidden deep in the earth of Ireland, and because of it the Fomorians could not altogether conquer the country, nor could they destroy the Dé Danaans, though they drove them from their pleasant palaces and hunted them through the glens and valleys like outlaws. (67)

The description of the modus operandi of the Fomorians seems to echo the colonial stratagem of the Normans/British. The invaders come into Ireland not to settle down -- unlike the Firbolgs or the Celts -- but to carry away the Cauldron of Plenty to their country. In *History of Ireland and The Irish People under The Government of England (*1844), Samuel Smiles gives an account of the centuries of slavery that the Irish people endured under the Norman/British rule, a period that saw the rulers use:

> her soil as a hunting-ground for our aristocracy, with soldiers for her blood-hounds; while her people have been branded as kind of Helots on the land which gave them birth. They have, at most been held of use only as giving a rental value to the lordly acres they cultivated." (i)

Not only were they plundering Irish resources, men, and food, but they were also extracting money in the name of religion. Selina Martin quotes John Davis in the *Summary of Irish History: From the Reign of Henry II to the Beginning of the Present Century* (2010) stating that "St. John levied six hundred thousand pounds, in hard cash, from Irish priests, as fines for not attending, on Sundays, in protestant churches: and yet

£600,000 exceeded the annual income of the whole kingdom." (395) Davis also says that the same viceroy who levied the taxes sent ninety citizens to prison in Dublin for denying the king's supremacy. In the 1800s, the British inaction to control the potato blight in Ireland and the decision to continue trading in potatoes when people were dying from starvation was a horrific outcome of resource exploitation. The carrying away of the Cauldron of Plenty can be read as a symbolic representation of this depletion. Youngs retelling seem to equate the plight of the Gods, with that of the common people of Ireland, "the Milesian race, the old English, and the new settlers" who were "now to meet in parliament, as they never had before, upon the common footing of British subjects." (380)

When Young writes, the Fomorians could not destroy the Dé Danaan, representing the true spirit of the Irish, because the Stone of Destiny still lay in Ireland, she seems to be saying that it was somehow destined for Ireland to not entirely lose her identity and that destiny will be fulfilled by Lugh, the grand sire of Fomor himself. This also seems like an allusion to the ethnic similarity that the Irish share with the British, but as destiny would have it, the Irish will be forced to turn against the people of their kind to wage a rebellion against centuries of oppression.

After the Gods have ascertained the myriad talents and exceptional prowess of Lugh, they decide to stand with him in his fight against the Fomorians. His battle cry for the chiefs of Ireland who join him in the war is also laden with significance:

> O Chiefs, raise up your foreheads. Though ye have not the jewels ye have the scars of battle combat, and ye have endured sorrow and hardships for ye have known what it is to be exiles in your own land. Let us swear brotherhood now by the

> Sword and the Stone that we may utterly destroy the Fomor and cleanse the world. Hold up your hands and swear, as I and those who came with me from Tir-nan-Oge will swear, and as the Sacred Land will swear, that we may have one mind and one heart and one desire amongst us all. (78)

It is interesting to see how Young stresses on the Jewels of Sovereignty time and again and emphasises the loss of sovereignty and its effect on Ireland. Keeping the mythological origins of the tale apart, this seems a narrative that speaks of the servitude of a race, exiled in its own land, deprived of its own resources, economic and cultural, beggared of any political rights, trying to reclaim what they have lost.

6. Padraic Colum and Upendrakishore RayChoudhury: Transformation of the Folk-type

> In both India and Ireland, early nationalist ideology emerged, therefore, out of a plural discourse. The elements which made it up constituted memories and traditions of earlier patriotisms of the days of Tone or the Maratha realm. Also present were the mystical ideas of race and nation, revived folklorism and reactive mainline religion: the Faith of our Fathers or *sanatan dharma* (ancient religion). But there was also present the modernised version of rationalist, political and economic critique of British government which stretched back to the days of Tom Paine and Edmund Burke. (Bayly 2000, p. 395)

Linguistic idealism played a decisive role in the constitution of the racial, national, and religious identity of the people of India and Ireland. The process of decolonization in both dependencies was eventuated through the reclaiming of a pre-colonial past and a return to indigenous languages and literature. The works of Padraic Colum and Upendrakishore RayChaudhury must be read within the ambit of the popular print culture that challenged established literary models and critiqued imperialist ideologues.

Padraic Colum was a poet, dramatist, author, and folklorist who was born into a family of farmers. He spent his childhood in a workhouse, a government institution that provided accommodation to the displaced and homeless.[55] Most of these people were Catholics. It has been stated earlier that the process of 'othering' the Catholics in Ireland became a watershed moment in Irish colonial history. The persecution of Catholics, their exclusion from government posts and land-owning rights before the Catholic ascendancy (1829) in Ireland resulted in their impoverishment and marginalisation. By representing these people and their history of exploitation through the appropriation of their legends and folklore, Colum declaims the 'Western metaethic.[56]' Colum's association with the celebrated artists/nationalists, W.B. Yeats, George Russell, J.M. Synge, his participation in the Theosophical Society where he discussed Indian philosophy and Mahatma Gandhi[57], authoring the anti-enlistment play *The Saxon Shillin'* (1902) and 'dramatising the realities of rural life in Ireland' (Boyd 1917, p.718) in *Broken Soil* (1903) and his participation in the Irish Republican Army for the creation of an independent Republic of Ireland is reflective of his political and ideological position. His financial woes compelled him to emigrate to America. Colum's diasporic identity comes into play in his writing, in the allure of distant places, nomadic life and in the subversion of essentialist discourses especially that of nationalism that is insulated to plurality and syncretism.

[55] Bowen, "Ninety Years in Retrospect: An interview conducted by Zack Bowen," The Journal of Irish Literature, (1973: pp.15-25).

[56]See The Fantastic in Theory.

[57] Bowen, "Ninety Years in Retrospect: An interview conducted by Zack Bowen," The Journal of Irish Literature, (1973, pp.15-25).

On the other hand, Upendrakishore Ray Chaudhury was born into affluence, the scion of a landlord or *zamindar*, he was adopted and raised by his uncle, Horikishore. [58] A childhood spent in the rural environs, surrounded by nature, the agrarian community and pulsating with the luminous tradition of oral storytelling, not only influenced him as a person but also whittled his artistic and literary imagination. Although he was growing-up in an orthodox Hindu household, he was drawn to the liberal Brahmo religion (a monotheistic reformist movement of the Hindu religion). He spent a considerable time managing the affairs of a Brahmo shop in the village that was associated with several philanthropic projects for the upliftment of the downtrodden.[59] Ray was a writer, musician, lyricist, technologist, and entrepreneur. His creative genius flourished once he reached the gates of Presidency College in Calcutta as a student and befriended some of the iconic figures of the Bengali cultural renaissance such as Raja Rammohan Roy and members of the Tagore family among other artists, activists, and political leaders. By this time, he was already contributing to several Bengali periodicals and magazines for children. Dissatisfied with the prints in these magazines, which were but weak imitations of British publications, he not only learnt the block-printing technology from books he ordered from England but set up a printing press and a publishing house with the money his adoptive father left him as his inheritance.[60] The intent was to indigenise the printed images. Around this time, the spirit of the

[58] See Sengoopta's *The Rays before Satyajit: Creativity and Modernity in Colonial India*, (2016, p.17).

[59] Ibid., 90.

[60] "Upendrakishore was not, however, a typical absentee-landlord living a life of urban luxury financed by rent income from East Bengal. Instead, he used his zamindari income to finance his early research in printing technology as well as his entrepreneurial ventures." Ibid., pp. 257-58.

swadeshi[61] movement (1905) akin to the Irish 'home-production,' (Bayly 2000, 379) had also percolated into the artistic and literary fields. Although he had denounced his Hindu faith by this time, he found his literary inspiration in ancient Hindu mythology and folklore to extol "the virtues of ancient Hindu texts and customs as being superior to Western (British) ones." (Goswami 2012, p.143) Ray was an affiliate of the *bhadralok* intelligentsia in Calcutta albeit his literature abounds in colloquialisms and abrogations. It is a literature that caters to all. As the anti-colonial sentiments in the country began to escalate, members of the Bengali intelligensia found themselves increasingly disillusioned. Goswami counts Ray among these members of "the disaffected *bhadralok* class" (ibid)

Analysing the folkloric adaptations including a filmic version of Ray's story directed by his grandson, the maverick filmmaker Satyajit Ray, this chapter will read the 'postcolonial fantastic' in their folkloric adaptations. The 'fantastic' architecture in folklore is adapted by the authors to embed anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic significations. At the turn of the twentieth century in Ireland and India, amidst civil unrest, a growing surge of nationalism and a desire for territorial freedom from the oppressive British rule, Colum and Ray identified a heterodox approach to juvenile literary ethos that was at odds with the hyper-nationalistic sentiments prevalent at the time.

7. Modifying the Metanarrative

Subversion of the metanarrative is remarkably nuanced in Colum and Ray. As they

[61] The Swadeshi movement which began in Bengal in 1905, as an umbrella term, signified 'use of home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things,' which primarily aimed at safeguarding home industry. See *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* by Basant Kumar Lal, pp. 155. This movement can be compared to the Irish 'home-production' movement. See (Bayly, pp. 379).

were both re-tellers of traditional stories for the young, it is important to understand their methods individually and in comparison. Re-telling of traditional stories for the juveniles takes place within a metanarrative framework because "it offers a patterned and shapely narrative structure, expresses significant and universal human experiences, interlinks "truth" and cultural heritage, and rests moral judgment within an ethical dimension." (Stephens & McCallum1998, p. 6) As stated earlier, Stephens and McCallum identify this framework as "Western metaethic," owing to its origins within Europe-based or associated cultures, which is denoted by the blanket term 'western.' Due to the culture-specificity of the term, they also identify certain limitations of this 'metaethic,' especially the misinterpretation, misrepresentation or missed-representation of indigenous voices and narratives in western academia. In the works of Colum and Ray we see an erudite attempt at modifying the 'metaethic' without trying to overtly upend it. This study proposes that the modification is facilitated through (a) the contemporization of the folk-type and (b) re-purposing the 'fantastic' within postcolonial juvenile narratives. They retained several elements of the 'metaethic' because even in postcolonial discourses it is difficult to divorce dominant cultural influences from indigenous literature and culture. But they modified the narrative methods, introduced culture-specific tropes and argot, made copious use of humour, irony, satire, symbolism, and political allegory to substantially alter the 'Western metaethic.' What they were trying to achieve in the process was not finding an alternative to the 'metaethic' but to accommodate divergent cultural and literary discourses within the same in a Gramscian recycling of the 'official culture' imposed on the people by the ruling classes.

8. Contemporising the Folk-type

There are several ways in which Colum contemporises the traditional folk-form in his juvenile fiction. These techniques betray a childhood connection: an affinity for the vagrant life and a fascination for oral performative storytelling.[62] He substitutes the first-person authoritarian narration found in traditional folklore of European origin with a combination of third-person and first-person narration technique mimicking the performative oral storytelling method he was so familiar with. The structured uniformity of traditional folkloric narration is replaced by a polyvocality. At times, through direct communication with the juvenile readership. Vagrancy is not a virtue in traditional folktales. It can be a stage in the quest of the folktale hero, but it is not one of his qualifying characters. Colum and his wife, Mary, were very fond of the vagrant life, having travelled and lived in many parts of the world. They were aware of, both the exhilaration and the pangs of the nomad life. Therefore, Colum's juvenile narratives are imprinted by his predilection. His stories reflect the banality of life, unlike traditional folk literature. He narrates the saga of people who live in penury, like the working-class people, the peasant, the toy-maker, and the drover. These narratives are not only about their toils but also about their dreams, hence it embodies the curious mix of wanderlust and the search for one's roots. The same can be said about Ray whose stories "portrayed the imagined, timeless village of the Bengali imagination, populated by farmers, labourers, and ordinary householders" (Sengoopta 2016, p. 298)

Colum's recollections of the *shanachie* from his childhood informs[63] his authorial invocation in *KIS* (1916), "His Hound at his heel/His hawk on his wrist/A brave steed to carry him whither he list/And a blue sky over him." (11-12) The opening

[62] Colum, "Vagrant Voices: A Self Portrait," *The Journal of Irish Literature*, (1973, pp.64-5).

[63] Ibid.

lyric introduces a vagrant hero. The hero, unlike the folktale hero, doesn't seem to embody the 'metaethical' values of piety and dutifulness[64]. The author assumes the function of a story-teller, addressing in the first-person and setting the reader's expectation of the youth as a vagabond. The 'fantastic' in traditional folklore warrants a willing suspension of disbelief. Colum subverts the convention in this text. On one of his travails, the prince is challenged to a game of cards by an old man sitting on a rock. The man challenges the prince to a card game and agrees to grant him a boon if he wins. But the prince is utterly dismissive of the man's powers. Traditionally, within the metaethical mode, this is an anomaly. So is the reaction of Goopi and Bagha when they are caught by the king's guards. They are two simple villagers from Ray's eponymous folklore, *GGBB* (1914). Goopi is a singer and Bagha is a drummer who meet in a forest under quite unfortunate circumstances, having been ousted from their respective villages for the display of their questionable musical talents. But the music that so enraged their neighbours in the village finds the approval and appreciation of none other than the King of Ghosts himself. Pleased with their performance the king grants them three boons, one of which is to be able to go anywhere they want wearing the special shoes that he gives them. When they appear in front of the King of Shundi out of thin air hoping to entertain him, they are apprehended for trespassing. The author writes:

> In all the commotion, Goopi and Bagha, who were after all, simple villagers, couldn't think what to do. If only they had said, ' We want to go out of here and go to such-and-such place,' they could have saved themselves. But at the moment it simply did not occur to them. Instead, they tried to run away on foot, and were soon captured. (Chattopadhyay 2014, p.55)

[64] Stephens and McCallum, Retelling Stories, Framing Cultures: Traditional Stories and Metanarratives in Children's Literature, (1998, p. 6).

Therefore, the incongruity to the folkloric cliché gives rise to humour. The 'fantastic' is a source of amusement not fear or apprehension. It does not provide the psychological support to its recipients that the 'Western metaethic' ideally ensures the hero. These texts offer an alternative mode of reading 'fantastic' in literature that is not associated with a catalytic function or repressed desires and anxieties.

The prince asks for cattle from the old man he defeats in the game of cards for the farm behind his father's castle. For a prince, cattle are an unconventional ask. He makes a pragmatic demand. The author develops the character of the prince in the image of a peasant or a farmer. He is more like a herdsman than a royal. In *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy* (2012), Tim Pat Coogan describes in great detail how the English attitude of 'backyardism' reduced Ireland to

> a poverty-stricken land to which famine was a frequent visitor. Famine struck Ireland in the seventeenth century and even before that. Prior to the An Gorta Mór or the Great Hunger, in the nineteenth century there were localised famines in 1800, 1817, 1822, 1831, 1835, and 1842.(14)

England's "scorched earth policy that wiped both cattle and humans from much of the Irish landscape," (Ibid.) added to the people's misery. Another reason for Ireland's depleting resources was the exorbitant rents charged by British landlords and the taxation on their produces, which eventually replenished the British markets. In the light of Ireland's history with starvation, the prince's demand for cattle assumes great significance. Again, Karen Hill McNamara states in an article, "As the Irish grew hungrier, they would seek out cows and bleed them, using the blood rich in iron and protein, for nourishment." (2009, p. 153) Cattle or cows, therefore, in a postcolonial reading of the adaptation, seem to stand as a metaphor for sustenance and deliverance from the oppression of hunger. Likewise, Goopi and Bagha do not ask for any specific boon from the King of Ghosts but basic necessities for survival. It is the King of Ghosts

who recognises their good-naturedness and adds embellishments to the boons. First, they express their desire to entertain people with their music and performance, signifying a source of livelihood. Secondly, they wish to be able to eat whenever and whatever they want. The King of Ghosts gives them a pouch from which they can conjure the best food and clothes in the world. Thirdly, they entreat him to grant them a boon that will enable them to travel anywhere they want. The boons echo the common man's universal aspirations: anything to wear, anything to eat, anywhere to go at will, which were but luxuries in colonial India. The hero of folklores, even if a destitute, aspiring for upward social mobility, readily accepts his fate and his position when he completes his quest, gains a kingdom and a princess. But Goopi and Bagha, who represent the subaltern in the text, are hesitant to don the role of the 'ruler.' Their discomfort is evident when they re-enter the king's palace as *kings* to outwit the king's guards who mistook them for imposters and apprehended them. The sartorial transformation they undergo results in the change of the King's attitude towards them as they are welcomed with open arms. The author writes:

> Goopi folded his hands and said, 'Maharaj, we're not kings. We're your servants.' Although Goopi was telling the truth, the king took this as a sign of their humility. He thought, 'They are such gracious and courteous people, like true kings, their modesty is their virtue.' (57)

The irony in this statement is not only a source of jocularity but an unsettling of the 'Western metaethic,' establishing the narrative as anything but mimicry of the Western literary models. In a way, it also expounds Ray's hesitance at becoming a *zamindar* or landowner like his adoptive father.[65] Many folk narratives written by him

[65] Sengoopta, The Rays before Satyajit: Creativity and Modernity in Colonial India, (2016, pp. 101-102).

have two overarching themes: (a) Food, consumption, nourishment, or the lack of it, and (b) a critique of the administration, hegemony, and hierarchy. Within the postcolonial discourse, both themes are of great significance. Colonial occupation in India saw several devastating famines. As in Ireland, the imperial government in India had turned a blind eye to the famine affected country, reducing expenses on welfare, and exporting cash crop despite widespread starvation. In the literature of RayChaudhury the common man's struggles with poverty and starvation are articulated. Resisting oppression and rising above one's station are therefore two dominant themes in RayChaudhury's short stories such as 'Dookhiram' and 'Tuntuni and the King's Tale.' He became a household name in Bengal after the publication of *Tuntuni's Tales or The Tailor-Bird's Book* in 1911. In traditional folklore, talking animals are commonplace. Not always are the talking animals an extension of the human ecosystem, but in Ray they are. They are anthropomorphized for ironical/satirical purposes. The story of the tailor-bird and the king satirizes the role of the king/administration. The king overhears a tailor-bird say that he is in possession of something that belonged to the king. The king is perturbed by this declaration, afraid that the tailor-bird has robbed him of his wealth. His men inform him that he has somehow come into possession of a royal coin. The king orders the men to fetch it back. The conflict between the king and the bird is a metaphor for that between the 'haves' and the 'have nots,' the landowners and the peasants and the imperial administration and its subjects. The little bird is powerless and poor, residing in a small nest, the fruit of his virtuosity and hard work, mirroring the trials of the average countryman. The absurdity of the situation is highlighted when the king, entitled and powerful, feels threatened by a little bird. He is afraid that even a single coin from his treasury making its way into the bird's nest will destabilize the balance of power. In Bengal, the colonial model of governance worked on maintaining this (dis)balance of

power at any cost. The draconian land laws were put in place to deprive the peasants of the bare minimum they made. In the tailor-bird then, we see a microcosm of the peasant population of Bengal; penurious, debt-ridden, and starving under an administration leery of their growing resentment and rebelliousness. The fearless tailor-bird does not miss the opportunity to ridicule the king: "The king has become a miser…/He has stolen poor Tuni's treasure. (RayChaudhury 1987, p. 23). The infuriated king commands his men to return the coin. Tuni taunts the king by implying that the king returns the coin because he is afraid. It comes as a huge blow to the king's fragile ego, and he orders the bird to be captured and cooked for his dinner. The bird manages to escape and, as fate would have it, the king loses his nose in the process, literally and figuratively. The author seems to suggest that it would have been easier for the king to swallow his pride than the little tailor-bird. The 'littleness' of the tailor-bird does by no means qualify the strength of the creature. The anti-colonial utterance of the author can be determined from this narrative.

Colum often employs the bird motif to express anti-colonial ideologues, such as in "The White Sparrow" and the "The Flying Swan." Relevant to this study is the "The White Sparrow," which incidentally is not one of his adaptations but an original work. It is based on the anthropomorphic representation of an albino (white) sparrow suffering from a strange identity crisis where it feels like it has been born in the wrong place and in the wrong body. Being 'white' is not a matter of pride for the poor sparrow but an axis that essentially 'others' him from the experiences of the sparrows in his community. The allegory is compelling because the 'white sparrow' in a way can be seen to epitomize the Irish, also a white race but sharing the unique experience of the non-white colonized races. The place of Ireland, Irish history, culture, and literature within the postcolonial spectrum is quite complex and problematic because it defeats

straightforward definitions of colonizer/colonized relations as opposed to the non-white races, and the tale of the white sparrow contextualises this ambivalence.

Again, in *KIS*, the characterisation of the Enchanter is pivotal to the narrative. About the enchanter, the King's councillor, Maravaun warns the king "if the heir of your kingdom does not honourably pay his forfeit, the ground of Ireland won't give crops and the cattle won't give milk." (Colum 2010, p.20) The enchanter convokes the image of a usurper. The 'forfeit' must be paid to continue the enjoyment of food and nourishment, reminiscent of Ireland's economic dependency on Britain. Colum revisits traditional folklore to embed anti-colonial significations. The 'metaethical' praxis is permeated with postcolonial ideology.

"The King of Cats" is an allegorical sub-plot in *KIS.* The 'King of the Cats' belongs to migratory legends of type 6070B and tales of Aarne- Thompson-Uther type 113A.[66] This is a popular folk type of England, Scotland and Ireland. Colum dexterously paints a picture of Ireland's struggles with colonialism and settler aggression through this story. Political allegory in Colum is defined by the use of irony and humour. Colum associates several amusing yet telling characteristics with the King of Cats like the flaunting of his whiskers, unperturbed by the loss of his tail. The loss of tail is denotative of indignity and the flaunting of whiskers is a sign of vaingloriousness. It is interesting how the Irish have historically associated these characteristics with the British crown. The allusion becomes clearer when the author demarcates countries in and around Europe, Britain and Ireland as the King's erstwhile dominion of which most is gone with the exception of Ireland. Again, The King of Cats like the King from *Tuntuni's* story represent the ruling class. In a similar use of symbolism Ray Chaudhury depicts the King's loss of pride in the severance of his nose. For a hundred years the

[66] See https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html.

king has received tributes from the Irish cats but there's been a sudden decline in the inflow, setting him off on a journey to determine the cause. Upon his arrival at the island he finds it in a state of deprivation and learns about the Eagle-Emperor and his atrocities. The King of Cats decides to confront this emperor. Until this point, the King almost appears as a saviour figure. The King finds himself an advisor in Quick-to-Grab who suggests he must not reveal his true identity to the subjects. The author mocks the complacency of the King in his self-assigned role of the protector while the popular opinion is quite opposite. These circumstances are symptomatic of people's distrust in the British crown and the suspicion it evinced in the common people at the sight of British presence on Irish soil. In a conversation between Quick-to-Grab and his masters the fear of the common man is expressed in no uncertain terms:

> "Not a word will we tell you," said the woman, "until we hear what the King of the Cats is doing in Ireland. Is he bringing wars and rebellions into the country?"
> "Wars and rebellions,—no, ma'am," said Quick-to-Grab, "but deliverance from oppression. Why are the cats of the country lean and lazy and covered with ashes? It is because the cat that goes outside the house in the sunlight, to hunt or to play, is made to suffer with the loss of an eye."
> "And who makes them suffer with the loss of an eye?" said the woman. "One whose reign is nearly over now," said Quick-to-Grab. "But tell me where you saw His Majesty?"
> "No," said the man. "No," said the woman, "for we don't like your impertinence. Back with you to the hearthstone, and watch the mouse-hole for us."
> Quick-to-Grab walked straight out of the door. (2010, p.99)

The discordance and intransigence in society is obtrusive in the quoted conversation. The British government, represented in the personage of the King of Cats is desperate for salvaging his dominion amidst widespread anti-government sentiments among the subjects who are rising in sporadic acts of rebellion. In the visage of the house cats, symbolic of a section of the Irish populace, the author has represented those

in the Irish society who were in favour of domiciling with the British. Then, there are local trouble makers, such as the Eagle-Emperor, likely an anthropomorphic prototype of the absentee Irish landlords. There are some birds evidently opposed to the king but in support of the Eagle-Emperor. The struggle for power between the King of Cats and the Eagle-Emperor and the stark reality of their roles as rulers/saviours is expressed through a 'food' motif when at the Hill of Horns, the abode of the Eagle- Emperor, the King of Cats appear unmoved at the sight of carcasses of subjects who have been killed by the emperor. Instead he worries over a piece of salmon. Both, the King of Cats and the Eagle-Emperor, are opportunists. Their struggle is then a struggle for dominance and not deliverance. The author writes:

> Just when the ball was about to be thrown in the air the Eagle-Emperor and the King of the Cats were seen mixed together in their struggle. One troop took the side of the Eagle and the other took the side of the Cat. The men of the country came up and took sides too.(2010, p.126)

It is at this very moment that the King of Fairies and the Chief of Fianna march their men to the ground, afraid that the internal wars in Ireland will dissipate the population of animals, humans and fairies. They freeze the two warring animals engaged in combat with their magical powers. The fairies represent the supernatural agency that eventuates the final undoing of the evil forces of the King and the Emperor. The fairies, who are indigenous to the people of Ireland, are the ones with the true power, and it is in them that the promise of the people's liberation lie.

The association of the 'food' motif with mordant anti-war rhetoric is also found in Ray. The King of Halla appoints Goopi and Bagha as his court musicians. The King of Shundi has declared war against Halla, and Goopi and Bagha offer to help. The Hindu kings often organised prayers or sacrifices before a war. The author describes a crowded courtyard where people are immersed in a war frenzy offering frantic prayers

for victory. After surveying the situation for a few days, they decide to play their trick once the king has left the courtyard on a fateful night. They wait on the palace roof and manifest different kinds of sweet treats of the kind the people have never tasted. As the sweets fall from the sky, the people, hungry and desperate, partake of them as the deity's blessings. The king is informed about this wondrous shower of sweet treats but by the time he reaches the courtyard, people who were gathered there after the prayers, had eaten them all. The king is furious. His subjects appease him with the consolation that all the sweets the deity sends the next day will be reserved for the king. To the starving millions there cannot be a more powerful distraction to war than food. The king's attitude towards the sweet treats is a critique of capitalism and the free market economy of the East India Company. It is a biting commentary on the politics of war-mongering to deflect people's attention from the more pressing issues such as high taxation, poverty and scarcity of food in colonial India. In a bid to capture the king they set up an elaborate ploy:

> After sometime, Goopi and Bagha, dressed as gods, descended from the rooftop, floating down through the air. On seeing them everyone started shouting, 'Look, the gods have come down from heavens to bless our king! Long live the king!' (Ray 2014, p.65)

The final staging of the act of God is a reviewal of religion, particularly idolatrous practices and Hindu ritualistic excesses. Through the depiction of the starving multitude praying for victory in war, their allegiance to an idol that they assume is sending sweets from heaven and equating the abduction of their king with the blessings of a deity, the author illustrates what might be termed a collective infantile "obsessional neurosis,"[67] "disavowal of reality," and *amentia* or "state of blissful hallucinatory

[67] See Strachey's *The Future of an Illusion*, (1961, p. 43).

confusion" that Freud designates as religion. The neurosis and *amentia* so engulf the common folks that they fail to identify their real struggles.

The film and the story have different plotlines. It is a musical where song and dance sequences form an integral part of the narrative. The songs that were composed by the filmmaker himself "display a delightful capacity for parody and transmutations of styles from the folk, devotional and classical music of Bengal and other parts of India." (Robinson 1989, p.183) There are two aspects to this arrangement, the filmic adaptation of the folk/performative story-telling technique and the representation of multiculturalism and plurality. It is a reimagination of the Western style of musicals with an emphasis on Indian legends, its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural traditions. The film was staged for audiences in London in 1972 and was panned by the audience. Andrew Robinson attributes its failure in the London circuit to "the West's historic disinterests in the legends of India" (182). The plot lacks larger-than-life characters, rather the two primary protagonists are people from the peripheries of society. Their peripheral status is reinforced time and again, whether in their banishment from their villages or them seeking refuge in the forest, a border zone signifying an area of darkness, interstitiality and ambiguity. Incidentally this is also the zone where they meet the King of Ghosts. The picturisation of the Dance of the Ghosts marks a landmark in Bengali cinema. This was the film-makers own creation and it presented a microcopy of Indian history. "He settled on four classes of ghosts because 'we have so many class divisions the ghosts would have the same," (187) which included kings and warriors, sahibs (Britis) pundits (Brahmans), Padres (Christians), lawyers and common people. Even the instruments which each of these ghosts are assigned correspond to their social class. As the sequence continues, these people start attacking each other. The sahib is depicted as dismissing a hookah brought by his servant. But towards the end 'music'

replaces the cacophony of war and peace is established. The dance also in a way reflects upon the plot of the film. It serves two main objectives of representing class inequality and colonial tyranny and use of the frame narrative, which again is an integral part of the folk tradition. It can be seen as a dramatic representation of hybridity, which RayChoudhury and Colum both proposed in their works, that debunks the notion of cultural purity and seeks a space, symbolically imagined by the filmmaker as the forest, were cultural, ethnic, social, religious, and even physiological differences can co-exist as a "articulation of cultures hybridity." (Bhabha 1944, p.38)

In the filmic adaptation, the King of Halla declares war on Shundi unlike the original story. The kings happen to be estranged brothers, which is a relatable trope for children, who were Ray's target audience. The King of Halla is merely a rubberstamp ruler and it is the evil minister and his aid, a magician called Borfi, controlling the king. They administer opioids to the king to induce a certain jingoistic hysteria in him. Again, the song and dance routine convey an imminent disaster:

> Listen all you Chiefs and Potentates
> Pashas, Dukes, and Blasted Head of States
> Listen; thus your Sovereign Leige dictates
> Halla's going to War!! (Thakur, 2021)

The juxtaposition of Pasha or a Turkish chief with a French Duke and the British Sovereign is symptomatic of all the powers that invaded India. King of Halla's declaration of war seems like the harking of a counter-strike on invaders.

Meanwhile, Goopi and Bagha, who travelled to Halla as spies, on the behest of the King of Shundi, the peace-loving emperor, have discovered that the people of Halla live in dread. There is a scarcity of food in the kingdom and assured flogging on non-payment of taxes symptomatic of the *zamindari* system supported by the British

administration under the Permanent Settlement.[68] The army that the minister and the evil magician have gathered are beaten, ravenous and impoverished. The magician has the army spellbound. They do not have free will or power to fight on their own. On the day war is declared by Halla, Goopi and Bagha are seized by the king's spies and imprisoned. It is 'food' that comes to their rescue. In the prison, they invoke a sumptuous spread by the dint of their boon. The hungering prison guard becomes insane with joy at the sight of it. He opens the gate of the prison cell and starts eating voraciously, allowing Goopi and Bagha the opportunity to escape. As they come out, they see the soldiers waiting for their king's orders to march towards Shundi. In their song, the two simpletons, attack the rhetoric of war and ask the people:

> Look at all those soldiers marching off to war
> All those cutting slashing thousands of things for making blood and gore
> You can take a beating if your stomach is full---they say
> This lot looks like they will die of empty stomachs on the way
> Marching off to war
> O All you Soldiers of Halla
> What are you fighting for?
> Carrying all those swords and knives
> All you'll do is lose your lives
> On bloody wars no nation thrives
> So what are you fighting for?
> The king can only shout and curse
> The minister just fills his purse
> The people get from bad to worse
> So what are you fighting for? (Thakur, 2021)

[68] See "Some Aspects of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal," (Wright 1954, 210).

Although, war might sometime seem like the only solution, the filmmaker asks if it is worth fighting for anyone when one's stomach is empty. The film is pacifist and does not cater to a strictly nationalistic framework of postcolonial literature. This is where Ray, his uncle and Colum concur in their definition of nationalism and its portrayal for the juvenile audience. In *KIS* too the fairies eventually stop the impending war between the King of Cats and the Eagle-Emperor at a time when the common folks were dying of starvation or in-fighting.

Seeing the reluctance of the army and the brutality of the minister and the evil magician, they ask for the heavens to rain sweets of every kind. As people see food, just like the prison guard, war seems like the last thing to shroud their minds. The pangs of hunger surpass their belligerence. Goopi and Bagha save the day by tapping into man's basest needs. The film was released in 1969. Between 1939 and 1945, many Indian soldiers were conscripted to the British army like the reluctant soldiers in Ray's film. In 1943 the Great Bengal famine saw around three million people die of starvation as the British government continued to divert resources to fight the war and refused to provide emergency food relief to the famine-affected under the directives of Winston Churchill. Hence, one can see this film as Ray's anti-imperial historiography, although it is the sequel of the first film, *The Kingdom of Diamonds* (1980) that is known for its political content and the filmmaker's interpretation of 1975-77 Emergency during Indira Gandhi's prime ministerial tenure.

Again, intersectionality is interlaced in the palimpsest Colum creates. He weaves the story of racial tension into the narrative of his folklore through 'The Unique Tale.' The character of Sheen falls in love with a Hunter-King and accompanies him to his kingdom. The king's sisters are quite dismissive of Sheen because:

> Often they talked before her [sic] brother saying that Sheen was not noble at all, and the reason she did not speak was because her language was a base one. (2010, p.226)

After Sheen's child dies due to the negligence of the King's sisters, afraid of their brother's wrath, they incriminate Sheen by establishing that she has killed her own child. As an explanation they say:

> The woman you brought here is of another race from ours. "She has forgotten that a child was born to her, and that she killed it and flung its body to the gray wolf. She sits there now just stitching a garment."(2010, p.229)

The King quite readily believes the sisters and throws her out of the palace. The sub-plot on Sheen is an example of contemporizing the folklore to include the themes of racial discrimination and persecution of the innocent based on racial and linguistic differences through the use of metafictive devices in literature.

A particular focus on speech or language defines the hegemonic relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Speech or the absence/negation of it also facilitates the process of 'othering.' Simon During has pointed out, "In both literature and politics the drive towards identity centres around language."(1995, p.125) When imperialist powers enter a country, their first attempt is to homogenise the language. The oppositionality in a colonial society is marked by the conflict between the spoken word and the written word. The spoken word represents the unique utterance of a people/culture and the written word a negation of it. There is an instance in the episode of the King of Cats, where the King orders his prime minister to write him a speech on the status of the depletion of tributes that he was to have received from his Irish subjects. He intends to present this speech before the parliament as an apologia. The King fails to read the documented form of the speech that he wants to present in his defence of imperialism because it is written in an ancient language that he does not

understand. This can also epitomise the failure of Western discourse to 'read' the 'subaltern[69]' text and marks the impossibility of the 'subaltern' to be written within such discourses of power. Again, Sheen's inability to 'speak' marks her subalternity. We already know that she belongs to a different race and she speaks a different language. But she is also a woman and by the virtue of her sex, coupled with her racial identity, she is rendered speechless. Spivak critiques the Foucauldian concept of the oppressed' awareness of and ability to express the nature of their exploitation. Through the example of Bhubaneshwari's suicide in "Can the Subaltern Speak?," (2008) she proposes that 'subaltern woman' cannot indeed speak. If we consider the body of a woman as text, in the light of postcolonial feminist theory, it is impossible for the society/patriarchy/polity to read or analyse it correctly. Spivak describes the suicide of a sixteen-year-old girl, Bhubaneshwari, and states that she died by hanging herself while she was menstruating. Her menstruation is a sign that the act was not associated with the outcome of a failed affair or unwanted pregnancy and yet that is exactly what people presumed when they discovered her body. The 'message' was implicit in her body but no one reads it. She was speaking but no one heard her. In case of Sheen, it is her position of subalternity that makes her husband, the Hunter-King, misread the signs on her body (he sees the blood his sisters had splattered all over Sheen to implicate her and

[69] In Spivak's view, the third-world subject constructed as Europe's self-consolidating Other obscures the true heterogeneity of decolonised/postcolonial space: the superexploited under global capitalism. Within the circuit of IDL, the heterogeneity encompasses the female urban subproletariat. But, outside this circuit, there are "subsistence farmers, unorganised peasant labour, the tribals, and the communities of zero workers in the streets and the countryside. This is the subaltern, the name for a consciousness that exceeds and cannot be comprehended within the enclosure of disciplinary knowledge production and intellectual activism because the traces of such a subject have been obliterated by the epistemic violence of colonial subject making through the codification of indigenous law and education. See Cheah, "Biopower and the New International Division of Reproductive Labor", (2010, pp.399-473).

believes that she has murdered their son) and misinterpret her silence when she is confronted with the news of her son's death as acquiescence of her guilt. The King of Cats, the linchpin of colonial power fails to read the 'speech' in the same way and due to the same reasons the Hunter-King representing patriarchy/authority fails to read Sheen's silence. There is a scene in Ray's film adaptation where the people in the kingdom of Shundi are depicted as mute. The audience is informed that a plague had rendered the entire population mute while the king was away on a tour. The subaltern's inability to speak is symbolically alluded to in the film. As seen, music is an integral part of the story and the film. The king is a lover of music and, therefore, he organises musical wars or contests every year. The musical war is pitted against the war with swords to highlight the latter's futility and the former's superiority. Music is a great leveller unlike spoken/written language because music can be enjoyed without the knowledge of spoken/written languages. "We come from the land of Bengal, sings Goopi, accompanied by Bagha (and full orchaestration), but although we know only Bengali, we know another language that is beyond nation and situation-the language of music." (2014, p.185)

Food, the 'fantastic,' the dilemma of language, universality of music, eco-humanism, cultural awakening and the faith in humility consolidate an ideological position in juvenile literature of Ella Young, Padraic Colum and Upendrakishpre RoyChowdhury that essentially undermine colonial discourses of oppression and power.

Chapter Three: They Weep Some Time Worn Fairy Only? : The Supernatural In Literary Fairy Tales.

1. Overview

Jens Tismar differentiates the "synthetic, artificial, and elaborate" (Zipes 2000, p. xv) literary fairy tale from the "indigenous formation' (ibid.) of the oral folktale based on the latter's simplicity and lack of authorial specificity. Therefore, both 'formations' seem to designate some kind of contrivance or construct of the creator. According to Zipes, in the literary fairy tale, one observes a more intricate structuring of a narrative in the "appropriation[sic] of motifs, signs, and drawings from folklore" (xvi) and combining them "with elements from other literary genres." (ibid.) As such, the literary fairy tale has often been seen as the predecessor to the novella/novel. (Zipes [2000] Carrassi [2012]) The elaborate formation of the literary fairy tale has also provided a larger canvas to the author to experiment with different forms of narration and literary expression. Women, who have traditionally developed and disseminated the oral narratives, were denied literary agency until about the second half of the seventeenth century in Europe. In fact, in many cultures, institutionalisation of female education and right to basic literacy, were not achieved until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[70] As a consequence, upper-class men monopolised the literary production of folk literature. The tales, although originating in women, were subject to "gender appropriation," "male fantasies," and "hegemonic interests" (xx) of men. This criticism essentially foregrounds studies in Western literary traditions, although growing literacy, the arrival of the press and the rising demand for reading material also eventuated development of the literary fairy tale beyond the West. Publications which were already in circulation in countries such as France, controlled by the literate bourgeoisie, were

[70] See 'Promotion of Female Education in Nineteenth Century Bengal' by Kaberi Chatterjee, (1996, pp.767-769).

successful in institutionalizing the fairy-tale to some extent but these narratives were too 'sophisticated' for the masses. Chap books or a derivative of 'cheap books' were brought into circulation to meet the demand for alternative reading material and the 'sophisticated' tales began to be appropriated to cater to a more diverse audience.[71] The fairy-tales one read in these chap-books paved the path for those that later became a staple for children's literature.

Realistic literature continued to hold a predominance in the publishing circles in Europe, North America, and England. English society was particularly antagonistic to the 'fairies' whose presence in literature was seen as an anathema to the ideologies of utilitarianism and puritanism. Never-the-less, fairy tales survived in oral traditions and within the pages of market-driven popular, low-brow literature. Tolkien's critique of English 'rationalisation' transforming fairies and elves into 'diminutive' beings seems indicative of the English attitude of undermining the fairy stories. Although Shakespeare and Drayton were some of the earliest exponents of the fairy narrative, they envisioned fairies as diminutive and dainty 'fluttering' kind.[72] These fairies and elves as 'little people' have ever since, eclipsed popular imagination. Fairy tales, especially the literary fairy tale, which is a well-crafted work of literature by a 'sub-creator,' (1983, p.132) has been historically relegated to the 'nursery and the playroom.' (130) Stemming from the erroneous belief that fairy tales are only suitable for the *juvenilia*, the adults and the parents put a kisbosh on everything magical, fantastical, or irrational as unbefitting adult intellect. Tolkein offers the example of Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books* as a "by-product of his adult study of mythology and folklore," (131) that were adapted into children's books. The folklorists and fairy tale writers discussed in

[71] See the Introduction by Jack Zipes to *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales.*

[72] See "On Fairy Stories" by J.R.R. Tolkien, (1983, pp.111).

this study represent this class of 'sub-creators,' whose adult understanding of myth, history, and contemporaneity have informed their literary imagination and children's literature.

The abundance of fairies/elves/sprites in Irish folklore can be attributed to its Celtic roots. As such, the supernatural presence in Irish folklore and fairy stories seem to present an ontological likeness to European and English folk literature. However, the history of the origin of the Irish fairy tale says otherwise. One can impute its uniqueness to the evangelical aspirations of the Church and the English invasion of Ireland. Vito Carrassi explains:

> Until the moment of the English invasion in Ireland in the twelfth century, the island nation managed to keep alive its markedly Celtic nature, and also unite it with Christianity, thus establishing a balanced, original compromise unequaled elsewhere. (Carassi 2012, p.66)

The 'compromise' reached by the Church stemmed from their understanding of the 'too large and too original cultural patrimony of the Celtic civilization in Ireland' (67) and an opportunity to adapt the tradition in accordance to Christian precepts with the intention of converting the pagan people. After the English invasion and the resultant persecution of Catholics in Ireland, threatened by the possibility of an absolute obliteration of the Irish heritage and language, the Irish church found it imperative, more than ever, to preserve the Celtic heritage of the Irish people. Folklore and fairy stories became a potent conduit of the Irish-Catholic renaissance. Representations of the supernatural/mythical in Irish literature are diffused with historical and cultural inflections borne of the collective anxiety of a dragooned people. Fairies/ 'good people' in Irish culture are variously described as fallen gods or spirits of the warring dead. They have often been seen as anthropomorphic projections of the natural environment and corresponding social life, representation of an obscured race of Mongolian origin in

folk-memory and the conjurations of the Druids or the lore keepers of the ancient Celts. [73] Several attempts at the rationalization of the folk belief of the Irish, including that of the 'fairy sightings,' have not been able to define the fairy phenomena comprehensively. At the cusp of the natural and the supernatural, the ecological and the psychological, the friendly and the fearsome, fairy-folk have traditionally been characterised by a 'liminality' or an in-betweenness. To that end, the uncertain positionality of the fairy-folk/fairy-faith can be seen as:

> an allegory of a more fundamental dislocation quite familiar in a culture which is geographically of Western Europe though marginal to it and historically of a de-colonizing world, increasingly assimilated to that Europe, while in part still subject to a dissimulated colonialism… (Llyod 1993, p.2)

This 'dislocation' and ambivalence not only lies at the heart of fairy-existence but also the birthing of the Irish fairy tale "as a species of *intermediate* space." (2012: 189)

The liminality of the Irish fairy tale lies both at a structural and a functional level. Genre acts as 'a model with which to approach the reality implicit in Irish folklore and in the literature regenerated from it.' (153) According to this model, a 'dialectic discourse' (151) is established by fairy tale writers such as Yeats or Stephens with other writers and literary forms in the creation of a narrative. Ensuring originality while retaining fidelity to the old tales and rediscovering their inherent interpretivisms individuate this authorial process. The progression from orality to textualization in the Irish fairy tale is marked by the want of a narrative. It is almost always about a narrative

[73] See *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* by Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz, (1911, pp. xxxi-xxxv)

lack addressed by a mythical/supernatural invasion that produces *narrativity.*[74] In this process there are no *signifier(s),* only *signified(s),* in a chain of narrativity. The narrative process is embedded in Irish mythology, pseudo-history and the relation between 'human and supernatural dimensions.'(2012, p.157) The characters in the Irish fairy tale move between these dimensions, sometimes the human elements move into the indefinite plane of the supernatural and sometimes the supernatural enters the definite plane of the humans. There are times when they also co-exist in the definite or indefinite plane without returning to their original dimensions. On a structural level, Myth-Legend, Legend-History and History-Myth[75] constitute three zones of Irish narrativity and the fairy tale is conceived at a functional level, within the chronotope of the '*communal* open space within which the exponents of any of the closed spaces may converge.' (189) So, the Irish fairy tale offers a 'fluid' space of meaning-making with infinite narrative and interpretive possibilities. It is in this fluidity and the seamless

[74] "I am referring to the many tales focused on the subject of the man without a story, who, within the narration, becomes a real character only when he is made to live, in the first person, a fairy experience: experiences of another type could definitely be narrated, but were less effective in riveting the public's attention. Only the fairy tale is able to magnetize the interest of any listener. Into it flow all the data and values having the power to make recognizable and to strengthen links between individuals and, at the same time, provide escape into a parallel universe, another world—frequently very close by—in which are conserved the dreams and illusions of an entire community, "See Carrassi, (2010, p. 167)

[75] The Myth-Legend level corresponds to the defeat of the *divine* race of the Tuatha De Dannan at the hands of the *human* race, Milesians and the Tuatha's displacement to the subterranean world. The Legend-History level denotes the period of St.Patrick's arrival and the subsummation of the pagan culture into Christianity. The History-Myth level constitutes everything that happens after the coming of Christianity and how the legends transform themselves, See Carrassi, (2010, pp.169-194).

association of the natural and the supernatural that the Irish fairy tales differ from European/Victorian models[76] but corresponds with the Bangla *Kuntsmarchen.*

In Bengal, as in Ireland, the transition from orality to textualization started with the missionaries. In India, the outlook of the English was different. They encouraged documentation of folklore to earn the trust and allegiance of the natives by displaying genuine interest in their culture and ensuring administrative integrity.[77] After reading Lal Behari Day's account of a story-telling session in a typical village household, the folklorist Captain Temple suggested Day preserve these tales for a larger audience. The written tradition in Bangla folk literature began with English reproductions of Bangla fairy tales. The emergence of Indian studies in folklore can be traced through three distinct periods: the missionary, the nationalistic and the academic.[78] The missionary period saw several English publications of Bangla folk and fairy tales by Sir George Grierson, William McCulloch, Dineshchandra Sen and so on. But with the inception of the nationalistic period, the rising *swadeshi* sentiments and the mushrooming home-

[76] "On the part of heroes from German and Russian variants, figures of the indefinite are considered no more than bench tests on which to exercise one's courage, without the slightest attention paid to their identity by the hero. Thus, the effort of the struggle is not indeed noticed. In the Irish variant, the hero performs his feats with a fair dose of respect for something that goes beyond his understanding. Whereas the German and Russian heroes act pragmatically, in their own interest, the Irish hero not only acts for the common good, but also takes on the responsibility of revealing to the community the nature of events that, prior to his arrival, were wrapped in the deepest mystery. Finally, the German and Russian heroes learn the meaning of fear, but this takes place in a humorous key, linked to events that are obviously natural (it is "enough to surprise them in their sleep with a chest full of darting fish). The Irish figure, however, remains a spotless and fearless hero, because, I would suggest, of the correct relationship he has established with the indefinite dimension, which had been a source of fear for the rest of the community. Whereas the tales of the Grimm brothers and Afanasyev concentrate exclusively on the more or less heroic feats that lead the characters to easy rewards…," (2010, pp. 275)

[77] See the Introduction to *Folktales of Northern India* by Sadhana Naithani, (2005, p.xxiii)

[78] See "Bengali Folk Rhymes: An Introduction," by Syed Mohammad Syed, (1993, p.148)

grown Bangla presses, the English language books began to be replaced by vernacular literature. Day in his preface to *Folk-Tales of Bengal* and Rabindranath Tagore in his foreword to Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakurdadar Jhuli* ratifies the Bangla authors' indebtedness to the Western literary models of fairy-tales in conceiving the indigenous works, while seeking an equivalence between the heritage and literature of the Orient and the Occident. Although there are several structural and functional affinities between these models, Bangla fairy tales formed their own precedence. The fairy tales began to be written in the *kathakatha* tradition: prose interlaced with long verses/ballads, which were sometimes intended to be sung. The descriptions of domesticity form another unique aspect of the fairy tales. Little intricacies of the domestic life, daylong activities, food habits, and religious routines form an integral part of the story. The early morning rituals of a Brahmin, cosmetic cultus of a queen or the bathing convention of a princess are expatiated. Analysing Day's fairy-stories from *Folk-Tales of Bengal* will throw light on several aspects of the Bangla narrative conventions. Bangla narratives do not display the linearity of European fairy stories. Bangla stories are inset with sub-plots. In that way, Bangla and Irish fairy stories exhibit a unique complexity in narrativity. For instance, 'Phakir Chad,' it can be said, is broadly based on the exploration of a friendship between a prince and a minister's son. Still, it has several sub-plots, each instrumental in establishing a facet of the narrative. For example, the story can also be about a princess's digressions borne out of the need to find a release from her ennui and a mistake that makes her realise the true nature of captivity. It is also about the Raja's son who is driven to insanity by the glimpse of a princess and a father who orchestrates abduction of this woman to cure his son. The story is equally important from the point of view of a poor stick-collector who must find a way to rehabilitate her mad son. These sub-plots are woven intricately into the master

narrative and each incident reflects upon the characters and their qualities. The metafictive elements in tales such as 'The Story of the Rakshasas' and 'The Story of Swet-Basanta,' enhance the appeal of these narratives. Again, within a comparative set-up of the Oriental and the Occidental fairy tale, 'The Indigent Brahmin' and 'The Little Peasant' (Grimms) are structurally similar. Two characters of little means are desirous of social ascent. 'The Indigent Brahmin,' establishes the protagonist as poor and chiefly "living on the benefactions of the rich." (Day 1883, p.53), 'The Little Peasant,' confer the 'littleness' of the peasant to his privation when compared with other peasants in his village who were rich. The social milieu in both the stories is different. The European tale is characterized by its elitism and the Bangla fairy tale by its populism. In Day's story, not only the Brahmin but the shop-keeper who tricks him into seizing the divine *handi*, represent the common man of humble means making a living within the extremely exacting feudal society. Every character is in a way a victim, even the evil *zamindar*. Again, the socio-political climate of rural India during the colonial period is alluded to in the depiction of the *zamindari* system and its impact on both the victim and the perpetrator. Grimms' story, on the other hand, attributes the 'little peasants' woes to the affluence of the other peasants in the village. It is evinced from a sense of insecurity and jealousy. The story itself is not representative of the actual social conditions of the time but populated with characters who can be placed within any agrestic milieu such as the mayor, the miller, and the shepherd. Both the stories have repetitive actions that leads to the undoing of a miscreant. In Day's story, the shop-keeper and the *zamindar* are reprimanded and in Grimm's, the miller's cheating wife. In "The Indigent Brahmin," there is a logicality to the actions, but the villagers are murdered by the 'little peasant' for no particular reason. At the end of the story the 'little peasant' becomes rich because everyone in the village was dead. Therefore, the

Bangla fairy tales seem apposite to a contrapuntal reading of the texts unlike the unidimensional European narratives. In her critique of the Bangla *rupkatha*, Sarani Ray associates simplicity as a common co-ordinate between tales from the Orient and the Occident. 'Phakir Chand' or 'The Indigent Brahmin,' like many other Bangla fairy stories seem to convey a narrative ponderosity that appears to communicate otherwise.

Dimentionality informs Bangla fairy stories too. The Myth-Legend, Legend-History and History-Myth segmentations are also to be found in Bangla *rupkatha.* There isn't a specific moment in history like the advent of Christianity in Ireland that informs such a periodical segmentation in Bengal, but there are instances of mythologization of history or historization of myth as in the epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. [79] The pan-Indian mythical characters have become part of endemic legends. These legends have made their way into folk narratives and fairy stories. The mythical influence on the Bangla fairy stories is undeniable. The human and supernatural dimensions, the *definite* and *indefinite* modalities are characterised by their mutability. The Hindu deities, *Kali, Durga, Shiva, Sani* are portrayed as roaming the mortal plains, maybe not visible to human eyes, but when the prayers of a devotee reach their ears, they manifest themselves to the mortals, often indulging in long conversations as in 'The Indigent Brahmin' or 'The Evil Eye of Sani.' Sometimes the inhabitants of the *definite* travel to the *indefinite* terrains and reside there. In 'Phakir Chand' the prince lives in the enchanted subterranean palace with a princess who is variously compared to a "*deva-kanya*" or the daughter of a God and a *nymph*, implying her otherworldly origin. In 'Life's Secret,' the god of destiny *Bidhata-purush* prophesises his niece's marriage with a corpse. The corpse is that of a prince, who is dead in the morning but regains his life

[79] See Romila Thapar's interview with Ramin Jahanbegloo and Niladri Bhattacharya on determining the historicity of myths in *Talking History*, 2017.

at sun-down. The prince in his life-in-death situation appears to belong to the *transcendent indefinite.* (Carrassi 2012, pp.186) In 'The Ghost-Brahmin,' a spirit from the netherworld takes possession of the house of a Brahmin and starts co-habiting with the unsuspecting wife and mother.

The Victorian literary fairy-tale was late to arrive in the literary and publishing circles. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Victorian fairy tales began to be written for children.[80] Despite a strong folk history of their own, dating from the Middle Ages, the British imagination and literary community held strong misgivings against the genre. The quandary can be attributed to 'the domination of Calvinism after the Revolution in 1688' (xiii) that promoted the moral upliftment of the child and the adult alike and pitted it against the 'utopian fantasy' (ibid.) effectuated by the galaxy of elves, fairies, beasts, giants, distressed damsels and clever peasants. The writing impetus of the Victorian fairy tale writer continued to be a moralistic one.

The Victorian fairy tales unfold either in the schoolroom/nursery or in the presence of the maid or the ayah. The child grows up in an environment of care, security, and abundance, albeit as an object of scrutiny and condescension. The aunt in Harriet Child-Pemberton's, 'All My Doing: Or Red Riding Hood Over Again,' (1882) and the narrator of the fairy-tale remarks on her niece's long and awkward hands and legs, her unkempt hair and dirty collar and calls the other niece 'as thoughtless as a little piece of wood." (1987, pp.213) Charlie in Edward H. Knatchbull-Hugessen's 'Charlie Among the Elves' (1870) or Punch and Judy from Rudyard Kipling's 'The Potted Princess' (1893) can only wander away in a dream or riding the waves of a story within the confines of their garden respectively. In the Victorian literary fairy tale the child is gaoled within the Victorian social script. Most of these fairy tales juxtapose rationality

[80] See Jack Zipe's introduction to Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves, (1987, pp. xiii).

and flights of fancy. They open in a realistic world and takes the form of a fairy story only to reinforce the practical and the worldly echoed in the potter's son's ratiocination in the ayah's story, 'A pot is a pot, and I am the son of a potter, "(316) as he defeats all men and Godmen in the country to release the potted princess through the straightforward means of opening the lid of the pot rather than trying magic spells on the container hoping for its miraculous releasing like the rest. Therefore, several of these narratives equate childishness with the imaginary and the fantastic, express the futility of such flamboyant imagination, consider it detrimental to the Victorian social ideals and re-emphasise the Victorian ethicality, pragmatism, and bourgeoise elitism. Although in few of these narratives, "the fairy-tale form [is used] in innovative ways to raise social consciousness about the disparities of the different social classes and the problems faced by the oppressed due to the industrial revolution," (xix) it is not a dominant feature of the tale. Writers of Victorian children's literature, and not necessarily fairy tales, critiqued the inequalities and decadence of Victorian society. George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Augusta Webster, R.L. Stevenson, and Beatrix Potter were among the few. Victorian fairy tales also affirmed the Empire's imperialistic activities in the colonies. Fairy tales such as Kipling's 'The Potted Princess,' provide glimpses of the British child's colonial experience.

Native authors of Anglophone and vernacular literature sought their inspiration in the traditions of the West. The fairy has no mythological equivalent in Bengali antiquity. The fairy or *pori/paree* is a colonial legacy of the Indians. Therefore, the fairy is not common in Bangla fairy tales. Folk and fairy tale writers (colonial) used the existing narratives of the dominant culture to re-inscribe them with native subjectivity, just like the indigenization of the fairy. In this study, it is contended that native writers of literary fairy tales modified the traditional narrative form of the Euro/Anglo-centric

tale by introducing mythical elements into the narrative, colloquializing the language, dismantling the binaries of the natural/supernatural, reimagining female agency and advocating pluralism, social and national awareness. This dissertation will read each of the parameters specified above in relation to texts that de-stabilize the fixity or singularity of meaning. Chapter Three has dealt with the folk writers' authorial processes of contemporising the folk narrative and re-purposing the 'fantastic' in folk-literature to represent hegemonic relationships and agency of the disenfranchised. This chapter examines the mythologisation of the modern literary fairy tale, revisiting notions of child heroism and reading the child protagonist's individuated self against the ambivalent 'fantastic.'

2. Leamy and Day: The 'I' beyond the *abject*

When Edmund Leamy (1848-1904) wrote *Irish Fairy Tales* (1906) which was published posthumously, the Irish literary fairy tale had not been fully realised. There were ethnographic accounts by Eugene O'Curry and P.W. Joyce but the literary fairy tale was yet to flourish in Ireland.[81] Neither was there an author who wanted to write solely for the "the child at his knees," sans "any literary self-consciousness." (1906, xiv.) But the artist he was, even the simplest of expressions assumed a finesse and grandeur of its own that was a literary novelty. Each fairy tale in the book has a story which might have equivalents in other cultures or literary traditions, but it is the mythical connection that adds particularity to Leamy's tales. The narrative is constructed around a mythical place or a mythical story. Mythical heroes are a common fare in the modern literary Irish fairy tale. In 'Princess Finola and the Dwarf,' the dwarf rests near the mystic lake which is a myth from the old Celtic romance, 'The Voyage of Maildun.'[82] It is

[81] See Note by T.P.G, (1906, pp. xi-xix.)

[82] See 'Birds of the Mystic Lake' under Notes by Leamy , p.9.

indicative of the hero, Diuran's, fearlessness as he plunges into the waters of the lake even after being warned of the fatal outcome of his action. Carrassi writes of certain sites in the fairy tale that acts as a communal space or open space where human/supernatural modalities escape or move from one dimension to another. In this chapter, it will be seen how these moments/sites result in the individuation of the Irish hero(ine). According to this theory, the mystic lake which in itself is associated with a story of both intrepidity and regeneration, (old and withered birds are brought back to youth once they enter the waters of the lake) acts as the site of transformation and regeneration. It not only revives an old medieval Irish narrative but also the hero who will remember his pledge to Finola. His dive into the lake after sacrificing his eyesight for the love of Finola will bring him closer to the truth of his own roots.

In 'The House in the Lake,' the fisherman's son Enda is smitten by Princess Mave, the daughter of the King of Erin who was changed into a swan by her evil step-mother. The perfume that will release her from the curse lies under the lake, in the kingdom of the fairy queen. The ambiguity around the fairy queen and the Fairy land is characteristic of Irish folk literature. The binaries of good/evil or friend/foe cannot explicate the relationship established between the hero and the fairy queen. Any notional centre that stabilizes the relationship is de-settled. This dissertation argues that the fairy queen/fairy land represents the 'abject' that eventuates the metaphoric birthing of the Irish hero(ine)/heroism. In this story, this fairy land lies under water. Mave informs Enda that he will require, the mythical hero, Brian's water dress, to journey to the fairy land. The fairy tale assures the young reader that the fisherman's son Enda can also accomplish feats of 'mythical proportions.' The lake becomes the site of a metaphorical rebirth for Enda.

Nora and Connla meet Liban, the mermaid, as they are being led into the Fairyland. The mythical creature, half woman, and half salmon was the daughter of the King of Munster, who lost her entire family in a deluge. God saved her life. To assimilate with the subaquatic environment, she prayed to be turned into a mermaid. Her conversation with Nora and Connla reveals the yearnings of one "exiled from the land she loves and pining in sadness beneath the sea." (84) The chance meeting plays a part in making the children feel the anguish of a lost home and forming a critical attitude towards the lure of the Fairyland.

Julia Kristeva associates 'abjection' with the Lacanian mirror stage. It occurs at a pre-linguistic, pre-Symbolic stage, and is brought about by the abjection of the maternal. Horror, love, hesitation, melancholy are all emotions that the child associates with the Mother, before the formation of the 'I.' So the 'abject' is manifested somewhere on the axis between the object and the subject. The abjection of the Mother leads to the child's initiation into the Symbolic order signified by the law of the Phallus and the realm of language. The allure of the fairies/ Fairyland offers itself as a formidable challenge to the youth as they form the 'fanatstic' other/ maternal other that must be abjected first, for the hero(ine) to be born, as in a Symbolic birth. Time and again the Fairyland resurfaces as the *chora* (Kristeva 1982, pp.14) in the Irish fairy tale, where the Symbolic arrival of the national hero(ine) takes place. A place of reconciliation of the fairy tale character with a national figure is evinced through the chance encounter of a mythical character and the journey through the 'fantastic' realm where binaries are eluded and movements between *dimensions* are normalised. Within a fairy tale narrative, the natural/unnatural paradigms are not easily determinable, but in terms of chronotope/dimensions, there are two distinct worlds in the narrativization of the Irish fairy tale: the earth and the Otherworld. So, for the sake of this argument, if we

consider the earth and everything that happens in it as natural then the 'Otherworld' which is associated with the supernatural, fairies and spirits, acts as a surrogate 'other,' against which the subjectivation of the Irish ideal is enacted in these narratives. Unlike Ella Young or Padraic Colum, discussed in the previous chapter, Leamy's ideation of the 'Otherworld/De Dannans' is ambivalent, and is characterised simultaneously by a sense of awe and horror ; reverence and repulsion. Kristeva expostulates:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful—a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself. (Kristeva 1982, p.1)

In 'The Golden Spears,' the children, Nora and Connla, are inveigled into the fairy world. Everything about the world fascinates their imaginations: from the journey to the visual wonders of the destination. The fairy queen and her retinue of fairies and elves throw a hypnotic spell over the children and keep them in Fairyland for seven years without them realising the time that has elapsed from the day of their arrival. They suddenly realise they have matured and become aware of their physical transformation. Nora holds her brother to herself and kisses him on his lips and they draw back to take a look at each other. At this point the fairy queen suggests they must return to earth, and they acquiesce. The first thought that comes to their mind is of their own little mother. Although the seduction of the Fairyland is overwhelming, the children do not want to stay back forever. Their sudden awareness of their physical growth and confusing

emotions results in the *abjection* that sets them off on a path to self-discovery. Although their mother seems content with all the gifts that the queen showers the two with, their little mother insists she would like to see her brave boy "without any fairy finery." (87) And Connla lays aside the shield and the spear he received from the queen to reinstate that: "I would rather have you than all the world." (88)

Like Leamy, Day can by no means be called a mere collector of tales. He infused these tales, which he obviously collected from village folks, as he claims in his Preface, with his own linguistic and literary facility. The folktales that he wrote can be considered as some of the first examples of the literary fairy tale written in English by a Bengali author. Some of his narrative innovations included allusions to classical texts from both Eastern and Western traditions. For example, to describe the king's efforts at curing the madness of his son, he turns to Greek mythology. He writes, "The sons of Aesculapius could not ascertain the cause of the madness, far less could they cure it." (1883, pp.25) He makes frequent use of Bangla terminology and provide elaborate descriptions of those terms, sometimes as a continuation of the main text and other times, in footnotes. The scientific names of indigenous flowers and plants are woven into the narrative. Mythical characters and religious practices are also explained in detail, either within the text or in footnotes, a feature also found in Leamy. This is a narrative technique he develops in *Govinda Samanta or The History of a Bengal Raiyat* (1874), his novel based on peasant life in Bengal, and explores it further in *Folktales.* These textual stylizations elevate the stories from the level of mere reproductions of oral narratives to the well-crafted *Kuntsmarchen.*

In Day's 'The Man who wished to be perfect,' the wood signifies the border zone or communal space where the prince encounter the mythical Rakshashi, the fearful maternal who represents the 'abject' that both seduces and terrifies the young prince but

also steers him towards his liberation and the boon of perfection. Similarly, the poor Brahmin, a failure in life and a burden to the wife, walks into the forest to shed silent tears of anguish. He is intercepted by the mythical God and his wife, Kali and Siva, who set him on a path of self-improvement. The magical gifts he receives from the deities do not change his fortune, which is seen in a traditional fairy story, rather it is his presence of mind, sagacity, and industrious nature which results in the expansion of his fortunes. Furthermore, in 'The Story of Brahmadwaitya,' the Brahmin for whom "to die of hunger is no better than to be killed by ghosts," (202) must travel to the outskirts of the forest where no human dares to tread. He must fetch a branch from a tree for *a* bigha or acre of rent-free land after accepting the challenge of the evil *zamindar*. The ghosts represent the 'abject' against which the Brahmin re-orientates his life.

Only through the recognition of this alterity or otherness of the 'fantastic' that 'beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire,' the subjectivity of the main protagonists is established. The subjectivity does not develop only at the level of the protagonists' consciousness but also define their relationship with society, history, and nation. What is also implied is the class and caste disparities in the country. On the one hand, the fertility of the princely states is advocated, and on the other, the comparative poverty of a section of people, who must turn to the deities, forefathers, and spirits for deliverance.

3. *The Story of the Rakshasas* and *Little White Cat*: Individuation and the Fantastic Other

The Danava in Hindu and the Tuatha Dé Danaan in Irish mythology were both descendants of a Goddess Danu.[83] The Dé Danaan began to be associated with sprites or

[83] See Celtic Myth and Legends, Poetry and Romance by Charles Squire, (1910: p. 44) and Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition by David Kinsley, (1986, pp.16).

fairy-like creatures with supernatural abilities and the Danavas manifested in epic Hindu literature as *asuras, daityas*, and *rakshasas*, again variations of deformed creatures yielding great power and supernatural abilities. Aside from their similar aetiologies, the *Danavas* seem closer to the Irish Fomorians in their conceptualisation of creatures of darkness. What is interesting though, is even Dé Danaan , who are usually celebrated in Irish mythology, deprecated from divinities to fairies occupying the Otherworld, are also portrayed as strange, manipulative, and somewhat dangerous to humankind in popular literature. Despite speculations, it has been difficult to ascertain any ethnic/racial identity to these imaginary characters as they are part of an elaborate Irish imaginative with little to non-existent historical veritability. Again, in a lecture delivered at the Sixth World Sanskrit Conference in Philadelphia, in October 1984, the Indologist Sheldon Pollock reads and analyses "a venerable line of demonic antagonists," (264) represented in Hindu epic literature. He concludes "like many other monsters of world literature, the *raksasa* is in essence the Other, the Stranger coming from a time and place it is altogether unnecessary, and probably wrong, for us to try to determine. For again, if there once attached to him some racial, ethnic, or geographical specificity, none of this remains to him in *Ramayana*. His one reality is that of a fantasized alien, who at one and the same time is both feared and desired, who threatens mortal danger and yet is invested with an extraordinary unsociable sexuality." (280-81) Although, people belonging to certain racial or ethnic groups have been represented in Bangla juvenile literature as savages or *rakshasas*, at the oral narrative level, with the source of the tales lying in the epics, it seems implausible that the *rakshasas* would stand for a particular racial or ethnic group. It is likely that some authors chose to depict certain races as demonic, like the Victorian representation of Indians in popular literature and culture. But it can be said that the early narratives, such as Lal Behari Day

or Dakshina Ranjan Mitra Majumdar's texts, which were largely based on oral accounts, might not have been products of some racial bias. Rather, this study concurs with Pollock's argument that *rakshasas* represented the 'Other' in epic literature and subsequently in folk imagination and literary manifestations. In several of the texts discussed in this chapter, the *rakshasa* or *raksashi* does not seem to fit into any category of race/ethnicity and they are not differentiated against based on the colour of their skin or their origin. They seem to embody a consciousness rather than physiognomy. Therefore, it is possible that a colonised people will identify *rakshasas* with those forces that terrorise them but also elicit their fascination and awe. Authors such as Day or Majumdar reproduce and adapt the popular imaginative through their textualization of oral folk narratives in the form of fairy tales. In the end, these creatures become 'signifiers', which can have innumerable 'signified(s).' In literary adaptations, what we see, then, is a re-modelling of these mythical symbols and totems, reproducing the vision of the author.

The Story of the Rakshasas opens with an imbecile and indolent Brahmin being coaxed by his disgruntled wife to undertake a journey to a king's palace who was giving away largess to people on his mother's funeral. Poverty is the hallmark of the fairy tale Brahmin, who often constitute the main protagonist of the story. He travels wherever there is hope for food, money, or rehabilitation. Particularly in this story the reason behind his journey establishes the anti-maternal tone of the narrative. It is a symbol of weaning from the maternal, connoting the point of subjectivation of the 'imbecile' hero with whom the children reading the story can also identify. Here, the role of the wife is also constructed as that of a 'surrogate' mother, cleaning the "clothes of her husband, and make[ing] them as white as any fuller could make them." (65) On the way he is intercepted by a maiden of exquisite beauty who is later revealed as a *rakshasi* or a

female *rakshasa*. Unable to resist her seduction, he begins a conjugal life with this woman. The *rakshasi*'s allure is not limited to her physical beauty but her association with wealth. She has taken over the kingdom of the rightful ruler and devoured all the people in the kingdom. The *rakshasa* can be seen here as a manifestation of the collective imagination of a people reeling with the impact of colonialism. The "strange Other," eternally seductive, threatening and also sexually liberated seem to not only embody a mythical but also socio-political signification. The native's fear and conterminous attraction of the colonizer is also called to attention. The *rakshasi* expresses her desire to co-habit with the Brahmins human spouse but her true self, that of a flesh-eating, gluttonous monster is revealed time and again although she "exercised great self-restraint on herself, and never did anything which human beings did not do." (70) This can be seen as the 'aliens' efforts at assimilating. The *rakshasa* lives with the brahmin and his wife for sixteen years and she attacks them only when she realises, she has been exposed. The realisation leads to retaliation and murder of the brahmin and his first wife. This 'Other' not only denotes a side of the hegemonic spectrum but also that of gender. Bangla fairy tales are quite accepting of polygamy. The king/prince is often seen as possessing three wives and being partial towards the younger one. Generally, these narratives normalise this social arrangement. But in this story, the narrative constructs the *rakshasi* as the quintessential 'other woman,' who is snatching the husband away from the wife but as a consolation suggesting that they live in the same household. It reflects her sagacity and manipulation skills so that she can establish greater control over her enemy. She realizes that the allure of money will prompt the husband to support such an arrangement and the dutiful wife will not let go of the husband entirely. Also, that she can hide her identity for so long asserts her superior intelligence and tactfulness. In all, the 'other woman' is reprehensible but also

perceptive and enviable. This is also evident in the characterization of Dasi, a maid servant in the court of Sahasra Dal. This woman is shown to yield great power in the king's household to whose daughter Sahasra Dal is wedded. The narrator describes this woman as a person of uncommon strength and perspicacity, industrious, and energetic. She is not described in terms of the typical fairy tale maid-servant. Although, it is revealed that she is a *raksasi* and is slain by Sahasra Dal towards the close of the story, her characterization is symptomatic of the usual distrust in an opinionated and assertive woman of considerable intelligence within the male-dominated Bangla society where the 'other woman' is always perceived as a demoness or a *raksasi.*

Both wives of the brahmin give birth to a son each. One is human but the other is of 'mixed' blood, Champa Dal and Sahasra Dal respectively. As soon as the brahmin's first wife realises that their life is in danger, she gives some of her breast milk to her son, Champa Dal, instructing that the day the milk turns completely red he must assume that they are dead and flee the country. The 'milk' turning red is the *abject* "proffered by the mother and father" (1982, p.3) that leads to the hero *abjecting* and accepting himself at the same time, thereby defining the role he will play in the narrative. The *rakshasi's* son on the other hand must chose his allegiance and he chooses his half-brother over his mother. This happens when he witnesses his mother transforming into a flesh-eating monster from her human manifestation. The child *abjects* himself at this moment and creates a self-identity for himself which is separate from that of the mother. The story ends with Champa and Sahasra saving the country infested with demons and assuming the role of heroes to the nation. Their individuated personas as heroes and saviours of the common man are established against the ambiguous fantastic, the meaning of which is continually *deferred* within a chain of significations.

The homogeneity of ‘Little White Cat’ and ‘The Story of the Rakshasha’ lies in the construction of the plot around the mythical figure of the ‘anti-mother’ against the backdrop of a threat to the country. Princess Eileen, like Princess Keshavati has been kidnapped by the demon king akin to Trencoss’s abduction of Eileen. In both instances, the demons/giants have waged a war against the native inhabitants of that country. They have killed the ruler and the countrymen and taken control of the land. The Giantess in “Little White Cat” exhibits cannibalistic tendencies like that of the demoness. During her encounter with the prince who was trying to rescue Eileen, she says, “I know what he is good for…he is good to eat.” (1890, p.59) Further in the text, a serpent assumes the form of Princess Kathleen to seduce the prince in the same way Day’s demoness transforms herself into a maiden to entice the brahmin. The little white cat and Sahasra Dal play important roles in turning the very course of the narrative. The final undoing of evil is the culmination of their intelligence and self-sacrifice.

The little white cat plays a role which can be equated with that of Sahasra Dal in the Bengali fairy tale. If not for these two characters, neither the prince nor Champa Dal would have succeeded in their quest for love. In keeping with the traditional tale pattern, they respond to those stimulants which render them oblivious to their present situation. They are drawn into a hypnotic spell until the intervention of some external stimuli brings them out of their stupor. Both ‘little white cat’ and Sahasra Dal orchestrate the union of the lost lovers and compel them to introspect. They are both distinguished by their liminality, the cat’s association with the Otherworld[84] and Sahasra’s half-human and half-demon lineage.

[84]See “Legendary Tails,” by Gerina Dunwich in *Your Magickal Cat: Feline Magick, Lore, and Worship*, (2000, pp.187-188).

The prince's encounter with the Giantess brings about an alteration in the hero. He has now become potential fodder for the Giantess. To fatten him up the Giantess feeds him on copious quantities of "sugar, and spice, and all things nice." (60) The monstrous anti-mother feeding him before his death, becomes the *abjection* against which the prince's individuality asserts itself, at first in the form of complete defeat and then through remorse and self-actualisation. By this time, he has realised the value of the cat's intervention. The cat rebukes him for being nonchalant at first but gives him one last opportunity to save himself and the princess, but he makes it adequately clear that the intervention is not for the prince but for Eileen. Particularly, as far as this story is concerned, the hero who finally marries the princess is a weakling in both the texts. The fallibility of the characters and their inclination towards repeating their mistakes are characteristics which a child reader can easily identify with.

The uniqueness of these two fairy-tales lie in the characterization. In some way or the other, all characters are marginalized. The prince has a weak mind and is easily defeated in mind games, Eileen is hopeful but helpless, Champa Dal is brave but misguided, Sahasra Dal by the dint of his 'mixed' heritage is always trying to atone his mother's sins and the little white cat's Otherworldly residence makes it even more difficult for him to unite with Eileen. Eileen does choose the prince in the end, albeit she bears the symbol of the cat's affection in the form the brooch he gifts her. On realising that his brother Champa Dal is the husband of the woman he had held captive, unaware of the Dasi's treachery, he lets Keshavati return to Champa Dal.

In the Anglophone world, the nation, which is essentially a male-led or male-dominated community is symbolised as a woman, primarily as a mother. The national heroes are mostly sons who are either exiled or alienated from the motherland and must

find their way back to her.[85] This is also discernible in Anglophone fairy tales, in the recurrent manifestation of the maternal agency in various forms. The subjectivation of the hero takes place in relation to this maternal figure that is marked by its ambiguity, uncertainty, and darkness. It is rather, the anti-mother, terrifying, over-whelming and all consuming, who must be *abjected* for the heroes' reconciliation with and return to the true mother who is the embodiment of the nation, similar to Connla's rejection of the *fairyland* in favour of the little mother and their humble life in Ireland.

4. Kankabati, Orla and Sheila: Not Just Fairy-Tale Heroines

Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay in *Kankabati* (1892) and Patricia Lynch in *The Grey Goose of Kilnevin* (1939) and *Orla of Burren* (1954) re-invent the fairy tale within narratives that belong to the 'fantasy' genre. Home, nation, history, and the place of the woman and the child in society and popular imagination are explored in these texts. Kankabati, Orla, and Sheila seek domestic stability, companionship, and a purpose in life. They are opinionated, inquisitive, daring, and adventurous. All three narratives are about a journey or adventure. In *Kankabati* it is a metaphoric journey. Kankabati's real journey is that from ignorance to experience but it is realised through a dream. Mukhopadhyay uses a realistic narrative where the 'fantastic' manifests itself in the protagonist's dream. The journey of Orla in *Orla of Burren* is a magical one, but the frame is realistic. The magic acts as a time machine, transporting Orla, Standish, and Miles into ancient Galway. *The Grey Goose of Kilnevin* is a cross between a fairy tale and an odyssey, where magic and reality sometimes become inseparable. Sheila's journey is more of an internal adventure than a magical sojourn. The fairy-tale is structurally relevant to *Kankabati*. The story is realistic, but the narration is reminiscent

[85] See "Motherlands, mothers, and nationalist sons: theorising the engendered nation, (2005, p.23).

of a fairy tale, except that in this story, everything happens in the real world. The brahmin appears here as in traditional fairy tales. The central protagonist is the daughter of a *kulin*[86] brahmin but his role is satirized in the narrative and a connection is established between the brahmin in colonial India and contemporary social evils. The brahmans exercised their social position to indulge in several diabolic and discriminatory practices. *Kankabati* extends a critique of these traditions. For instance, the author laments the criminalization of *suttee* and says that brahmins like Tanu Roy, Kankabati's father, have sadly been rendered distraught. Had the tradition been still salient, Tanu would have been rid of his two widowed daughters by now and that would have greatly improved the financial situation of the household. In another instance, he mocks the complacency of the charlatan brahmin in an episode with Tanu's son who boasts of his superior knowledge in the Shastras to be adequate for a comfortable life and the futility of any other kind of education. In the Bangla *rupkatha* the prince must leave his mother, either to set out on a world expedition or in search of a wife. In *Kankabati*, the prince equivalent, Khetu leaves his country home in Kusumghati, leaving his mother behind, to travel to Kolkata, the city, for education. Kankabati's companion in the story is a cat, Meni. Although Meni does not speak like the talking animals in fairy tales, Kankabati and her, have their own secret covenant. Meni cannot speak and Kankabati is not allowed to speak. The adults silence her and that remains constant in reality, and in her dream. In *Orla of Burren*, the fairy tale elements include

[86] A Brahmin who was allowed to have several wives. People considered marriage of their daughters to a *kulin* household as fortuitous and a marked raise in social standing and esteem of her family. Pre-pubescent girls in Bengal would be married off to aged *kulin* Brahmins, sometimes in lieu of money. This resulted in the increase in the number of child widows. Before *suttee* or immolation of the wife in the funeral pyre of her dead husband was criminalised in 1829, many of these young widows were forced to sacrifice their lives by burning themselves alive in their husband's pyre.

magical creatures and objects that assist the children in their journey across time, a conflict between good and evil and a tale of a princess trapped in her castle. But Lynch re-imagines these traditional motifs and coalesces them with the history of Ireland. In the character of the ballad singer, we see someone who can travel across place and time. Margaret of the Dark, the singer and storyteller, symbolises narrativity, that can transcend temporality and spatiality. There is a conflict between good and evil forces, but it probes the relativity of evil. The princess in the castle is not the 'damsel in distress' but she is a sea-pirate trying to consolidate her independent rule over an island against the attacks of warring Irish elites and the British Empire. Orla is a little girl who is adventurous and brave. Like her creator, she has not seen her father, who is a sea-captain for a very long time. The news of her father's accident reaches her mother, and she leaves for Galway. A letter arrives for the mother bearing news of the father and they run behind the bus to deliver it to their mother. They miss the bus and embark on a journey on horseback. They lose themselves in the enchanted Burren where they meet the ballad singer and a magic stone transport them into the ancient walled city of Galway. In this magical world they believe they will find their father who has now joined the mighty Granuaile. In *The Grey Goose of Kilnevin*,(GGK), the Maggie Fagan track and the friendship with animals who can think like humans has a semblance to the *Cinderella* narrative. Sheila, like *Cinderella* is lonely and in search of companions. She is also on a quest like fairy tale heroes. There is a talking scarecrow and the Children of Lir, creatures she meets on her way to Bridgie Swallow who turns out to be a little woman living as a swallow to keep Maggie at bay. Both *Kankabati* and *GGK* borrow elements from Lewis Carroll's *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* (1865); a girl who enters a wonderland only to discover that she cannot navigate through the world or understand its inhabitants. In *Kankabati*, it is reflected in her misadventures in the

dream world where the creatures she meets add to her confusion and delay in her search for Khorbur who has the power to save her husband. In *The GGK*, Sheila keeps coming back to the same point where she started. Animals talk in both the stories. In *Kankabati*, these animals appear in her dream world and in *The GGK* these animals appear and start communicating with her after Sheila drinks the magic water of the lake that cured Maggie's rheumatics. In both the texts, the protagonists have trouble understanding the magical/dream world they are suddenly thrust into. Kankabati cannot understand the nonsense verse of Mister Gomiz, the frog. Sheila fails to understand the meaning of the strange signposts. Mukhopadhyay and Lynch's re-imagining of the fairy tale lies in their subversion of the Victorian fairy tale narrative. Mukhopadhyay casts it in an anti-colonial mould and Lynch localises it with the help of traditional Irish characters, birds, and folkloric motifs. All three narratives re-invent the fairy tale where the 'fanatstic' lends 'narrative logic' to the text. The geo-temporal dimensions are not fixed or constant. They keep changing and characters keep traveling between these dimensions. It is either explicitly mentioned in the text or is implied by the author. In *Kankabati*, it is revealed that the girl had been unconscious with fever and the strange experiences she had and creatures she met were all in her dream. But the author also prompts the readers to not dismiss her dream as simply a dream and Niranjan expresses his surprise at the girl's vivid scientific description of a mosquito she saw in the dream. Khetu informs him that there was a time when he had written the description in a paper and threw it away somewhere. He thinks Kankabti might have read the details from that discarded sheet. Although, it still calls to question some other things she saw and experiences she had in her dreams, which were quite unlikely for a girl of eight years who had never left her village to be aware of. For instance, her experience of riding a train and the knowledge that passengers are sometimes swindled by strangers who offer them spiked

beverages. But it is something that the author does not ponder over and quickly concludes the story. Whether her dream was truly a dream is left open ended. In *Orla of Burren* the ballad singer is the only character who can travel between the past and the present. She is first introduced as a known face in Orla's neighbourhood and later revealed to be a friend of Granuaile and someone who lived in ancient Ireland. The dimensions are quite indeterminable in *GGK* which gives the impression of magic realism. There is no particular point where Sheila exits the real world and enters the magical dimension. The only time it is implied is when she drinks the golden water and is suddenly able to comprehend Betsy, the goose's hissing sounds.

In Mukhopadhyay and Lynch's rendition of the fairy tale, the girl child and her childhood are also re-constructed. It is a deviation from the traditional fairy tale characterization of the girl. All three texts deviate to certain lengths depending on the period in which the texts were written and the societal conventions of the time. Mukhopadhyay alludes to several folkloric narratives that were circulated among the countryfolk of Bengal. Fairy tales based on these folk narratives were published in collections such as *Thakurmar Jhuli, Thakurdar Jhuli* and *Thandidir Thale.* The stories were mainly named after the female protagonists like 'Madhumala,' 'Kanchanmala,' 'Sankhamala', etc. Although, the part they played within the grand narrative indicated lack of female agency, voice, or authority. Authoritative women were depicted as she-devils. Only the women who were compliant and submissive were commended. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay states:

> The many tales of *Thakurdadar Jhuli* aim to demonstrate, on one hand, how woman's ultimate identity, her final truth is revealed in the way female consciousness has eternalized the notion of patriarchy, as a consequence of which there is an acceptance of the legitimacy of the authority of the family; while on the other, if by chance the woman's selfhood become assertive and she desires to

> become free of the ignominy of the slavery and the humiliation of submission, then this is something wrong, immoral and worthy of blame. (2015, p. 66)

Still, within the patriarchal framework, some fairy tale heroines were written to defy expected patterns of behaviour. In 'Madhumala,' it is the princess and not the prince who initiates exchange of promise rings. In 'Pushpamala,' Chandan, a soldier and the hero of the story, arranges for fuel and prepares food for himself and Pushpa, when the latter fails to perform the duty. The roles of man and woman are reversed. Pushpamala is also one of those few fairy tale princesses who fights dacoits on horseback. She is not only deft in martial skills; she is also a clever counsel to Chandan. After she kills their attackers barring one who begged for mercy, Chandan readily agrees to forgive him. However, Pushpamala reminds him that one must always eradicate debts and enemies. It is always prudent to do away with them at the right time or it results in lasting trouble. One is familiar with the good queen and mother in the Bangla fairy tale who does not disagree with the king/husband. In 'Malanchamala,' Malancha's mother refuses to wed her teenage daughter to a twelve-day-old baby. In *Kankabati,* the author uses patriarchal conventions of colonial India as a backdrop to his socio-political satire. *Kankabati* is, by all means, a product of the society where the rules for the girl child are different from those for the boy. In this story, her ultimate quest is that of a husband, as in a traditional tale, but one that is of her choosing. Her father wants her to marry the elderly landlord, Janardhan Chowdhury but she loves Khetu, the boy from her village who brought her books from Calcutta so that she could also learn everything he knew. In those days, girls had no right to education, but Khetu feels otherwise and speaks for the education of women. Khetu is a young boy, but he is depicted as someone who is wise beyond his age. However, it is in her self-awareness that she differs from the stereotypical fairy tale heroines. Because the 'fantastic' is an

episode in a realistic story, Kankabati is not painted in the lines of a valiant Pushpamala or an entirely coy Malanchamala. Like any girl of late eighteenth-century to nineteenth-century rural Bengal, she is a product of the times and its family unit. She cannot argue with the father, but she is aware of what is happening to her. She pacifies her mother by saying that if a few of her bones could fetch her father a handsome monetary deal, she will accept it thinking the bargain has served her family. But she is afraid she is too weak, and she could be dead anytime. In the event of which, if that happens before her impending marriage, she is concerned about her father's anger and disappointment. Through this statement she not only mocks the society but also articulates the dilemma of a girl child. The strength of her character is revealed through the dream episode. She is not meek or feeble, she is merely a victim of the times. In the real world, she has no right to choose the man she wants to marry, but through the dream she lives the fantasy although she fails to save her husband's life in the end. She decides to perform *suttee* in mourning. It is her acute awareness of reality that manifests in the vision of her own *suttee* even in a dream.

For a young girl her age, Sheila is perceptive. She is quite aware of her reality, her mundane existence with the domineering Maggie Fagan and her need for companions. She is never too far away from the reality even though she is no stranger to magic. When Sheila brings Betsy, the goose to her "tiny cubby-hole under the stairs" (1951, pp.33), asks her to listen to the waves of the sea from the big, speckled shell and Betsy hears the roaring of the wind heard in the bushes behind Jim Daly's cabin coming from the shell, they become part of a sensorial magic. She has great conviction and although Fergus and the old Ballad Singer keep trying to convince her that there is no Bridgie Swallow or a place where she might be found she continues her journey. Her

friends are lost on the way, but she follows the instructions of the Children of Lir to finally reach the lair of Bridgie.

Orla on the other hand is unafraid. She does not shy away from an adventure. Although her brothers, Miles and Standish, do not prefer living in Burren among the stones and the wilderness, Orla finds a sense of thrill in the Burren. The adults always asked them to avoid the treacherous Crag. But when she fails to find Miles and Standish at the farm, she travels to Crag on her own in search of them. Unlike the fairy tale heroine, Orla is the youngest, but she is the most protective of her brothers. Later in the story it is revealed that the magic stone that comes into Orla's possession through Miles, originally belonged to Granauile. The lady pirate, like little Orla, was also a commander of a male-driven world. When the children approach Uncle Hugh for help on their adventure across unknown geo-temporal expanses, he feels the children should have waited for their mother to send for them. In response to which Orla asks him if he always did things as he was bid as a child, he finds it difficult to answer her. After the magic stone transports Orla, Standish, and Miles back into time and in sixteenth-century Galway, they meet their mother, uncle, grandfather, and cousins. Orla's cousin Joly expresses her surprise at the transformation of the 'meek little Orla' (1954, p. 89) into her confident and resolute self. Her travel into the past results in a heightened sense of self-awareness. She is emboldened to put her arguments forward without hesitation. She finds the social norms, custom,s and sartorial traditions of the ancient world extremely restrictive and repressive. She asks for her own clothes and not the dainty frocks she is made to don. She stands up to Joly's reproaches who calls her a pirate for wearing her boyish dresses and a liar for saying she can draw the map of Galway or quizzing her about the tribes of Galway. The author writes:

> "Without being told, Orla knew it would be wiser not to mention the changes in the city or in the people she knew. There were others who knew her yet whom she had forgotten. She was indignant when strangers scolded her for day-dreaming, and being lazy and forgetful." (87)

5. Exile and the Literary Pursuit of a Home

Kankabati, Sheila, and Orla are aware of their marginality unlike the fairy tale princesses who accept their subordination. In all three texts, the girls experience an in-betweenness. They are trapped between binaries erected by the society that is represented by the adults, between family and personal choice, between adult rules and childish yearnings, between responsibility and carelessness. Lynch's articulation of Betsy's inner voice summates this liminality, "The grey goose put her head on one side and looked very wise. She wished she could do something for Sheila, but the world was such a confused, crowded place and the people were all so big." (1951, pp.18) The 'fantastic' is the representation of the girl child's contemporaneity. Whether it is in a dream, a fantasy, or reality, the child finds herself talked down or forced into conventional female roles that she is not willing to perform. The fantastic journey of the child exemplifies her pursuit of a home. In *Kankabati*, the home lies with Khetu, who unlike other men like her father, believes in the equality of man and woman in society. In *GGK* it lies in strangers who are more of a family to Sheila than a real family. In *Orla of Burren* it is with her father whom she hasn't seen for a long time and travels across time and centuries to protect. Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay has held several jobs in his lifetime: a teacher, an editor, a sub-inspector, and a clerk at the Bengal Gazetteer Office (1870). He was also a social reformist who played a pivotal role during the Bengal famine in 1876-78. The experiences he had as a government officer in colonial India influenced his literary and satirical work. Having lost his parents early in life and reared by his grandmother, he went through life without formal education, several

illnesses, poverty, and perilous pursuits and struggles. A self-taught man, he established himself in society through painstakingly uphill journey in life. In a lecture delivered on 24 November 1888 in Bangalore on the topic, 'Change and Progress,' he acknowledges the sad plight of the colonized people of India but at the same time calls upon his countrymen to unfetter their minds from nocuous social rules and customs. Among these customs he specifies "Manu's absurd and obscurest doctrines." (2001, pp.34) He also describes how he overcame his prejudices to find the clarity of thought that he gained from that experience. Therefore, it can be inferred that one of the reasons for constructing the character of Kankabati was to highlight the status of the woman in a society that is governed by the dictum of Manu and that an alternate is achievable only if the people can shed the shroud of ignorance. Like Mukhopadhyay's personal experiences and ideologies influencing his novelistic discourse, Lynch's Sheila and Orla stem from the author's own trials and tribulations in life. Lynch's childhood was also spent in poverty and constant movements from one place to another. Perhaps that explains her fascination with the 'wandering and travelling' people that keep appearing in her works. She never really knew her father, who worked in Cairo and before she could re-unite with him, he died of fever. Orla's search for her father and the need to save his life is inspired from the author's own life events. Her free-spirited mother could never provide her the emotional security that she needed and was herself quite dependant on her elder brother, Patrick Henry. They often left her behind at relative's houses or boarding schools to travel abroad. Phil Young, Lynch's biographer, documents two compelling episodes in her life that informs her literary sensibilities: displacement/exile and the storyteller. Even before the Great Famine of 1840s, "emigration was accepted as a necessary evil." (2005, p.20) The long British rule and the widespread shortage of crops and growing poverty compelled many Irish-born to

emigrate to London, Paris, or United States. This constant state of displacement and involuntary distancing from her roots profoundly affected her. It resulted in years of separation from family and a lack of long-standing associations and friendships. As a result, the plight of the exiled becomes a recurrent concern with her narratives. Although House of the Grey Goose belonged to Sheila's folks, she was exiled in her own house by Maggie Fagan. It is also telling that she would meet the mythical Children of Lir who were exiled in their own land for hundreds of years under the curse of their evil stepmother. Hiroko Ikeda has also seen the legend of the Children of Lir and the story of their imposed exile to have a "historical resonance for the Irish people." She writes:

> The battle of Kinsale in 1601 marked the beginning of the age of dispossession and exile…Two centuries later, the Great Famine drove many Irish people into exile…It is likely that the long-standing interest in the fate of the exiled children of Lir was partly due to the continuous emigration which became a marked feature of Irish history, as it is possible to associate the fate of the exiled with that of the Children of Lir in several different ways. (2006, p.50)

Earlier, the process of the reclaiming of the exiled author's homeland through literature was discussed in relation to Padraic Colum. This reclamation generally takes place through what can be called the 'diasporic memory' of the author that harks back to the native past and its signifiers. In Lynch, the storyteller becomes the link between the past and the present. In her is humanised the diasporic memory of the exiled. This also explains the Ballad Singer's ability to travel between time zones whenever she wants and without any magical assistance in *Orla of Burren.* The Ballad singer's origin can be traced in Lynch's past and her memories of her native land.

Again, Mrs Hennessy, the *seanchaí* appears in Patricia Lynch's autobiography, *A Storyteller's Childhood*. She is described as a link between Ireland's Gaelic past and

the Irish Renaissance. About Mrs. Hennessy, Lynch says: 'The people who lived in Ireland before the days of history were as well-known to Mrs Hennessey as the neighbours in her village.' (18-19) Mrs Hennessey's visit to the house in fair Hill was to have profound implications for Patricia. Not only did she provide the little girl with a deep draught of Irish culture and a link with Ireland's past through her storytelling, but she was also destined to be her travelling companion on a journey that was to be the first of many in Patricia's nomadic life.

6. Into the Post-colonial 'Fantastic'

In Mukhopadhyay and Lynch, we see the personal, the political, and the literary collude to confect postcolonial childhoods. While describing a Salman Rushdie novel, Andrew Teverson says that the novel becomes political, not because it directly engages with political issues but by resisting those interpretations which are offered by official organs of power. [87] The 'fantastic' chronotope lets Mukhopadhyay and Lynch express the political without belabouring. Tapodhir Bhattacharjee states:

> Trailokyanath carefully built a microcosm of phantasmal reality. Though it seems to be a term in contradiction, from close analysis we understand that through his literary discourses he sought to tear apart the confines of colonial superstructure. Literary fantasies were not mechanisms of escape for him, rather he tried to prove that his microcosm bespoke of a new literary mode subverted the generic and textual structure imposed on it…We also find that these refused to observe unities of time, space and character and did away with prevalent notions of chronology, three dimentionality as well as rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, self and other, life and death. (2001, pp.39)

The entire dream episode in *Kankabati*, which might or might not have been a dream, in keeping with the author's doing away with the 'rigid dimensions,' moves

[87] See *Salman Rushdie* by Andrew Teverson, (2007, p.15).

away from the dominant middle-class bourgeoise representation of the Brahmanical Bengali society to a universe constructed around the "different viewpoints of the marginalised other" (42) "through which the voiceless subaltern sections of the society might speak." (40) This is symbolised in Kankabati's descent into the aquatic universe. The fishes are overjoyed to have an 'empress' to rule over them and they readily bestow all authorial powers to her. Kankabati's lack of interest in playing the empress leads them to organise a plebiscite of the fishes in a bid to convince her to assume this responsibility, indirectly reinforcing the necessity of 'voting' to determine popular mandate as opposed to occupying a country with brute force. Kankabati's chance encounter with the headless ghost of Skull, Skeleton & Co. apprise her of his growing fear of extirpation and obsolescence due to the ignorance and disbelief of the 'English-speaking' *babus*. He tells Kankabati:

> Why should people say that ghosts don't exist? What have we done to the English-speaking babus that they want us eradicated? You have already done away with the Gods, now you want these demigods to be done away with, is it? (180)

That English education resulting in the depletion of native languages, cultures, and ritualistic practices is corroborated through this ghostly affair.

The control that a small community of mosquitoes yield over the humankind can be comparable to that exerted by the small island of Britons over the vast Indian subcontinent. Irrespective of their size the mosquitoes seem greatly overpowering and self-absorbed. Two queens of the king of mosquitoes discuss domesticating a human offspring. Having met Kankabati, the elder queen expresses her wish to keep Kankabati as her pet. She is afraid that unlike humans she will not be able to eat those same creatures she has domesticated. The queen next in line dismisses her argument and suggests if she must domesticate someone it should be strictly utilitarian – reflective of

the British attitude towards the colonizers. Again, the King of Mosquitoes compares people of India to imbeciles. He says, “These people of India are extremely stupid. They have no common sense.” (227) It is also implied that in the mosquito-land, stupid mosquitoes are addressed as ‘humans.’ At a certain point, in the narrative the mosquitoes hold humans under curfew, restricting their free will and movement, symptomatic of the measures undertaken by the British administration to suppress dissent. The character of the witch, Nakeshwari is also telling. Witches, again, are a foreign import. The illustration of the witch in the text is an indigenization of a Victorian representation of a witch. In the illustration below, we can see that the witch wears a hat and holds a broom which is typical of Victorian witches, but she wears a *saree* and sits in a basket that are indigenous in origin.

Figure 7: The witch in *Kankabati.*

Nakeshwari's aunt lives beyond the seven seas, again pointing to a foreign connection. Even in the demeanour of Nakeswari we see the replication of the British attitude in terms of colonial occupation. The witches, like the British, keep saying that they are planning to leave but they never leave. Kankabati requires a particular root for a concoction that could save her husband but learns that it can also be found on the moon. The day she plans to travel to the moon, Nakeshwari's aunt 'white-washes' the sky so that Kankabati fails to differentiate between day and night. This constant effort

of the witches to throttle Kankabati's plans and lay impediments in her way has a correlation with the colonial enterprise and its oppressive state machineries.

The 'phantasmal reality,' borrowing the term from Tapodhir Bhattacharjee, of *GGK* can also be traced to the author's experience of colonisation and migration while living in Ireland. 'Home' as Irish children knew it was constantly changing due to the widespread poverty and scarcity of food and jobs. Between 1914 and 1918 Irish soldiers also joined the British forces against the Central powers. The already languishing Irish economy, a consequence of British 'backyardism,' faced a severe blow with men and resources being diverted into war efforts. As the nation was grappling with its own struggles with independence and identity, Lynch was also in search of her own calling and negotiating her chequered family situation, with an ailing mother and a brother who was dead. Therefore, Sheila's search for 'home' is also in a way Lynch's own search for that stability, security, and assurance, which she eventually found with R.M. Fox, but also that of a nation that was 'free' of the bullies like Maggie Fagan and truly belonged to the disenfranchised and forsaken like Sheila and Betsy. Maggie ousting Sheila from her own house and becoming its sole owner can be read as the British occupation of Ireland. Maggie sends her off on an impossible errand of bringing butter from Bridgie Swallow. The only reason apart from Sheila's perseverance that leads to the discovery of Bridgie is the meeting with the Children of Lir, the mythical personas, totems of Irish indigeneity. They are the actants that lead Sheila and Betsy home. The fox whom Sheila meets in her journey represents the Irish response to British interference in the country:

> "I don't want to go back,' he whined. I'm sick an tired of being chased an hunted round the countryside. I'm getting on in years and if me tail had been a bit longer I wouldn't be here talkin about it. (75)

The fox had to leave 'home' on account of being 'hunted' everywhere. When he says only those find the road to the Isle of the Four Swans, who are being 'hunted,' he seems to indicate that it is in Ireland's past that the deliverance of the 'hunted' Irish people lie. The fox explains:

> If ye're being hunted an ye're at the last gasp there's a chance ye'll see a signpost, he told her. "But ye can't touch a Fly or Dig road. Ye must go under or over. Tis easy enough for those who can fly, but tis desprit hard on us others…, (76)

Indicating the ones who can migrate or 'fly' can save themselves from being 'hunted' but those who can't must face the consequences. Their plight then becomes like that of Finnoula. Sheila asks her, "Are you lost, too?" and she says, "We aren't lost, but we cannot get back.' (136).

Conversely, in *Orla of Burren*, the postcolonial is expressed through a fantastic journey back in time. The absence or imminent danger to the father looms large on the child. The father who is associated with a sense of security or protection is lost to the children. It is revealed through the fantastic sequence that the father is fighting a battle alongside an iconic yet misrepresented figure in Irish history who had a radical part to play in keeping the English out of her dominion in Ireland for a long time. She was the sea-pirate, Grace O'Malley. At the same time a historical character and enshrined in Irish mythical imagination, Grace is often seen as a commander of men and lands. In the old storyteller, Sheila had found a companion on her arduous journey to self-discovery and a place she could call home. In the ballad singer in *Orla of Burren*, the eponymous heroine finds her companion through the journey of time. The Ballad Singer 'who has no home' because she must keep travelling for the story to live on and Orla who is on a journey to complete her family, find in each other 'timeless' companions. The singer is also a link to Orla's father and Granuaile. The experiences she has in the Galway of

sixteenth century causes Orla to appreciate her contemporary times and freedom that comes with it. The sixteenth-century Galway, the walled city where the British had built a stronghold and the streets were filled with foreigners, was a world that Orla and her brothers were surprised to discover. To the people living in the city, Orla and Standish were the 'savages' from the Burren. (1954, pp.77) Orla's grandfather voices the frustration of one who is trapped: "Now I am prisoned in a walled city. When I sleep, when I sit in the sun, or listen to your mother playing on the harp I am free, for I dream." (99) The children find themselves encumbered by sexist norms and different restrictions. So, they plan an escape. The Ballad singer once again helps them escape. She tells them that people will not be gentle with those who want to leave the city. Standish asks "Why not? If people don't want to stay isn't it wiser to let them go." (109) There are subtle political suggestions that the reader will not miss in this fantastic adventure. It was a convenient narrative to demonise the pirate queen for those whom she was able to keep at bay and whose trades and businesses she disrupted. History remembers her as an ambiguous figure, fierce and yet iconoclast. She also urges Orla to return to the future and change the narrative about her that has thrust her into the throes of infamy:

> When you go back to Galway and you hear them call me Pirate, will you remember how I was no pirate but an honourable sea queen, who spared prisoners and seldom asked ransom, save from the most wealthy. (173)

Therefore, Mukhopadhyay and Lynch reclaim the narrative of the powerful to re-write it for the adrift, the wandering, the forsaken, the misunderstood, and the abandoned.

Chapter Four: I can See Me and I am Not Nobody: The Empowering Supernatural

1. Overview

This chapter sets out to specify a fundamental difference between apparition narratives for adults and for children. It has been established in the Critical Framework that 'fantastic' as perceived by the child and that by an adult cannot be equated. Unlike the adult, the child is more accepting of the 'fantastic' and capable of reconciling with their own liminality at the juncture of reality and fantasy. With that in view, this chapter examines texts particularly belonging to the 'ghost story' genre written for children where postcolonial childhoods are constructed through the invalidation of accepted societal and behavioural norms and expectations of the child. The history of the evolution of the ghost story written with an adult audience in mind enables readers to "see it not merely as a source of spooky entertainment but as a chance to extend the limits of literature and thus open up new questions about reality, about how we perceive and imagine it." (Brewster & Thurston 2018, p.3) This dissertation proposes that the same can be said about ghost story written for children: that academic scholarship has often included children's ghost fiction in the category of 'spooky entertainment' but the childhoods that the authors in this study construct transcend such narrow definitions. Another defining aspect with regards to the authors and texts chosen in this study is the axis of their reality, which is also reflected in their fantastic imaginings. The 'reality' as defined by an Anglocentric consciousness will differ vastly from that by a postcolonial consciousness. This chapter examines the manifestations of this postcolonial consciousness in Anglophone apparition narratives. The ghost story is central to the study of the 'postcolonial fantastic' owing to its "long history in oral traditions and ancient cultures," (Ferrier-Watson 2017, p.9), although it is often ignorantly "lumped with eighteenth and nineteenth century gothic tradition." (ibid.)

2. Print Medium and the Evolution of the Ghost Story

The Victorian print medium chose the rational over fantastic and social realism over the supernatural. According to Sean Ferrier-Watson and Peter Marshall, this newly burgeoning print literature enabled the ghost story to thrive. Sustained scrutiny and criticism of the genre failed to have any effect on the marketability of the ghost fiction. It persevered in chapbooks, broadsheets, penny books, and shilling monthlies. The ghost fiction transuded adult imagination but its suitability for children was still being contested by editors and publishers of magazines. Ferrier-Watson claims that "the ghost story for children remained in a dubious position for most, if not all, of nineteenth century." (14) Although it might be so with British or American print literature, the scenario in Ireland seems to be a deviation to this trend. Several magazines such as *Duffy's*, *Young Ireland*, *Dublin University Magazine*, and *Shamrock Magazine* regularly published apparition narratives. The *Dublin University Magazine* was a 'literary and political' journal that included both fiction and non-fiction articles. The articles in the journal spanned across several topics from society, culture, religion, to literature. Among the articles were several anecdotal pieces about supernatural sightings such as the 'Awful and Mysterious Occurrence: An Authentic Narrative of a Dialogue between Sir Robert Peel and the Ghost of his Father,' of the February 1839 issue of the magazine. In actuality, the article was a political commentary on the Ascendency of the Protestants and the plea of the father to his son to uphold the cause of the Catholic Church. In the 'Legends and Tales of the Queens County Peasantry' in the September 1839 issue of the journal there was a long and informative article on the *Banshee* and the October issue in the same year was published the short story 'The Bewitched Butler.' The publication of legends and supernatural stories in the Irish magazines was a response to Protestant censure of the irrational and the fantastic.

Victorian ghost stories marked “the return of an old world and a taste of the new, their narratives steeped in a sublime imaginary past and yet neatly packaged as a cultural commodity alongside the latest fashions, advertisements, or new items.” (2018, p.4) It was a narrative born at the margins of two timelines that toyed with the idea of history and temporality. A genre that evolved at the crossroads of the old and the new, Neo-classical realism and Victorian commodity culture and sensationalism that catered to populism without descending into the outright frivolous and comic. The ghost story of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thus marked an interstitial position between the oral and literate cultures, between elite and popular literature. The interstitiality that marked the genesis of the form as we see it in its current state in literature also enabled the form to “capture the moments and its marginalized figures.” (O’ Brien and Stevens 2012, p.11) with characters being “written from outside the traditional conclaves of power and propriety,” (2018, p.4) indicative of the genre’s adaptability to discordant voices and the affective readiness for a culture to come to terms with the impact of the “enlightening but soul-destroying modern scientific positivism.” (5) As a result, it can be inferred that its adaptability to such varied interpretations also provided certain authors a platform for “contesting colonial histories and affirming the belief systems of indigenous cultures; and negotiating the tensions between the local, national, and global.” (8) Apparition literature originating in postcolonial societies have adapted the ghost story to textualize colonial experiences and associated trauma, but it has been limited to the area of adult literature. Postcolonial childhoods in children’s fiction remains an area of interest least examined.

Since this study is particularly interested in Bangla and Irish traditions as opposed to Anglocentric traditions in children’s ghost fiction, this chapter will read the

development of the form in England, Ireland, and Bengal, and show how these narratives (re)shaped the modern ghost fiction in postcolonial Bengal and Ireland.

3. The English Ghost Story

Peter Marshall, in his account of the medieval ghost stories, states how the apparition narratives settled "comfortably within a coherent, and pastorally explicable, theological framework." (2012, p.20) These were stories that catered to the "dogmatic orthodoxy" (2012, p.33) of the post-Reformation Catholic circles. Later, the English ghost story, retaining most of its fear of the 'Holy Trinity,' assumed a distinctive Englishness, discernible in Robert Aickman's 'weird tales,' especially in his suspicion of left-utopianism and a sense of estrangement with post-war modernity. Aickman narratives evoke affective, visual, and aural horror. The supernatural is situational. A case in point would be one of his strangest tales, 'The Hospice.' Maybury, a travelling businessman, runs out of petrol and in the dead of a night, stranded in a 'dark' and solitary place, seeks shelter in a hospice, the only place in his immediate vicinity. The name of the protagonist is also tell-tale, Maybury or 'May Bury;' uncertainty of life and death looms large on the character and the place where he seeks refuge. Very mundane things have the most harrowing effect on both the protagonist and the reader, like the 'look' of the lady who serves him food, the huge quantity of the food that is served, the lady's insistence on eating the entire portion as if chiding an errant child, evoking a sense of helplessness and the 'scream' he hears from the adjacent room elicit supernatural horror in Maybury, compelling him to leave. The horror in the repetitive, intangible, and ambiguous often mark the supernatural in the English ghost stories. 'The Willows' by Algernon Blackwood, for instance, evokes the same sense of spatial fear that is present in 'The Hospice,' the only difference is these spaces are usually free spaces and not enclosed. The fear in 'The Willows' is a fear of a piece of land encroaching on two

adventurers or that is how they feel every time they wake up in their tents in the dead of the night and feel 'voices' speaking to them although they are the only two people stranded on the island. They imagine the willows slowly and surreptitiously approaching them while they are peacefully asleep. It is also a test of the mind. The adventurers in the story are trying to stave off apprehension, fear, and annihilation by ignoring their fears, as if that is the only way this inexplicable, sinister force would be dissuaded. In the 'The Shell of Sense,' by Olivia Howard Dunbar the spectral seems sensorial and psychological but assumes a silhouette by the end of the story, signifying a veritable presence unlike the other narratives discussed. The ghost in the English story is almost always a shapeless, formless, psychic terror. Punter writes in "The English Ghost Story" that:

> it is worth emphasizing that in fact—or at least in the literary canon—ghosts have virtually always to do with fear, they are rarely reassuring, and the messages they bring, if they bring messages at all and provided we can hear, see, read, or understand the messages they bring, are only occasionally—as, for example, in the return of the war dead—of any cheer, (2018, p.179)

whereas in children's literature the ghost has a physical form. The adult narrator, assuming the naivete of the child reader, assigns a certain shape and form to the ghost, ideally to extract fear and loathing. Historically, British authors writing for children, such as Edith Nesbit, Kenneth Grahame, J. M. Barrie, and A. A. Milne romanticised and idealised childhoods where children were adult-like. British writers of children's supernatural fiction of the likes of Roald Dahl and Neil Gaiman constructed subversive childhoods but within idealised narratives like the child protagonist's denial of mortality in Dahl's *The Witches* (1983). Even Nobody, the feral child in Gaiman,'s *The Graveyard Book* (2008) must assimilate into normality leaving behind his 'home' in the 'graveyard,' relinquishing his supernatural consciousness for 'passport' to the world

without. Gaiman was inspired by Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and the narrative equates spectrality with the wild and the uncivilized, again reinstating a Victorian abstraction. This study proposes that the works examined form an anti-thesis to established Anglocentric models of children's apparition fiction. It also sheds light on the significance of the 'form' of the ghost in Anglophone fiction, that will be discussed in the ensuing section in relation to the Anglophone Irish apparition narrative and its association to the Swedenborgian concept of the 'spirit.'

4. The Irish/Anglo-Irish Ghost Story

The term 'Irish Supernatural' immediately reminds one of the Gothic. The Gothic tales of Bram Stoker, Charles Maturin, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Lafcadio Hearn boasts of narratives set in the dark Irish landscapes and obscure castles that subvert the linearity of space and time and unleashes a gothic instability within the prose that threatens to expose the very fragmentation of the modernist self. But there is another aspect of the Irish supernatural that not only qualifies a deeper understanding of the Gothic fragmentation of the self but also the apparition narratives of Le Fanu or Elizabeth Bowen that address the instability of post-colonial spectrality. Punter points out that:

> The invocation of the spectral in Irish literature is marked by the conflicting cultural, political, linguistic, and religious allegiances engendered by colonial history. For Anglo-Irish writers like Le Fanu or Bowen, the relation to Ireland and their claims to Irishness constituted unresolved questions for the literary imagination, and the ghost often served as an index of these anxieties. In one specific example, the Irish Revival drew upon Irish folklore and myth cycles, the Gaelic storytelling tradition, and Celtic prehistory to restore and express cultural autonomy, but the ideological differences between Anglo-Irish and Irish-Irish cultural nationalism meant that this reclamation of a rich indigenous supernatural hinterland proved contentious and divisive. (2018, p.8)

There were two aspects to these 'unresolved questions' in Irish literary imagination: the anxieties of the Protestant and that of the Catholic. James Walton in "Vision and Vacancy: The Fiction of J.S. Le Fanu" attributes the supernatural in Le Fanu's fiction to the social and political anxieties of the aristocracy, of which he was a member, to the decline of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. The Protestants' sense of betrayal and abandonment by the British in Ireland after the Catholic Ascendancy is at the heart of this anxiety and so is the fear of the loss of inheritance following the Tethe War (1830-38).[88] Spectrality in Le Fanu also has a moral/ethical undertone owing to the influence of the philosophy of Emmanuel Swedenborg on the author. In Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Madam Crowl's Ghost' a thirteen-year-old Mrs. Jolliffe recounts the haunting of Mrs. Crowl in the Applewale House, where she was once employed as the old lady's waiting woman. The 'white-and-black house,' (Fanu, p.2) with the doors and windows shut, a 'place so dark and lonesome,' (8) evokes spatial horror through a dominant trope in Le Fanu of the ruined castle or manor house symptomatic of the waning aristocracy and resultant anxiety among the Protestants who are now slowly becoming minorities. The young Mrs. Jolliffe accidentally uncovers a family secret that has rendered Mrs. Crowl mentally unstable. She had murdered and hidden the body of her step-son in a vault in the house. After her death Mrs. Crowl comes back as an apparition haunting young Mrs. Jolliffe while she lay sleeping in her room, to reveal the location of the unfortunate child who was lost years ago and never traced thereafter. The tenets of the Swedish mystic and theologian Emmanuel Swedenborg can be read in Le Fanu. Like the mystic, Le Fanu believed in the predominance of the Spirit over the body and endowed a 'form' to the Spirit. In the light of his philosophy, the return of Mrs.

[88] See "Vision and Vacancy. The Fictions of J.S. Le Fanu," (2007, pp. 125–126).

Crowl can be read as an expression of the 'moral freedom' (Dresser 2018, p.163) of her spirit self that is now, after her death, independent of her intellect and an expression of her religious calling.

Again, 'The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh' offers two versions of the same narrative. The stories in "The Purcell Papers" were first published in "Dublin University Magazine," under Le Fanu's pseudonym, 'the Reverend Francis Purcell of Drumcoolagh' between 1838 to 1840. [89] According to Sullivan, Le Fanu assuming the persona of a Catholic priest, gave him the opportunity to express such sentiments and sympathies with the Irish peasantry that he would not have been able to convey in public owing to his own religious inclinations. It is probable that the two versions arise from the religious conflict of the Catholic and the Protestant. In both versions, Robert Ardagh is a man of mystery, belongs to the upper-class gentry, has served in foreign armies, is or was in possession of a huge fortune, and lives in a Gothic castle on top of a hill. It is suggested that his wealth has been acquired through foreign means. In the first version he is not married and in possession of ancestral wealth that keeps increasing. He refuses to mingle outside the gentry except for one very dubious man who happens to follow him everywhere, even to the racecourse. The common people think this man is devil incarnate. Suddenly, this man leaves, and Robert falls into great despair. He sells his property and starts living an ordinary life. One fateful night, as witnessed by a servant, a mysterious hooded man visits him in his castle and demands something that he is not willing to offer. There is a struggle and Robert falls off the cliff through a rear door and dies.

[89] See Sheridan Le Fanu: The Purcell Papers, (1838, p.6).

In the other version, he oversees a depleting ancestral property. He goes to foreign countries to acquire wealth and returns after eighteen years. He starts acquiring lands in Ireland and betting at the races. He also gets married in the meantime. He finds himself a mysterious wingman, a Frenchman named Jacque who has a surprisingly strong hold on him. He leaves as suddenly as he steps into Robert's life and post his departure he falls into despair. It is suggested that he takes his own life.

The first version seems to be the Catholic version, where Robert is the owner of a thriving ancestral property and his actions and associations are suspect, and the second one, the Protestant version, where his property is in ruins, depicting the condition of the Protestants after the Catholic Ascendancy. In the first version Robert is killed, hinting at the persecution of the Catholics in Ireland and in the second, he kills himself, symptomatic of the Protestant's act of self-harm owing to their waning political power and financial well-being and a debilitating aporia, not knowing where they truly belong. The author leaves it to the reader to choose a side, if at all.

'The Ghost and the Bonesetter' is about mystery and hilarious confusion. Keeping with the Irish folk tradition where the mundane, the macabre, and the magical come together. The storyline is particularly compelling because it's a social satire critiquing the hierarchical relationship between the gentry and the peasantry in Ireland. In 'The Ghost and the Bonesetter,' the ghost of an Irish landowner visits a poor bonesetter in the hope of getting his bone fixed after dislocating it in a horse-riding accident, which had incidentally also claimed his life. It gives us a glimpse of the harmless, friendly banter between the protagonist and the ghost. The foul-mouthed squire, used to extracting the last penny out of the poor tenants in taxes when alive, must come back to the poor bone-setter as a 'spirit', earn his trust by calling him a respectable, industrious, sober man (when he is clearly drinking to pull him through the

night) to get him to perform the job, which is as good as left unattended. In the supernatural realm, hierarchies do not exist or are entirely inverted as the irony of the landlord-tenant relationship unfolds. Sullivan is of the opinion that Le Fanu is 'spoofing the spook' (11), which can be read as a mockery of Catholicism but also that of the Protestant gentry. The 'Ghost and the Bone-Setter,' is written like a supernatural folklore, the likes of which can be found in *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry (1888)* selected and edited by W.B.Yeats.

Therefore, although a Protestant ally, the works of Le Fanu are also reflective of the gradual disillusionment of the Irish protestants. His ghost fiction does not follow English models but creates its own complex precedent. Ascribing the spirit, a form and imagining the spirit as an extension of the corporeal self are central to the ghost fiction written for children. These narratives are characterised by their plurality and emphasis on 'dimensionality,' discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

5. The Anglo-Indian Ghost Story

The British officers who worked in India, settled with their families. They could never entirely integrate into the social milieu of the subcontinent. Miscegenation resulted in the formation of a distinct ethnic community, the Anglo-Indians. These children were born in India but racial difference with the natives culminated in a fractured identity in these people who were neither entirely British nor Indian. The Anglo-Indian ghost story explores these fractures and anxieties in both British narratives of Indian life and the existential anxiety of the Anglo-Indians. The Richard Bell Manuscript preserved at the British Museum plays out to the stereotype of traveller accounts of Englishmen who came to India and wrote about the strange and horrifying things they witnessed. This particular manuscript compiled in Ruskin Bond's *Ghost Stories from the Raj* furnishes the details of the travails of one named John Campbell between 1654 to 1667, and his

search for treasure in a house in 'Old Dilly,' 'Dilly being the anglicised version of Delhi, that leads to a chance meeting with the 'Divell,' mimicking the native pronunciation of Devil (Bond 2002, p.6). This treasure belonged to a Mughal emperor named Asaf Khan who is long dead but whose treasures, looted from the Hindu kings, lie underneath a Jaffir Khan's house. Campbell and a few other Englishmen agree to dig out the treasure in lieu of their share in the wealth. During this digging expedition a Divell appears and claims to be a former slave of Jaffir and the guardian of the treasure. He died guarding it and demands the Englishmen give Khan over to him so that he can enslave him and make him a 'gholam.' He also proposes the men return to their country instead of waging wars in his. In response, the English men try to frighten the devil with the Bible but the devil cannot do much and only rants as his powers prove ineffective on Christians or 'Xtians.' This excerpt from the manuscript shows the colonizer's lack of understanding of the religious complexities of the colonized and the 'ghostification' of the colonized people. "The Haunted Villages," by Lt. Col.W.H. Sleeman curated by Bond from the *Rambles and Recollections of An Indian Official (Vol1)* of the Bengal Army and Kipling's ghost story, "The Return of Imray," deals with the native's superstition as the colonizer's worst nightmare. "The Return of Imray" is the haunting tale of an Englishman named Imray who disappears from his bungalow, never to be found again. An officer, Strickland, comes to live in Imray's bungalow and is overcome by its eeriness. He requests the narrator to stay a night with him and the narrator hears voices coming from the wall. It is revealed that Imray was murdered by his native servant and his corpse was stowed away into the space between the roof and the false ceiling made of cloth that is usually seen in old bungalows. A superstition caused the servant to commit the crime when his son died after Imray had patted him on his head. "Chunia, Ayah" by Alice Perrin is again the story of a British girl growing up in

colonial India who is murdered by her native nanny Chunia because the girl, Dottie's mother, insults her by throwing slippers at her and in an act of retaliation she drowns the little girl. The spectre of Dottie haunts Chunia until she is forced to confess to her crime. These narratives evoke racial prejudice and horror in colonial literature. In comparison, Ruskin Bond's 'Ghost Trouble,' published in the Children's Omnibus, written for children is unlike any of his stories from the Raj. It is funny, enjoyable, and endearing at the same time. It is about a mischievous ghost but not one that is sinister, harmful, or ominous. *Pret,* which means ghost in Hindi, indulges in harmless haunting at Ranji's bungalow when the people from the corporation take down the *peepul* tree where he lived. He is the kind of ghost who will knock the hat off the *sahibs* head and place grandmother's spectacles on the stuffed pig's nose that is mounted on the bungalow wall. A homeless pret now seeks shelter at Ranji's. Eventually the family realises that the pret needs a home and wants to belong. They are reconciled with him. Orphaned as a young Anglo-Indian boy in India, the need to belong haunted Bond. Pret can be read as an extension of the author's own consciousness. Meena Khorana opines that Bond's ghost stories for children have a unique quality, "the ghost is not an evil being, but its behaviour is dependent upon his or her experiences while alive." (Khorana 2003, p.110)

Having traced the emergence and development of the Anglophone apparition narratives, this chapter sets out to define what constitutes the Anglophone/vernacular ghost story for children. Surprisingly, there is a dearth of academic inquiry in the sphere of Irish and South Asian studies on the supernatural in children's literature. Although Anglophone apparition narratives written for primarily adult readers have dealt with the anxiety of marginalisation, the 'ghost' as a marginalised figure in Anglophone children's fiction and its association with the young protagonist has constituted several

amusing narratives but they have never garnered serious academic attention, either due to their regional appeal or the authors' relative obscurity. The significance of the apparition narrative in constituting postcolonial childhoods and a child-centric approach to the understanding of identity, society, and nation as envisioned by an author whose own awareness of contemporaneity informs his literary voice seem to demand some attention. This study has identified this lapse and endeavoured to address it. This chapter will examine texts by Bengali and Irish authors of modern apparition narratives for children within a comparative framework to highlight certain parallels, which this study proposes could be attributed to their postcolonial consciousness.

6. The Ghosts of Bangla Fiction

The 'ghost' finds a special place in Bangla literature. Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay and Rajshekhar Basu (known by his pseudonym *Parashuram*), were known for their apparition narratives. The 'headless ghost' has been a subject of perusal in Chapter Three in relation to Mukhopadhyay's *Kankabati,* which was written for the juvenile readers. But both were primarily authors of adult literature. Since their stories were often comical and irreverent, they also appealed to young readers, especially in their preoccupation with the spectral. Amit Dasgupta attests that:

> Bengali literature boasts a robust and varied tradition of humour, satire and nonsense, from poetry of Isvarchandra Gupta in the first half of the nineteenth century to the somewhat later prose tales of Troilakyanath Mukhopadhyay. In the field of adult literature, its greatest exponent is Rajshekhar Basu of 'Parashuram' who composed not only social satires but at least one unique metaphysical fantasy about spirits and after-life. (Dasgupta 1995, p.88)

A case in point would be Rajshekhar Basu's 'Bhushundir Mathe or In the Grounds of Bhushundi,' a short story published in his collection *Gaddalika* (1922). We must understand that these stories were not only written for the purpose of amusement,

but they were also piercing political satires. It relates the story of Shibu Bhattacharya, a man unhappy in his marriage and abused by his wife, Nrityakali. The premise is reminiscent of the brahmin protagonist of Bengali folklore who leaves the house after being chided by the wife for being unable to provide for his family. His inability to control his wife turns him into a subject of ridicule in his neighbourhood. Frustrated, he travels to a faraway temple to offer oblations to the God, asking for Nirtyakali's early departure to the netherworld. This is again a comic deviation to the brahmin of folklores who usually prays to the God for riches; instead Shibu prays for his wife's death. Unfortunately, the prayers ricochet and after devouring a huge meal at *Hotel de Orthodox*, denoting that anything 'foreign' is detrimental to the common Indian's health, he finds himself, instead of his wife, dead and transformed into a type of Bengali ghost, the *Bramhadaitya*; the ghost of a dead Brahmin. The author then offers a theological explanation of the ghostly phenomena and says that atheists do not have souls. When atheists die, they turn into different kinds of gases. Among the *sahibs* or foreigners, the believers do have souls, but they are doomed for good as they cannot experience rebirth. After the *sahibs* die, they become ghosts and gather in a big waiting room. Their fates as ghosts are decided after a stint in the waiting room and based on their conduct, they are assigned hell or heaven. Since the *sahibs* enjoy all the liberties in their lifetime, after they die, they are denied all of it. This is a pun aimed at both western philosophy and theology and the colonizers privileged social status. To toy with the traditional narrative, the author whimsically alters between the third person and the first person. In this alternative narrative in the land of ghosts (where ghosts are free unlike in the real world where the humans are colonized) the *sahib* ghosts participate in the daily life of the native ghost with great enthusiasm. In fact, reverse colonization is a popular trope in Basu. In his story, 'Ulot Puran', which translates to 'the tale of the world upside

down', Basu depicts a futuristic India where the colonizers are trying to mimic the colonized. Englishwomen are trying to behave like Bengali women, chewing beetle leaves or *paan,* Englishmen trying to wear dhotis or the Indian alternative to pants or English students trying to muster pidgin Bengali. Sumanta Banerjee points out that:

> "Ulot Puran" therefore assumes particular significance in the literary discourse in India today. It greets us with two faces-one looking inward and the other outward. The outward face addresses the colonial regime, laughing at it by reversing its rule and reducing its members to the position of subjects, in a fantasy…In this inward introspection Rajshekahr Bose lashes out at an obnoxious tradition-the alliance of orthodox religious superstitions with unscrupulous political interests-shared in common by almost all the Indian political parties in those days." (2004, p.37)

These adult ghost narratives in Bengali also influenced modern writers such as Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Leela Majumdar and several other writers of children's fiction. Sadly, authors such as Mukhopadhyay or Basu (Bose) and their works have been forgotten by the present generation and they have truly turned into 'ghosts' of Bangla fiction.

7. The Ghosts of Martin Waddell and Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay

Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, a prolific writer, and a well-known name in Bangla literary circles, share two distinctive life events with the Irish author, Martin Waddell, which they both have said several times in interviews and public events, have had a huge effect on their lives and writing careers. They both started off writing for adults but later shifted to children's writing and that is how they have been remembered since. They were both products of turbulent times. The Troubles in Northern Ireland shaped and inspired Waddell's creativity and the Partition of India and Pakistan shaped Mukhopadhyay's. In the light of these co-incidental parallels in their lives and careers,

this reading assumes quite thought-provoking dimensions. Mukhopadhyay has also written several books for children. His first story, *Jal Taranga* or *Waves in the Water* was published in a magazine called *Desh* in the year 1959. His first children's novella was *Manojder Adbhut Bari or The Strange House of Manoj (1978)* that was also published in the *Desh* magazine and then was turned into a novella. He has also authored timeless Bangla classics such as *Pagla Sahiber Kobor or The Mad Kings Grave, Patalghar or The Underground Chamber, Nabiganjer Dwaitya* or *The Giant of Nabiganja, Hirer Anti or The Diamond* Ring, *Bhuture Ghori* or *The Ghostly Clock, Golmal* or *Confusion* and many others. It can be conjectured from the titles that they all have a fantastic premise. His narratives cover a wide range of issues such as social stigma, religious fanaticism, identity politics to science fiction and mystery. In this chapter, we will look at some 'fantastic' and 'ghostly' stories by Waddell and Mukhopadhyay for a closer look at the supernatural narrative.

8. Understanding the 'Ghosts' of Waddell and Mukhopadhyay

Popularly known as the author of several picture books for children, Martin Waddell began his writing career with a set of four comic spy thrillers for adults. These books give a rare insight into Waddell's use of humour in his works, especially those written at a later stage in his career particularly for children. An explosion set him on the path of authoring children's fiction[90]. He wrote his first book in 1969, at a time when sectarian rioting was taking place between the Catholics and the Unionists, and Belfast was the epicentre of the riots. It was during this time that an explosion Waddell witnessed led to a prolonged 'writer's block' and an opportunity to spend some time with his kids at home. That is when he developed his interest in writing children's

[90] See 'A little comfort for children,' by Anna Carey published in *The Irish Times.* (2004, 8th May.)

fiction. His first children's book was *In a Blue Velvet Dress (1972)* and it was also his first attempt at writing an apparition narrative. His first attempt was followed by *Sleepers on the Hill, (1973)* and *The Back House Ghosts (1974).* After this he wrote a series of shorter novellas for children. A lot of Sefton's philosophy on maturation, identity formation, and battling the odds as young people is reflected in his works for young adults, such as his trilogy, *Starry Night (1986), Frankie's Story (1988),* and *The Beat of the Drum (1989).* These works throw light on various aspects of maturation and constructing childhoods marred by violence and brutality. Although some of Martin Waddell's works, such as the above, can be categorized as young adult fiction, he is primarily remembered for his children's fiction and picture books. His books for the young are written in the vein of traditional fantasy narratives but they cater to the school-going children or pre-teens. His ghost narratives are based on the horror-humour conjunction, where the natural, the real, and the fantastic inter-communicate to critique absolutist notions imposed by the adult society.

In Sefton's *The Back House Ghost (BHG),* Ellen discovers the ghost of Margaret and forges an extraordinary friendship with her. *The Ghost and Bertie Boggin* (1980) (*GBB), Bertie Boggin and the Ghost Again!* (1988) (*BBGA)* and *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan* (1979) pivots around the relationship between a child and a ghost. *The Ghosts of Cobweb* (1992) has ghosts and children, uniting to save their village school. *Pagla Sahiber Konor* or *The Mad Sahib's Grave* (1987) (*PSK)* is based on a similar premise as that of *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan (GGB).* The central character, Haribandhu, is a school going boy, utterly disinterest in studies, confronted with his father's wrath. Bertie and Burun, the eponymous heroes of *GBB* and *GGB,* are both emotionally vulnerable as they feel alienated at home. Hari *from PSK,* on the other hand is admitted to a boarding school far from home because he failed to get promoted for the third time.

Whereas Burun and Hari have been excommunicated due to a failure, Bertie is silenced and rebuked when he attempts to communicate. Bertie and Burun encounter a ghost, and the chance meeting culminates in friendship and self-discovery. The illustrations of Bertie and Burun with their ghosts, depicted in Mukhopadhyay and Sefton's texts respectively, bear arrestive resemblance.

Figure 8: Bertie with his Ghost from *The Ghost and Bertie Boggin.*

Figure 9: Burun and Nidhiram from *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan.*

Again, the ghost is like a sentinel to the boy, Hari, leading him to his grave that some local miscreants are trying to identify because in it lies a priceless diamond that they are after. The primary difference lies in their immediate setting. *GBB* has a more urban setting; Bertie, his family, and his Ghost live in the city. *GGB* and *PSK* are based in rural Bengal, in an imaginary village or suburban place and so is *The Ghosts of Cobweb.* A local dacoit kidnaps Burun, hypnotizes, and imprisons him in a cave under water. Nidhiram, his ghost friend, informs his grandfather about the place where he is held by the dacoit, Habu, and at the behest of his grandfather, his maths teacher, Karalibabu, who also happens to be an ace swimmer, sets out on Burun's rescue mission. Habu's hypnotic spell on Burun is broken when he hears someone calling out the number thirteen. The memory of his failed maths examination brings him back to his senses. His math's teacher accomplishes the impossible. The use of dream sequences and phantasmagoria in this novella will remind one of Kankabati. The tale of Bertie is more of a domestic adventure because he is younger than Burun. His ghost wants him to understand that believing in something wholeheartedly makes that 'something' attainable. The friendless Bertie finds a comrade in the quick-witted and sagacious Ghost who fetches him his favourite Brandyballs from the high shelves in the supermarket and the kite that runs away on his birthday. The ghost also teaches him to 'believe' for the sake of others. It is interesting how the concept of 'belief' is treated in Waddell's fiction. Bertie suffers from several insecurities because he is a child and is always told that he is wrong, so the Ghost seems to imply that trusting his own instincts might be the trick to survive the adult word of scrutiny. Again, Hari's encounter with the ghost of the mad *sahib*, as he is popularly known to the people of Motigunj, is shrouded in mystery. The *sahib* cannot be sighted by everyone, only few people have seen him. Tublu, Hari's friend, informs him that no one knows if this *sahib* is a ghost or

a human being. This equivocacy marks the narrative. There seems to be an uncertainty when it comes to the characters of the *sahib* or Patalda, a mysterious man who becomes Hari's unlikely partner in his adventure. Patalda is a retired crook who seems to almost manifest out of thin air. He mysteriously enters Hari's room through an opening in the wall and happens to find him whenever he is in danger like the *sahib* who first appeared to Hari in the forest to save him from bullies. Although, Patalda is a human being unlike the *sahib*, it is hard to tell his character apart from a spectral appearance. Even in the description of a solitary night, the author purports something supernatural: "The moonlit night wrapped in fog made everything appear eerie and strange. It seemed as if it wasn't a real place but a kingdom from the fairytales." (Mukhopadhyay 1987, p.28)

The 'fantastic' works as a *narrateme* that enables the natural and the supernatural to coexist. It is almost as if the two are undifferentiated. The authors allow such plurality and differences to sustain throughout the texts. The child manoeuvres known (family/ parents/society/administration) and unknown (wild nature/supernatural creatures/bad people) forces that threaten its subjectivity in what can be read as an attempt to de-colonize these textual spaces from the established literary, semiotic, and social narratives that construct childhood based on certain absolutist values. These authors focus on the inner workings of a child's consciousness to construct their childhood experiences.

9. The Child

The cover of *The Back House Ghosts* (1974) (*BHG*) describes the story as a combination of a "bubbling gaiety with a ghost story that is both eerie and touching." It is a tale told with humour and empathy. Séance writing was extremely popular in Ireland. Julie Anne Stevens has written about the séance practices of Edith Somerville and Martin Ross in some detail. According to her, Elizabeth Bowen was inspired by

Somerville and Ross who documented their psychic experiments. She illustrates how these influences let to the modernization of the Irish short story in the hands of Bowen and how that entire tradition can be linked to the studies in consciousness and psychometry practiced by Anglophone ghost story writers. *BHG* seems to call on the tradition of séance writing as a medium of contact between the child protagonist, Ellen, and the ghost of Margaret. This is one of Sefton's earlier stories for children and several thematic conventions in this book reappear in his later works, especially those for young readers. Ellen is described as a 'misfit' because of her 'wondering' mind. In this intrusive fantasy, she tries to establish 'her truth' against the reality of the adult universe. Her character shows a lot of maturity for a child, but she does not behave like an adult, she is still quite childish in her pursuits. She does not readily give in to the vagaries of her mind. She has her moments of doubts and only after experiencing several supernatural moments she is convinced that a ghost is trying to establish contact with her. Although his later novellas for younger children such as *The Bertie Boggin and Ghosts of Cobweb* series are written in a similar vein, a lot of the psychological underpinnings of his earlier novels about ghosts are left out. Since *The Back House Ghost* was written for older children compared to the Bertie and Cobweb series, it falls within the fantastic-uncanny paradigm (Todorov) and the first reaction of Ellen at Margaret's presence is one of scepticism. Bertie and Cobweb series is closer to the fanatstic-marvelous paradigm (Todorov), which rationalises the presence of ghosts at the very outset, for instance, the real and spectral children study together in Cobweb Primary School.

Ellen is ambitious but confused. The sudden demise of her father has left her family scrambling for finances and her mother decides to run a hotel, Bon Vista. Since

it is a lot of work for a lone woman, her daughters, Bella and Ellen are expected to assist her. The narrator of *The Back House Ghosts* observes:

> Ellen had ambitions. She was going to keep more pigs than Billy Catchpole, be a world-famous actress, nurse the very handsome rich wounded, be a ballet dancer…but her twinkling feet were in danger of being worn down to the knee caps running up and down the stairs of Bon Vista. (1974, p.27)

The author's intervention in the novel not only sums up Ellen's vulnerable situation but also provides a reason for her many 'wonderings': it is an attempt to reinvent herself, to understand the mysteries of life. Her curious nature is a cause of concern to her family, and they are afraid she will get into some trouble because of it. She is also dealing with the loss of her father who left them when she was too young to understand. Yet, she remembers her father and wants to talk about him but understands her mother's hesitation whenever the topic of her father comes up. Unlike most ghost stories, the loss of the father or the separation anxiety does not return as the 'fantastic' intervention in her life – as a manifestation of a loss. Rather, the loss acts as an emotional catalyst that enables Ellen to empathize with the 'fantastic other.' Hari also experiences such vacillations of his mind. After he reaches his boarding school and his new neighbourhood, he must make several adjustments but the hardest is to confront the loneliness that surrounds him. His new house holds no appeal to him, and he wants to wander away into the wide world to seek new adventures. In a conversation with his father, before he is sent to the boarding school, he lists all the things that he likes to do, which includes, reciting poetry, climbing trees, throwing stones at birds and finally, running away from school. His honest responses are met with his father's ridicule. Yet again, Mukhopdhyay alludes to school as the place where the natural instincts of the child are suppressed and mocked like the parrot from Tagore's *Totakahini.* This allusion is further strengthened with an actual reference to Tagore in the text when his father

tells Hari that many great people used to hate studies and their special talent lay in running away from schools like the great Rabindranath Tagore. In Mukhopadhyay we see a harsh critique of the colonial idea of the school. Again, Cobweb is haunted by the ghosts from many centuries ago. The ghosts of Sir Richard and the Old Minister hark back to the colonial period. Sir Richard is described as bad tempered and authoritarian. There is an old school in Cobweb that the Education Board is trying to shut down. The children are informed about a scheduled inspection at the school from someone from the Board. This education board and system of inspection again is a colonial establishment. The historical reference is relevant here because the story states that the school was opened in 1853. Jackie states:

> Some of them were offended, being respectable ghost-people. They didn't see why any man from the City should come teaching them how to behave. Old ottie Barwistle was going to argue, I saw that coming, and so was Henry Wilks who is a very good-living-reading-his-Bible-ghost; but it wasn't the well-behaved ones I was worried about." (Waddell 1992, pp.15-16)

The allusion to the disapproval of the Bible-loving ghost child of the School Inspector's visit can be seen as a historical reference to the effort of the British administration to close a school where the Catholic children studied.

In several of Waddell's ghost stories for children, including *The Back House Ghost,* the concept of 'believing' in oneself and one's experiences play an important role. Although everyone else in the story is sceptical of Ellen's supernatural encounters, she continues to invest in her 'belief' to the extent of jeopardising her own life by the end of the story to arrive at the truth. In troubled times, when the adult world has forgotten the children, and left them to tend for themselves or let them die, it is a belief in the self that will enable the child a smooth passage to a more enlightened consciousness. Therefore, Waddell's vision of children in apparition narratives is

orientated by memories of The Troubles (1968-1998), observable in his other works of fiction, especially young adult fiction. The focus on 'believing' is a recurrent trope in Waddell and can be found in *The Bertie Boggin* stories. *GGB* was first published in 1980 by Martin Waddell, under his pen name Catherine Sefton. Due to the lack of much biographical information on Waddell, it is difficult to say why he used a pseudonym. In all probability, it was in the memory of his mother Catherine Semple who believed in ghosts.

The Bertie Boggin series describe the boy in the following words: Bertie Boggin was the smallest Boggin in a house full of Bogginses. He was smaller than his sister Elsie, smaller than his brother Max, and not quite as big as their dog, Tojo. (Waddell 1980, p.9)

As evident, at the very outset, we are introduced to the 'smallness' of our hero. The comparative paradigm is highlighted here to establish the 'disenfranchised' nature of Bertie. Further into in the novella, this trope is expanded where we realize that owing to his small stature, he is also the most bullied in the family. He lives under a constant shroud of fear: fear of Max and Elsie, who take advantage of his smallness, and troubles him at the slightest opportunity. In *BBG* Max and Elsie 'haunt' little Bertie. The metaphoric 'haunting' by those in a position of power becomes more terrifying to the child than the literal haunting of Bertie's *Ghost.*

Bertie has just learned that something big is going to come to their house and he wishes it to be a big elephant. Elsie reminds Bertie that in the event of the arrival of an elephant he has to move out of his room, again evoking a sense of dread at an impending 'displacement' for the poor child. He is trying to find a place for the elephant in the house and suggests the coal-shed. Max does not mince his words:

> You *fit* in the coalshed, Bertie. Your elephant would'nt, would it? Not if it is a great big elephant. So I think you have to move into the coal shed with your ghost, and the elephant can sleep in your room. (1988, p.6-7)

This story deals with many seemingly trivial anxieties of the child, but the concerns it addresses, social as well as psychological, have deeper significance. For instance, a child's fear of losing his room can be a psychological manifestation of experiencing displacement. The author could have imagined Bertie's forceful ousting from his room and taking up shelter in the coal shed with the Ghost as a figurative depiction of the uncertainties that haunted the adults and children alike during The Troubles. Therefore, it can be inferred that Anglophone children's literature is characterised by the use of child-centric approach and the horror-humour conjunction to foreground deeper concerns with history, society, and polity.

Approaching the matter of representation in the text, the 'unhomely' is depicted as a 'paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition' (Bhabha 1994, p.9). It denotes a displacement and a disjunction. Confronted by the news of his uprooting, the child experiences the 'unhomely' moment that "relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence." (9) Here, Bertie's condition can be a symbolic representation of the author's own experience of a similar kind of terror as a child. The horror-humour conjunction is used to normalize the presence of the ghost Bertie befriends. In Bertie's world, there are terrors far compelling that the ghost that merely wants company. Again, by using the home and outside trope so deftly, Sefton is redrawing the domestic space as the space of the normalizing, pastoralizing, and individuating techniques of modern power and police: the personal – *is*- the political, the world-*in*-the home." (15) The text might appear as a straightforward children's ghost story, but this study proposes that in it are embedded several signifiers that indicate a transposition of the complexity of the real world into

the simplistic narrative of domesticity and familial relationships. Max, Elsie and their father are representatives of the real world that denotes all the factors that control Bertie's domestic life. The only person apart from Bertie who can finally see the Ghost is his mother: the one who believes in Bertie. 'Believing' is the 'fantastic' that manifests the Ghost. Making his mother, an adult, believe in something that he is convinced of but that nobody else seems to believe, he reverses the dominant narrative of the adult worldview. The ghost comes as a reassurance from the past into the present to help Bertie re-evaluate his expectations and bring about a change in everyone so that they start believing in Bertie in the same way Bertie believes the *Ghost*.

Similarly, *GGB* by published in the year 1979, three years prior to the publication of *GBB*, begins with the following: Burun felt like an idiot after he manged to score a dismal thirteen in Mathematics. (Mukhopadhyay 1979, p.9)

Scoring well in Maths, which is a subject deeply revered by educated Bengalis, has through the ages been associated with smartness and intelligence. So, when Burun scores a mere 13 out of 100 in his finals, he is faced with the greatest fear of all: the fear of 'failure.' An overwhelming and nagging fear that is even bigger than the fear of 'ghosts.' As an aftermath to this event, which is seen as a catastrophe by his teachers and family members alike, he is shunned by one and all. This part of the story is reminiscent of the good boy/bad boy dialectics proposed in Bangla readers that reinforced the Benthamite model of Panopticon for the school going children of colonial India. After Hari sees his school for the first time in *PSK* he says with sarcasm, "I have not seen such a safe school building. It's a huge white building. Its surrounded by high walls. It doesn't look like a school; it looks like a prison." (1987, p.13)

Ellen, Burun, Bertie, and Hari are initially represented as characters that populate the margins of adult discourse. They are constructed such that they are given

very little opportunity to articulate themselves. They must live according to the rules set by the adults or endorsed by the government. Ellen does not want to work at Bon Vista but her family is poor and she is fatherless and their only means of livelihood is the hotel that her mother cannot run by herself, so circumstances force her to 'grow up' prematurely. Burun's and Hari's failure to perform well in school set them at odds with the social and institutional expectations. They might be good in other things but their lack of interest in bookish education makes them seem foolish and small. Bertie, on the other hand, is bullied by the dint of his size and age. Nevertheless, the supernatural is a reinforcement of selfhood in the child who has so long been 'othered' within oppressive power structures. So, when Elsie and Max do not believe that Bertie has taken two scoops of the ice-cream because he would be sharing one with the Ghost, his spectral ally encourages him in the following words:

> Doesn't matter. After all, you have eaten *both* the ice-creams now, haven't you? And Max and Elsie may know how to count past four, but they don't know much about ghosts, do they? You are the expert on ghosts around here.
> Yes I am, said Bertie, I know almost everything there is to know about ghosts. (1988, p.78)

The readers can feel the confidence brimming in Bertie and although the ghost knows he could say a whole lot more about ghosts to Bertie, he only smiled his ghostly little smile. Hari too surpasses everybody's expectations when he is promoted to the next class in his school at Motigunj. He saves his friends and confronts an evil gang that was after the *sahib's* diamond. The episode assures him of his strength and intelligence. When his father, impressed with his annual report, asks him to return home he decides to stay back and complete his education.

10. The Adults or Adult Like

Ellen's disbelieving older sister in *The Back House Ghosts*, and her sustained attempts at ridiculing her imagination, create an interesting backdrop against which the narrative is played out. Since Bella herself does not experience the supernatural, she refuses to legitimize Ellen's. Just to bring out the contrast, Bella's character is pitted against Victoria's, who is portrayed as a confidante of Ellen. She is not as cynical or critical of Ellen as Bella. Bella is also extremely wary of Ellen's 'wondering' and curious nature and so is Mrs. Bailey. So, when Ellen assumes she has encountered a ghostly presence she does not deem it wise to involve her mother. She tries to enlist her sister's support, but Bella laughs it off. When for a brief time Bella does see Ellen trying to write something with her pen that she claims someone else is making her do, Bella dismisses it instantly and makes fun of Ellen. In *GGBA*, the narrator emphasises upon the environment of hostility at home by using 'cannibalism' as a metaphor:

> "I am the Chief Cannibal," said Max, "I go around eating people."
> "What people?" asked Elsie.
> "Bertie," said Max
> "Oh no," said Bertie
> "Polite dinners don't answer back," said Elsie
> Bertie runs to his mother for refuge but she is too busy fixing the kitchen sink to notice Bertie. And Bertie asks, "Are you dead?" (1980, p.9)

Spurned by his mother Bertie seeks refuge in the coal-shed at the back of the house and that his where he befriends the *Ghost*. Here, the paradox is reflected in Bertie's rhetorical question asking whether his mother is indeed dead or alive when she ignores him, since the dead to him seem more alive than the ones who are truly living. The child's awareness of his disentitled state of existence is highlighted. Likewise, the narrator of *GGB* elaborates the situation at Burun's house:

> After scoring thirteen in maths, everyone has become silent at home. No one is talking to him. Neither his mother, nor his younger brother, Gurun nor younger sister Beli. He had once requested Beli to scratch his back and Beli had said, "Father has asked me not to mingle with you. You can rub your back against the wall. That will suffice for you! (1983, p.12)

Clerarly, Burun's ignominy knows no bounds at this chastisement. To seek solace and solitude Burun runs away to *Gosain Bagan*, an inhospitable swamp in their village, which people do not generally visit due to the fear of wild animals.

In plain words, the 'uncanny' evokes a sense of unease when a familiar thing suddenly seems unfamiliar. Traditionally, home is supposed to provide a sense of stability, security, and familiarity to the child. But in these instances, the children do not feel 'safe' at home; they are simultaneously, 'at home' and still 'not at home.' This then defines the 'fantastic' here and not the expected incursion of any supernatural elements. Bertie' being moved out of his room can result in the 'uncanny.' Hari trying to adjust with his new life in Motigunj and its eeriness can result in the same sense of disjuncture from the familiar environment. Encountering the supernatural character is not the first appearance or realisation of the 'uncanny' for the children. The 'swamp/forest' in *GGB* and the 'coal-shed' in *GBB* are symptomatic. Both the forest and the coal-shed are not only associated with the 'uncanny' but also with the 'maternal,' the source of life. If read psychoanalytically, it marks the 'temporary' displacement of the protagonists from a space that they thought was familiar to one that was unfamiliar but felt 'more like home', signifying that their space of refuge feels more familiar than their home. This return to the 'maternal' signifies a return to their primary/unfragmented consciousness.

People who are older than Bertie try to impose their reality on him. When Bertie tells Max and Elsie that he has befriended a ghost, they don't believe him and complain to their father, Mr. Boggin:

> "Bertie got black and Mum had to wash his clothes with him in them and he said he was talking to a ghost, but he wasn't because there aren't any, are there? Said Max
> "Of course not" Mr. Boggin said, sniffing to see if he could find out what was for tea.
> "Bertie is a little liar," said Max. (1980, p.15)

Bertie's mother starts believing him after she finds him in possession of Brandyballs that were placed in the highest racks at Supermac. Although, Mr. Boggin still refuses to concede:

> "There is no ghost, Edna," said Mr. Boggin sternly
> "I have never heard such nonsense. Bertie is making him up because he has no one of his own age to play with when he isn't at school," (1980, p. 25)

He absolutely fails to explain the mystery of the Brandyballs and yet he does not agree with Bertie or Edna. When Bertie's mother tries to convince him further, he declares with a ring of finality in his tone that he does not believe in ghosts and that should suffice it for her to draw this conversation to a close. He shows Bertie and his mother their place.

Mr. Boggin is reminded of the ghost's presence a couple of times, either by his wife or by Bertie himself, but he cannot bring himself to believe in such irrational things. Even Elsie and Max also experience some 'unnatural' presence, but they do not acknowledge or admit it to Bertie. Unfazed, Bertie perseveres. The narrative revolves around Bertie's attempts at establishing 'his truth' against that professed by his family. In Bertie's consciousness it is only his mother who is aligned to his truth, but the father and siblings are distanced. As such, it can also be seen as a manifestation of Bertie's Oedipus complex and sibling rivalry, which are recurrent tropes in folk narratives and fairy tales.

11. The Fantastic Other

The role of the 'fantastic' reveals itself through the rejected and marginalised child's restoration of faith in himself through the supernatural agency. The impact is more psychological than magical. The magic, as in folklore and fairy tales, does not take place at a metaphorical level but a metonymical one. In *The Back House Ghost*, the 'fantastic' does not come from the outside, but it comes from within the narrative; its vestiges are always palpable to the protagonist, but the recognition does not happen right away. The 'fantastic' seamlessly enters the narrative, thereby metamorphosing[91] the narrative. The toing and froing between reality and unreality creates the suspense in the narrative but not any sense of 'fear' or 'terror.' When Ellen informs Bella that a ghost is communicating with her, showing her things that 'she' wants her to see, her elder sister asks Ellen if she is scared because she does not seem like it; Ellen tells her that she isn't. She tells her the thought of it sometimes feels scary, but she is unable to feel any real fear. It is the ghost of Margaret that tries to reach out to Ellen first. Margaret's first attempt at reaching out to Ellen is marked by an altering of reality. Waddell dedicates an entire chapter to this moment where Ellen is unable to see the sky through her window. She could only see the back of the wall of Bon Vista and the window to the back bedroom through which she could only see a rose but not the sky. The familiar surroundings of Ellen become unexpectedly unfamiliar giving rise to the 'uncanny.' Since differentiation of the real from the unreal becomes almost impossible, the element of fear is allayed. The next time Margaret tries to send a message is by making Ellen's pen write a note to her. She is never quite successful in the attempt and Ellen has to abort the process midway, but she manages to convey a few words. It is

[91] See Section 3.1.

Ellen who deciphers the entire message on her own and finds a way to help her. Margaret representing the 'fantastic' other is as marginalized as Ellen. She was in love with a man convicted of murder and had eloped with him. But to keep their secret safe she could not reveal her plans to her own father, whom she loved dearly, and who died thinking that his daughter had ended her life by plunging into the sea where her lover had also disappeared. Since both Ellen and Margaret have unresolved histories with their fathers, they can both see, understand, and help each other although their communications are often interrupted or incomplete. One day Ellen wakes up from her sleep, flustered and pale. Her sister asks her if there is some matter with her and she says:

> I don't, I…well, for a moment there I felt…I felt as if I was someone else. I had a dream…you wakened me out of it. I was coming down the stairs…and for a moment there I felt that the dream had been true…only it wasn't. I was me…awake. (1974, p.31)

And, later in the story she says:

> And it wasn't like, well…*ghosts*…at all. It was as if I'd come into a room with a real family in it…*real* people…and it was as if I was one of them, and they were expecting me, and wanted me to be there. (1974, p.101)

In "Constructions in Analysis," (1937) Freud explains how the hallucinatory psyche works in an individual who doesn't expect to see themselves in their own reflection and conjure up someone like the self but not quite and he wonders if this has anything to do with the individual trying to evade time, retain youth or to find in the mirror the look of the original mother. Ellen, Bertie, and Burun already have a fragmented self-image. The ghosts they see are the reproductions of their own consciousness, but it is somewhat altered. Their minds manifest someone that is not

them but alike, indicating a return to the original mother. Hari's sighting of the *sahib* is a reproduction of his colonial consciousness. It can be read as Hari trying to hypostatize the 'colonial' past that continues to influence his present. The colonial legacy is such that it has perpetuated into every aspect of postcolonial life, society, language, governance, literature, and educational policies and institutions. Hari is a victim of the very system and a prisoner of those institutions. That the *sahib* is a projection of the colonial past is inferred from the historical information the author provides in the text. The *sahib* is also known as the *neelkar sahib* who had a huge mansion in the village, which has now turned to ruins. It shows that he was associated with indigo farming in colonial India and had amassed considerable wealth during the British Raj. The legend of Motigunj says that on account of the discovery of the *sahibs* grave and the acquisition of his cross which has the precious diamond on it, the spirit of the *sahib* will cease to exist. The *sahib* is the past that Hari must confront and make peace with. But no one, not even Hari, can recover the cross, although the *sahib* himself leads Hari to his grave on multiple occasions. The author seems to convey that the past will never cease to be, it has been subsumed in the postcolonial consciousness and it will come back to haunt from time to time. Hari's subjectivation takes place during his last sighting of the grave and the realisation that he has reconciled with the past for a better present.

The humans and the ghosts are part of the same consciousness. For instance, the BrandyBall episode from *GGB* brings this to the fore:

> "I like Brandyballs," said Bertie
> "Bertie likes Brandyballs, Edna," said the Ghost.
> But Mrs. Boggin didn't hear either of them
> I want Bradyballs,' said Bertie
> Bertie wants Brandyballs," echoed the ghost not very hopefully.

> Mrs. Boggin paid no attention, and so the Ghost decided to do something about it. After all, Bertie was his best friend. (1980, p.24)

Here, we see both Bertie and the ghost suffer the same fate. They are not heard. Their 'minority' voices fall on the elderly deaf ears. Similarly, Burun and Nidhiram, the ghost, are united in their disappointment in themselves and their urge to perform and outshine. Burun has to excel in studies and Nidhiram has to make Burun and other humans be afraid of him. It is a matter of shame that he cannot elicit fear in humans, not even a little boy. In the story, we are also introduced to a robber, Habu, who used to be quite notorious at a point of time but was outsmarted and detained by a village cop and was forced to serve time at the prison. Also, there were rumours that many people have seen him riding a tiger into the forest. This man was about to be released from the prison and he was planning revenge on all the people who played a role in his imprisonment, which unfortunately included Burun's grandfather, a local Ayurvedic doctor. Burun happens to learn from Nidhiram that he not only terrorizes people but also has magical powers with which he can control the ghosts. So, Nidhiram rues that once Habu is released from prison he will not be able to help Burun anymore because he would be too busy running errands for Habu. When Burun asks Nidhiram what he intends to do if Habu asks Nidhiram to tear off Burun's head, the author writes, "Athough Nidhiram is a ghost, he started sweating profusely" (70). He said restlessly, "Please do not say such horrible thing"… " I really love you but if he commands, I will have no other alternative. (1979, p.70)

In an instance from the novella, Nidhiram complains to Burun's grandfather about his terrible body ache for running around at Habu's behest and requests him to prepare some herbal medicine for the ghost community. It is an incident that shares a familiarity with the Ghost from *GBB,* who tells Bertie how sad he is because he has too

many hauntings during Hallow'een and will not have any time to have his own party, although he likes parties very much.

12. The Society

The social milieu plays an important role in these narratives. The child interacts with the 'fantastic' or 'fantastic other' at the outskirts and borders of society. These interactions are also social responses. Ellen's humble family, loss of a parent, and lack of family support draws her into the 'fantastic' vortex. Although she does not seem to have a choice in who reaches out to her, she can always deliberate on her will to act upon it. She chooses to follow Margaret because she feels she must, and she wants to. She sees no malevolence in Margaret's entreaties. Although it is juvenile fiction, *The Back House Ghost* alludes to several socio-political affairs in Ireland. Peadar McShane, the lover of Margaret, dies in a land feud. The year is mentioned as 1889 when there were several land wars and clashes between farmers and tenants in feudal Ireland. Peadar, a land agent kills Sir John Duvalier by accident, in a feud over a piece of land. Margaret helps Peadar to hide in the back house while the entire county was searching for McShane. McShane and Margaret made an elaborate plan to elope by pretending to die of drowning in the sea. Her ghost haunts the back house because she could never tell the truth to her father. Similarly, in *GGB,* Burun is the product of a society that is extremely strict, regulated, divisive, and parochial: a society where the school segregates its students based on their performance in the annual exam. It is reminiscent of the Brahmanical patriarchal social structure. So, on the occasion of a cricket match at school, the students who have passed are pitted against the ones who have failed their final exams leading to harmful competition. It is the pressures of the society that compels Burun to appeal to Nidhiram's supernatural powers for deliverance. As is

evident, Nidhiram himself is also reeling under the same kind of performance pressure in his own community. In *PSK,* too, class differences are depicted. The author describes the neighbourhood of Gopal, Hari's friend, somewhere at the borders of Motigunj; an old, congested, and filthy colony. Gopal's house is old and the furniture is broken unlike Hari's privileged upbringing as a doctor's son.

The ghost as the child's alter-ego in a way depicts a dehumanisation of the protagonist. Margaret is a ghost, and it is through Ellen that she speaks. Margaret's presence permeates Ellen's vision and automatic writing. Ellen is the conduit because by being dehumanised she has become an extension of the 'fantastic other.' The first - person narration does not presuppose events or pass judgements. It lays out the details and allows Ellen's voice and thoughts to construct her own narrative about what must have happened to Margaret. Therefore, by claiming the narrative and triumphing over the odds, the agency is given back to the disentitled. It also takes place through reverse historicization that gives rise to humour. For example, in *GGB,* the author introduces the foreign owner of a tea estate, Mr. Thomson. The dacoit, Habu, has kidnapped his son and demanded a huge ransom. To everyone's surprise he pays the ransom without much resistance. It is said that after losing his wife a year ago the bereaving *sahib* seems to have lost all material cares on earth, clearly trivializing, or subverting the traditional portrayal of the British in an Anglophone text.

In *GGB,* Burun and Nidhiram must act together to resist the colonial mindset of the adults. This mindset is projected in equating a child's acumen and success to performance in schools. The natural proclivities of the child are trivialised and ridiculed. The school thinks that losers in the class will also lose on the fields. The author emphasises the irrationality of such presumptions because the team of losers are,

in actuality, excellent at sports; the probable cause of their disinterest in studies in the first instance. David Roas states that:

> The fantastic story has always come to us from the same perspective: the human voice, 'the of the protagonists-a victim of those undesirable encounters with creatures from the other side-or that of an external or neutral narrator but who is nevertheless placed in a homogenous place to which the reader also belongs… (Roas 2018, p.100)

Roas examines the works of Spanish writers such as Patricia Esteban Erlés and Miguel Ángel Zapata who subvert these traditional narratives by giving a voice to those that come from the 'beyond.' Alterity is re-inscribed into these narratives. Both Waddell and Mukhopadhyay use this technique in their children's fiction. Since the purpose of the ghost in this narrative is not to instil fear but to destabilize the narrative and unsettle the reality. This 'voice from the beyond', which implies "humanising" the 'Other' and "reducing their otherness" suggests a reversal: the child is dehumanised and relegated to the periphery and ghosts, who appear from the periphery, are humanised in the depiction of their woes which are same as that of the child protagonists they meet. The human and the non-human become inseparable and the dimensions between them are dissolved. This is best described in *The Ghost of Cobweb* when Jackie says," We've got good ghosts, as ghosts are concerned, they are still people, like anybody else. It is just that the world around them has gone a bit wonky, and peculiar." (1992, p.10) In this story the ghosts are humanized to reflect upon the discrimination that they face because they are ghosts and they are held responsible for anything that goes wrong in Cobweb.

The narratives have an equalising and egalitarian approach to characterization. Elders and rouges are considered with empathy in *GGB.* Although his father restricts Burun from playing longer than usual in the evenings after his poor performance in Maths and enrols him in Karalibabu's math tutorial, for which he must travel every day

for a really long distance, he does not chastise Burun harshly when he sees his report card. Instead, he says, “Even I was not very good in mathematics during my school days. “Although I never scored eighty or ninety, I did not have much difficulty scoring a forty or fifty.” (10)

Burun’s grandfather has faith in Burun, no matter what others say. He is the only person who doesn’t ignore Burun after he fails his finals at school. Even Habu, the archvillain in *GGB,* is presented as a very promising young boy who turns delinquent due to too much parental love. In *PSK,* Patalda is a crook but he is described as a good man who comes to the rescue of the ‘outsider’ Hari when he first arrives in Motigunj.

In the same vein, the otherwise strict Mr. Boggin rebukes Max for calling little Bertie names and offers him his blackberries. The soft interior within the façade of the strict exterior of Mr. Boggin is also highlighted in the text. Even Mrs. Boggin, who initially distrusts Bertie tries to make up for her behaviour and listen to Bertie’s side of the story.

The inadequacy of language to construct certain realities is reinforced in the narrative. The Ghost and Bertie do not require a common language to communicate. Bertie has just started P2 and is still learning his alphabets. Ellen and Margaret communicate through signs. In *GGB,* Mukhopadhyay resorts to sporadic use of English words, such as ‘kneel down’, condolence meeting’, ‘world record’, and ‘interesting’ in the Bangla lexicon. This is an instance of semiotic subversion and appropriation of the language of the ‘colonizer.’ He also makes use of Hindi words in his texts, as in *PSK,* to highlight the cosmopolitanism inherent in the worlds he constructs for children. The use of the horror-humour dialectic aids the process of subversion and narrative porosity between dimensions and binaries. In every society, within established power structures, there are those who are othered, peripheralized, and marginalised. The children, it can

be said are ‘signifiers.’ They stand for the minorities and the hunted, like Sheila from *The Grey Goose of Kilnevin.* The ‘fantastic’ offers them the hallucinatory moment of looking into the mirror and seeing themselves, only slightly altered. The consciousness that is now fragmented must be reconstructed for the subjectivation of the child. The children must look within, in their ability to believe, convince, and exercise their will power to restore the consciousness and resurrect the narrative. When Habu hypnotizes and incarcerates Burun, Nidhiram, the ghost philosophises, “If only Burun can use his will power to overcome the hypnotic spell cast on him by Habu, can his life be saved, or else there is no other way. “(93)

As Homi Bhabha argues there comes a point in time where we identify ourselves with the ‘other.’ This causes a ‘split’ that culminates in the return of the subject as an ‘agent’ to negotiate or interrogate its situation. This effects the process of individuation. The supernatural lies in this ‘split,’ this disjuncture. It necessitates a reconstitution of the lost narrative.

The act of humanization of the ‘uncanny’ and the individuation of the child-hero also presents a strong critique of narrative, linguistic, and social structures. Various social customs are mocked, whether it is the right to obsessive parental control, or such stark generalisations that a boy who scores thirteen in maths must be stupid. Mukhopadhyay reinstates that Burun’s stupidity is just a social construct because he is the same boy who had enquired of his maths teacher if no two things in this material world are identical how can one added to one equal two, establishing that he is anything but a dimwit. In *BBGA,* the Ghost is critical of Mr. Boggin and his lack of participation in household activities such as hoovering and the habit of slouching behind the newspaper when Mrs. Boggin is inundated with household work. In *The Ghosts of Cobweb,* Jackie laments:

> Cobweb isn't much of a place, because there aren't many people in it, not more than two hundred, not counting the ghosts (or we would count them, if we could spot all of them at once, but they are on and off ghosts, because the Education Board doesn't, and the Board pays for the school. (1992, p.7)

This passage makes one wonder if the author is talking about the ghosts of the children who went missing or died during the Troubles, hanging about "where their crossroads used to be." (13)

Children's literary criticism has always vouchsafed the complexity of children's literature and its potential to assimilate and allegorize adult content. In this case, the essence of postcolonial fantastic literature lies in the way the texts construct post-colonial societies.

Thus My Story Endeth, The Natiya Thorn Withereth: Conclusion

> "Thus my story, endeth,
> The Natiya-thorn withereth.
> "Why, O Natiya-thorn, dost wither ?"
> "Why does thy cow on me browse ?"
> "Why, O cow, dost thou browse ?"
> "Why does thy neat-herd not tend me ?"
> "Why, O neat-herd, dost not tend the cow ?"
> "Why does thy daughter-in-law not give me rice ?"
> "Why, O daughter-in-law, dost not give rice ?"
> "Why does my child cry ?"
> "Why, O child, dost thou cry ?"
> 'Why does the ant bite me ?"
> "Why, O ant, dost thou bite ?"
> Koot ! Koot ! Koot !" (Day 1883, p.16)

The traditional Bangla fairy tale always ends with the nonsensical poem about a *natiya* thorn withering or so thought Lal Bihari Day when he adapted the fairy tales in his book. But in an analysis of the folk verse, R.C. Das has pointed out the deep agricultural and psychological implications of the verse. Since Bengal has always been an agricultural community; its art, literature, festivals, and rituals have all revolved around agriculture or agricultural practices. The *natiya* thorn signifies corn here, an essential crop in Bengal. If read carefully, the poem refers to a series of consequences if the child is not taken care of properly. Neglect will result in the child being bitten by an insect, which in turn will make the child cry, which will result in the mother's distraction and delay in household duties of cooking and serving the man of the house; therefore, the man will not tend the family cow and the cow will destroy the crop leading to hunger and economic downfall of the agrarian society. Correspondingly, Das also adduces, "The child in the present verse represents the child in all men. Thus, the verse indicates Oedipus complex and sibling jealousy are age-old psychological problems that haunt

the human mind for indirect satisfaction of the underlying unconscious wishes," (Das 1985, p.86) of a society that is suffering from a separation complex borne out of a colonial psychosis. Similarly, seemingly simplistic folk lyric prevalent in Ireland and sang to a child often forms associations with the agricultural and the psychological. As in the folk poem, "A Stolen Child:"

> Away with us, he's going,
> The solemn-eyed ; He'll hear no more the lowing
> Of the calves on the warm hill-side. Or the kettle on the hob
> Sing peace into his breast ; Or see the brown mice bob
> Round and round the oatmeal chest.
> For he comes, the human child,
> To the woods and waters wild,
> With a fairy hand in hand,
> For the world's more full of weeping than he can understand (Yeats 1888, p.60)

The fairies alluring the child to the 'fairyland' on the pretext of a peaceful life in the Otherworld away from his real mother, household and farming duties, family, land and 'all the world's weeping' that he does not understand symbolize the fear of homelessness and death in the postcolony. These are but a few of the examples where one can see the folk imagination of two nations developing out of shared homosocial experiences, agrarian consciousness, and those fears and anxieties which plague the postcolonial society. This dissertation is an attempt at unveiling this shared psychological scaffolding in works of children's writers who have re-imagined folklores and fairy tales. They have contemporised them to give rise to what has been proposed in this study as the 'postcolonial fantastic;" constructing childhoods that denounce conventions and reclaim the colonial narrative to inscribe anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian significations within Anglophone literary traditions. Beginning with the growing influence of the fantastic in Irish and Bengali print cultures, the re-visioning of

mythological tales and legendary exploits of national heroes, the association of the nation and the maternal/anti-maternal, the use of the food/fertility imagery and preoccupations with exile and homelessness to the constructions of postcolonial childhoods in modern fiction, this dissertation has engaged with cultural essentialism, intersectionality, gender and polemics of representation in Anglophone/vernacular narratives. Finally, it has demonstrated the importance of examining children's literature of otherwise overlooked or rarely consulted writers from postcolonial cultures to understand how their literary consciousness could have developed in the self-same manner and resulted in a common symbolic language of articulation irrespective of racial or ethnic differences or variegated experiences of colonisation.

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