

# Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World

Edited by

Shirleene Robinson

Simon Sleight



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Edited by

Shirleene Robinson

*Macquarie University, Australia*

Simon Sleight

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## Note

1. A review of the symposium by Eureka Henrich is available: 'Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World: Historical Perspectives', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 77, no. 1 (2014), 337–39.

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# Introduction: The World in Miniature

*Simon Sleight and Shirleene Robinson*

Outside Buckingham Palace in London, a celebratory vision of the 'British world' is embodied in stone. On a central pedestal, a venerable Queen Victoria resides on her imperial throne, flanked by statues of Truth and Justice. A winged Victory, together with figures of Courage and Constancy, rises above, while the reverse of the pedestal displays Motherhood in the tender image of a seated woman – a youthful Victoria, perhaps? – sheltering three infants. Four bronze lions (a gift from New Zealand) stand guard at Victoria's feet, alongside Naval and Military Power, in muscular yet effortless repose, and associated fountains and reservoirs. Across the water, some distance beyond, a series of concentric gates and allegorical statues by British sculptors depict imperial dominions.<sup>1</sup> These outlying figures are all notably youthful, the Australia statues especially so. Animals accompanying each national child further emphasize the apparent rawness of the imperial offspring. Canada nurses a seal and a bulging net of fish, South Africa tackles an ostrich and monkey, West Africa escorts a cheetah and Australia coaxes a large ram and kangaroo. Such associations contrast with the stateliness and settled bearing of Victoria and her immediate companions, whom the callow youths presumably hope to emulate. Forever petrified as children, and positioned to face their 'Mother Queen', the dominions orbit the imperatrix.

The Victoria Memorial, completed in honour of the late Queen between 1902 and 1924,<sup>2</sup> tells us a good deal about how Britain imagined its empire in an era of imperial power. Notions of core and periphery are prevalent; the imperial family is seen to exemplify a host of ideals; hierarchies of authority, age and deference suffuse the whole enterprise; whiteness is cherished. Adding flesh and bone to such imperial conceptions, this book is about the way childhood and youth were lived and constructed across the British world from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. It aims to make a timely intervention into two strands of history hitherto seldom connected. First, the book expands understandings of the British world by considering the position within this global network of young subjects in the making.<sup>3</sup> Second, it contributes to the history of childhood, which in

turn reveals much about broader social attitudes, institutions and transformations. In doing so, the study constitutes the first detailed history of the place of children and young people within the largest imperial system the world has known.

Children and young people, both British and Indigenous, both locally born and migrant, were central to the imperial project, burdened with its hopes and anxieties. Their experiences and the ways in which they were represented exemplify the processes through which 'Britishness' was expressed and contested across the globe. The cultural influence of the British world was expansive: even those countries not under Britain's direct control were impacted by its imperial reach, ideologies and trading networks. Children and young people focused – and in some instances manipulated – the imperial practices generated by this exertion of authority and cultural power. Recipients of the decidedly mixed blessings of British rule, they were at once petty imperialists, migrant 'pioneers', active resisters and dispossessed victims. 'Pawns of empire' (in the phrase of literary scholar Rosalia Baena),<sup>4</sup> young people found themselves in the front line of imperial undertakings, moving within parameters set for them by adults, yet often exerting a much greater degree of autonomy and agency than the analogy of the chessboard implies.

The 'British world', now interpreted beyond an outdated trope of centre and margin,<sup>5</sup> refers to the imperial system built on mass migration from Britain to places such as Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and beyond. It includes sites of formal and informal empire and those countries with a British majority as well as a substantial British minority among their citizens.<sup>6</sup> This definition acknowledges that individuals living in locations as disparate as the West Indies, Singapore or Kenya may well have felt themselves to be part of what Tony Ballantyne has recently described as 'the webs of empire'.<sup>7</sup> Such a conception also recognizes that the British world was fluid and adaptable as well as nodal, relying on interconnections between settlers and across colonies and nations, usually (but by no means always) via the metropole. Britain influenced the British world, it has been argued, but it too was transformed by its colonies, absorbing their inflections and hosting their people (see Figure I.1).<sup>8</sup>

The majority of chapters in this collection consider childhood and youth from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. During this period, and especially between the 1880s and the 1950s, the British Empire reached its apex and the span of the British world was at its most extensive.<sup>9</sup> At the peak of the British Empire's geographical spread in 1922, it occupied over one-fifth of the earth's surface. *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World* complements and extends existing scholarship on this imperial world.<sup>10</sup> Just as men and women experienced colonialism differently, diversity also characterized children's experiences of living within the spheres of British influence. Relations of empire played out within the institutional

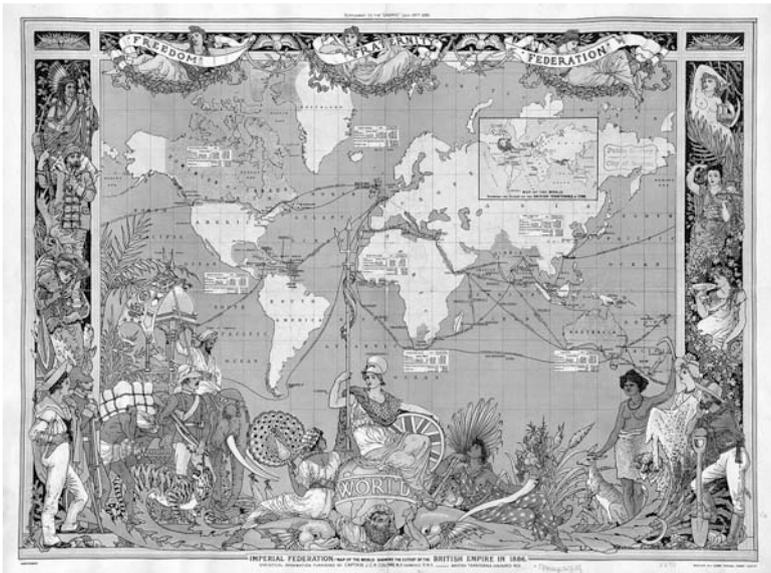


Figure 1.1 Walter Crane, 'Map of the World Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886', *Graphic*, 24 July 1886

Courtesy Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA, Creative Commons License.

frameworks that governed individual comings of age, young people's daily lives revealing much about the way the British world functioned on both a local and global scale. These relations of empire also operated within more intimate spaces like the home, hospital or classroom. Whether colonized or colonizers, young people absorbed the effects of imperial power.

### The one day of the year?

From the late 1890s until 1958, the annual Empire Day celebrations underscored the centrality of youth – and indeed race – to imperial ideals. Each year, hundreds of thousands (possibly millions) of children across the British world were marshalled on the late Queen Victoria's birthday towards public articulation of their place within the imperial system. A gala event in Preston in northwest England in 1907 was emblematic: crowds of adults looked on as children representing different imperial nations paraded and moved through sequential routines. 'Heaven Bless the Maple Leaf Forever' read one banner, captured by film footage of the day; 'Bond of Union' stated another, held aloft by local schoolchildren performing stand-in roles as their Australian and New Zealand cousins.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting a particular moment in imperial history, two Irish banners appeared on the Preston showground

that year, followed by a giant bobbin ('Success to Cotton') and representations of edible produce from the colonies. Children either dressed as farmers, sailors or fisher girls or else daubed with blackface as Indian or South African 'natives' were just some of the other constituent parts in a huge undertaking weeks, if not months, in the making. By 1909, the London *Times* could note approvingly that Empire Day was 'now an established festival throughout the British world'; so it was that children gathered from the West Indies to Australia, from Hong Kong to Canada, to wave Union Jacks, sing patriotic songs or learn about imperial kinship.<sup>12</sup> And intriguingly it was in Canada, not Britain, that Empire Day had originated as a celebration of the late Queen Victoria's birthday.<sup>13</sup> Here then was an example of patriotic dominion-based Britishness informing 'home' culture.

To what extent the children participating in Empire Day *thought* imperially is a question with only elusive answers. While youth is a universal phase of life, it yields comparatively few written documents of sufficient acuity to generate confident conclusions on such matters. Tentative (albeit carefully reasoned) supposition is therefore one of the commonalities of the history of childhood, with subsequent analyses often revealing as much about adult intentions as youthful agency. Occasionally, however, historians themselves have offered reflections on their own imperial upbringings, or bequeathed evidence for others to examine. In his 2001 book, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*, historian David Cannadine includes a final chapter drawing upon his personal memories.<sup>14</sup> Born in Birmingham, England, in 1950, Cannadine belonged 'to the last generation of Britons for whom their empire was something like a real presence in their formative years and imaginative life'.<sup>15</sup> In the wake of the 1953 Coronation of Elizabeth II, the young Cannadine played with miniature soldiers and golden coaches, while his sister possessed a doll that she named 'Queenie'. 'A vague impression that there was a greater Britain' percolated early childhood, Cannadine notes, gradually coalescing as his father related stories of his time with the Royal Engineers in India and discussed the overseas artefacts in the family home.<sup>16</sup> Cannadine recalls a large world map, with its swathes of red, in his primary school, 'Empire Made' goods and produce for sale in the local shops, distress at the death of Churchill and dreams of travel to foreign lands. Without asking too many questions, 'the empire seemed good and friendly and big and strong, and I simply took for granted that it was right that Britain had it'.<sup>17</sup>

What those around him referred to as 'trouble' overseas began slowly to chip away at this conception from the mid-1950s. Yet Cannadine's picture of empire remained 'backward-looking' and largely frozen in time, supported by Whiggish histories and boys' own tales of imperial endeavour.<sup>18</sup> Studying Commonwealth history at Cambridge offered little on decolonization (by then largely an accomplished fact), and only after graduation in 1972 did 'the receiving end of the empire' at last come into clearer view. Until then, Cannadine admits, a settled and mostly blanched view of the British Empire

held firm.<sup>19</sup> Now a leading academic, Cannadine is keenly aware that an air of pervasiveness can all too easily creep in to one's account of a particular phenomenon. Words have a capacity to compress the endless variety of lived history, leaving only peak experiences and masking counter-trends or more static moments. To this end, Cannadine concludes his reflections by adding an important caveat. 'I was not "drenched" in empire', he observes; 'I was a child of empire, though empire was only a small and distant part of my childhood'.<sup>20</sup>

The intermittent but abiding presence of imperial patterns in David Cannadine's youth was probably characteristic for other British children,<sup>21</sup> a tentative conclusion supported by the findings of a large-scale project examining the teaching of history in British schools during the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> Understanding the myriad ways in which empire impinged on consciousness and structured – or had scant effect upon – individual upbringings elsewhere within the British world will require considerable further scholarship. Even for the peak experiences of Empire Day and Trafalgar Day (the latter commencing in 1895), John Griffiths has questioned the penetration of imperial thinking.<sup>23</sup> Poring over Australian and New Zealand school logbooks and educational material provided for teachers prompts Griffiths to conclude that Empire Day did not capture popular imagination before 1914, that the message of Empire Day was sometimes lost amidst half-day holidays and teachers' attempts to instil discipline, and that abeyance and abandonment characterize the story well before the Second World War.<sup>24</sup> Such findings offer an important supplement to the arguments of Bernard Porter in *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2004),<sup>25</sup> and a counterview to numerous scholars who contend that imperial-era literature served as a 'major means of indoctrinating the young'.<sup>26</sup>

What then to make of our cover image for this book, shown in full extent in Figure I.2? Were these children, pictured in 1941 in Adamstown, a suburb of Newcastle in New South Wales, bucking a trend in marking Empire Day with such elaborate preparation? What effect did the outbreak of war have in reviving – perhaps temporarily – older imperial patterns of belonging? And how did imperial thinking touch these girls and boys (as well as non-white children) during the remainder of the year, if at all? Additional research here is sorely needed, particularly on the last of these questions. Oral testimony in Britain, supplemented by the examination of children's own exercise books, suggests that Empire was widely taught until the 1970s, but only ever as part of a wider curriculum and bequeathing at best patchy memories of deeds in foreign lands. One child, born in 1938, recounted that the British Empire was 'almost always spoken of in CAPS' at primary school; another, born ten years earlier and later a teacher, recalled like Cannadine a classroom globe displaying in pink portions of the world that 'we owned'.<sup>27</sup> Schoolwork produced in Britain from the mid-twentieth century also includes bold statements such as 'Many of the colonies were poor and thinly populated' prior to the arrival



Figure 1.2 Adamstown Public School, Empire Pageant (1941)  
 NRS 15051. Reproduced with permission from State Records NSW, Australia.

of the British and ‘In British rule it was wrong to ill-treat the natives’.<sup>28</sup> Other interviewees, however, stated that they had ‘NO understanding of Empire’, or that imperial history was barely taught to them at school.<sup>29</sup> Accosting a number of juvenile street sellers in late 1850s London, Henry Mayhew encountered similar diversity in awareness. Asked what he knew of history, one boy, aged 13 or 14, reeled off some significant dates for Queen Victoria and stated knowledge of the battle of Waterloo (but little of Trafalgar); a second slightly older boy admitted that he had heard of ‘Straliar’ (Australia) and Ireland, yet struggled to remember the name of the Queen, despite having seen her in person, and possessed ‘no notion what the Queen had to do’.<sup>30</sup> The third young costermonger approached by Mayhew rebuffed his questions with a slight stammer, stating ‘It’s no use your a-asking me about what I thinks of the Queen or them sort of people, for I knows nothing about them, and never goes among them’.<sup>31</sup>

If general knowledge of the British world and its protagonists was uneven at mid-century among poorer youth, important research by Mary Guyatt demonstrates that British middle-class children of succeeding generations engaged with the non-European world in manifold ways. Some of these interactions were conscious, others less so. Material goods from the colonies fell into children’s hands, stage plays and books depicted overseas lands and their people, make-believe games such as ‘playing Indian’ were popular and personal encounters with settlers and sojourners from outside Europe occurred with surprising frequency.<sup>32</sup> These children had a role in empire-making, Guyatt concludes, although their active participation in

territorial expansion and administration was obviously limited. Yet there was no 'straightforward process of socialisation', no clear alignment of childhood activities and future adult endeavours.<sup>33</sup> Years of fruitful research lie ahead in order to further test such findings, especially for the British world outside Britain and for the children of the working classes, about whom we know so comparatively little.

## Categories of youthfulness

'Children'; 'childhood'; 'youth': these and other age-related terms are imprecise social markers, historically contingent and thoroughly entwined with factors including gender, ethnicity and class. Until the close of the nineteenth century, social commentators lacked a psycho-sexual conceptualization of adolescence, with the category of 'the teenager' yet to be conjured. Legal definitions of age boundaries varied,<sup>34</sup> and although societal processes of age stratification and scheduling accelerated during the late 1800s, their impact remained irregular.<sup>35</sup> In the absence of more thorough understandings of the period labelled 'pre-adulthood' or its intervals,<sup>36</sup> anxious discussion centred in this era upon imperial youth broadly defined, the perceived 'boy problem' in England and overseas and the relative merits of the colonial girl, who was often thought (under the influence of climatic factors) to reach sexual maturity in advance of her British cousins. Underscored by concern over the development of incipient colonial nationalism, constituent parts of Britain's empire were often figured as precocious children, subject to stop-start adolescence.<sup>37</sup> Age was hence a fundamental factor in British world discussion.

Because age was a highly fluid category during the waxing and waning of the British world, this book adopts a flexible approach in defining its charges. Our concern is not solely with 'childhood' as an ideology nor with 'children' or 'youth' as elastic categories of experience; instead we examine the processes of representation and growing up across a wide range of historical settings within the British world,<sup>38</sup> with considered attention given to the impact of colonial context, class, caste, ethnicity and gender, as well as relative age.

## Networks and historiographies

'For too long, imperial history has focused on the links at the top among the imperial elites; we need to dig deeper if we are to understand the vast array of networks that held the British World together.'<sup>39</sup> In the binding process discussed – for adults – by Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis in *Rediscovering the British World*, children's own imperial networks can also be shown to have played a role. The example of a journal-based global exchange

column for young readers is illustrative in this regard, serving further to help shift attention from the peak experience of Empire Day to more quotidian and less orchestrated interactions among the imperial 'family'. From the early 1900s, a stable of magazines published by the Pilgrim Press in London (incorporating similar content but the location-specific titles *Young England*, *Young Australia*, *Young Canada* and *Young New Zealand*) facilitated something akin to an imperial 'swap shop'. All manner of articles – usually pictorial views or foreign stamps, but also including mechanical toys, sporting goods, musical instruments, a pair of homing pigeons and even a six-chambered revolver – were offered or sought for exchange. In 1903, a correspondent living in Sunderland requested written picture postcards in return for Australian or Southern Nigerian stamps. A reader from suburban Christchurch, by contrast, sought old volumes of the *Boys' Own Paper* in exchange for coins and curios. In Battersea, London, a subscriber solicited 'a Crocodile's and poisonous Snake's Egg', while one C.N. Ramaswami in Madras asked for stamps and postcards from overseas to add to an existing collection. Hugh Fletcher in Natal also offered to swap postcards, this time depicting South Africa, for foreign examples; Harold Vanstone in Ontario proposed an exchange of stamps with boys in other colonies.<sup>40</sup> An intriguing instance, for young imperial subjects, of 'globalisation from below',<sup>41</sup> the exchange column found space alongside regular magazine articles on the activities of the Boys' Empire League, a global organization (founded in 1900) which encouraged the youthful reading of books on overseas territories and boasted some 7,000 members of its Colonial Correspondence Club by October 1904.<sup>42</sup> The writing of letters for the purpose of making pen friends or to initiate the exchange of personal possessions tethered the domestic realm to the wider lived and imagined domain of overseas territories. As well as suggesting the webs of a more youthful empire than that hitherto studied, the sending and receiving of letters and parcels supports the argument that imperialism functions in 'contact zones' of intimacy, in small spaces as well as on wide frontiers.<sup>43</sup>

Aimed at privileged boys attending public schools (and perhaps wishing to exchange silver sleeve studs),<sup>44</sup> the magazines of the Pilgrim Press helped present a racially stratified view of the British Empire. White children in settler societies were commonly understood to represent the future of the British line, progeny who might either prosper or fail in new climates. The colonial environment, frequently sub-tropical, was often depicted as a potentially degenerating or contaminating influence, becoming a subject of considerable concern for elites.<sup>45</sup> Social Darwinism in the late 1900s and eugenic sentiment in the early twentieth century both contributed to a rhetoric focused on creating a race of healthy, young, virile – and, most importantly, white – settlers. Episodes of warfare further exacerbated fears colonists held for the future of the white race, which in turn carried direct implications for children in the British world. In her pioneering 1978 article,

historian Anna Davin drew out the connections between imperialism and mothering, noting particularly the increased focus placed by the British state on women with children in the aftermath of the second South African War.<sup>46</sup> Other work on the topic has drawn similar conclusions.<sup>47</sup> Analogous to this process was the increased state focus on white children across the British world in the years before the First World War.<sup>48</sup> In this sphere, a slow shift occurred from religious and voluntary interventions into young people's lives towards nationalist, compulsory and state-sponsored endeavours, which in some countries included compulsory military training for adolescent boys.<sup>49</sup> Child reformers backed the switch of emphasis. 'Saving' underprivileged white children from the presumed evils of city streets had by 1914 become as much an affair of the state as a matter of individual salvation.

Indigenous children were also subject to particular scrutiny under British imperial rule. Racialized assumptions entailed that they were viewed as a threat to the purity of newly emergent societies and subject to increased official surveillance and intervention.<sup>50</sup> Such assumptions, coupled with anxieties over sexual mixing or 'miscegenation', also impacted heavily on children whose ancestry was both indigenous and non-indigenous. In Canada and Australia, racial policy was structured around the removal of mixed-descent children from their family groups, while Maori children in New Zealand were placed in state institutions in far greater proportions than white children.<sup>51</sup> These and similar practices reveal the extent of beliefs about the malleability of children across the British world.

As stated earlier, we draw in this edited collection upon two distinct historiographies: histories of the British world and histories of childhood. Both fields of study have developed in exciting directions over the past three decades. As Saul Dubow points out, by the 1980s historiography pertaining to the field of British imperial and Commonwealth studies was in dramatic decline. Post-war decolonization, mixed with the insights of scholarly post-colonialism, revealed the omissions and weaknesses of traditional imperial historiography. Despite this, British-based historians were slow to adapt to the new theoretical developments and regional scholars based in former dominions were more preoccupied with producing their own national histories than with transnational studies.<sup>52</sup> It was not until the publication of the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire* between 1998 and 2000 that regeneration was offered.<sup>53</sup> The history of childhood, while not subject to the same hiatus, has emerged recently in comparative terms, to date broaching transnationalism only with caution.<sup>54</sup>

In the opening years of the twenty-first century, perhaps as a result of a new range of British histories that considered national developments in international context, an upswing of interest in the delineations of the British world is evident. In New Zealand, James Belich and Tony Ballantyne have moved the analysis beyond the bicultural and placed that nation's

past in the context of the wider British world.<sup>55</sup> The work of these scholars demonstrates the rich possibilities that can eventuate when historians move outside the boundaries of the nation-state. Belich subsequently authored the keystone 2009 text, *Replenishing the Earth*, a study which investigated the settler boom and transmission of ideas, information and goods between Great Britain and North America, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand between the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>56</sup>

Belich's study is something of a standard-bearer for a range of innovative work, published in the last decade or so, considering the specificities of the British world and its complex interconnections. As is fitting for a field of scholarship that considers the British world as a whole, many histories interrogating the meanings of this global network have come from parts of the world formerly connected to Britain, or from overseas scholars who have moved to Britain to pursue their careers. In their 2003 collection, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich explored the sense of identity – the 'cultural glue' – that bound British communities around the globe.<sup>57</sup> The same year in Melbourne, Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre produced an edited collection, *Britishness Abroad*, which considered Britishness as a global phenomenon.<sup>58</sup> Buckner and Francis's 2005 collection, *Rediscovering the British World*, published in Calgary, likewise argued for British imperial history to begin *outside* Britain. The former colonies of Empire were answering back.

So raw was this field of study at this time that Buckner and Francis felt compelled to include a disclaimer in their text, informing readers that 'scholars who study Britishness and believe in its historical significance do not necessarily identify with it or approve of imperialism in any form'.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps they had in mind an early criticism of British world scholarship: was this refigured imperial history – to borrow the phrasing of a charge levelled at the membership of company boardrooms – a little too 'pale, male and stale'? Would the 'subaltern' be allowed to speak, or were the series of well-attended British world conferences, which toured around the former dominions from 2002, akin to the Royal yacht *Britannia* undertaking an extended imperial farewell?

Since 2005, the field of British world history has grown exponentially and addressed some of these concerns. In 2008, this expansion was reflected with the establishment of a specialist journal, *Britain and the World*, founded by the British Scholar Society. The publication of important studies such as John Darwin's 2009 *Empire Project, 1830–1970: The Rise and Fall of the British World System* further demonstrates the maturity of the field in recent years. Darwin himself notes that British world history has:

begun to reverse the long neglect suffered by the settler societies in the wider history of empire. It has also helped to restore a long-forgotten perspective of vital importance: the passionate identification

of Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, Newfoundlanders and South African 'English' with an idealised 'Britishness'; and their common devotion to 'Empire' as its political form.<sup>60</sup>

Research on the British world has also benefited enormously from the work of scholars concerned with the gendered, racial and sexual dynamics of imperialism. In particular, scholars including Anne McClintock and Catherine Hall have interrogated colonial racial orders and the position of women as both colonizers and colonized.<sup>61</sup> Ann Laura Stoler has also conducted important work on processes of differentiation in colonial settings.<sup>62</sup> These studies and others have helped flesh out more closely the ways imperialism functioned in intimate settings and between (and across) categories and locations. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, for example, have pointed out that empire was lived across everyday practices, and have queried – like Cannadine – the extent to which people thought imperially, 'not in the sense of political affiliations for or against empire, but simply assuming it was there, part of the given world that had made them who they were'.<sup>63</sup>

While the body of historical scholarship on the British world is now substantial, precious little attention has been directed to the ways children were shaped by this world and how they in turn manipulated it.<sup>64</sup> This is a significant omission, as both the meanings attached to childhood and the experiences of children across the British world shifted substantially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Western nations, the position of children changed from one that emphasized their economic value to one that insisted upon their vulnerability and need for protection and care.<sup>65</sup> From the 1830s and 1840s onwards, the prevalence of working childhood waned as it was seen to violate the right of children to a protected period of dependency.<sup>66</sup> The introduction in Britain and elsewhere of universal free schooling from the 1870s and its later compulsory enforcement further altered the context in which children lived. Changing attitudes to child-rearing, together with the increasing influence of childhood 'experts', also proved influential. To varying degrees, these fluctuations were transmitted across the British world, and Chapter 3 in the present volume explores this phenomenon in greater depth.

Standing out as a detailed transnational survey, Shurlee Swain and Margo Hillel's 2010 text, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915*, is to date perhaps the most impressive study of childhood across the British world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>67</sup> As indicated by the title, the authors are primarily concerned with child rescue discourse, rather than with the lived experiences of children and the construction of childhood for the majority of children falling outside the rescuers' purview. Nonetheless, in accounting for the circulation of knowledge about children within a British world frame, the book offers a great deal. Studies of youth movements such as John Springhall's

early account, *Youth, Empire and Society* (1977), Robert MacDonald's *Sons of the Empire* (1993), Nelson R. Block and Tammy M. Proctor's edited collection, *Scouting Frontiers* (2009), and the work of Kristine Alexander and Mary Clare Martin on the international Girl Guide movement also provide valuable insights related to childhood in the British world (the last of these on the often neglected role of girls).<sup>68</sup> Another pioneering study, by Fiona Paisley, has considered indigenous involvement in the trans-imperial child movement and the implications of this for histories of gender and race in settler colonies in the early twentieth century.<sup>69</sup> Histories of child emigration from Britain to the colonies reveal further connections between imperial thinking and the role of children, and suggest that transnational approaches to the history of young people in the British world in this period are most profitable.<sup>70</sup> Additional material relevant to this collection can be obtained from national histories of children and childhood and youth, though such texts are somewhat limited in number.<sup>71</sup> Research continues to emerge especially strongly in Australia, Britain and Canada, while less detailed attention has been devoted to other parts of the British world (though this is now also changing).<sup>72</sup>

Historical studies that are more tangential to the study of children and childhood also assist in understanding the lived experiences of young people and the world they inhabited. As alluded to above, work specifically on parenting and mothering has revealed the intense state surveillance under which mothering and child-rearing has fallen historically across the British world.<sup>73</sup> Texts on the family such as Elizabeth Buettner's *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (2004) and Emily Manktelow's *Missionary Families: Race, Gender and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier* (2013) are particularly noteworthy here.<sup>74</sup> A 2013 edition of the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* entitled 'Imperial Relations: Histories of Family in the British Empire' evinces the increased recognition historians are affording to the space of the family in maintaining an imperial order. Esme Cleall, Laura Ishiguru and Emily Manktelow assert that 'family – broadly defined – operated as a key site of imperial processes, a social and economic unit at the heart of colonial life, and a building block for imperial relationships and identities'.<sup>75</sup> Work exploring non-British imperialism has similarly confirmed the importance of domestic family structure to the functioning of empire.<sup>76</sup>

While a growing body of historical scholarship has explored the social constitution of race and gender across the British world, a sustained examination of *age* and empire – even within the peak years of 'the age of empire' that Eric Hobsbawm identified running from 1875 to 1914 – is hence clearly overdue.<sup>77</sup> Such a consideration of the relationship between childhood in the British world meets Anne McClintock's call for a more nuanced understanding of social power and identity.<sup>78</sup> As Steven Mintz points out, age, like gender, is simultaneously natural and constructed, yet it is more flexible as an historical category.<sup>79</sup> Age, as discussed above, is also thoroughly

embedded in social and cultural systems of power and authority. In addressing the lived experiences of children and young people and the associated social constructions of childhood across the British world, this collection asks whether they reflected broader imperial values. Furthermore, our essays question how age should be read as a category of difference across the British world.

## Reading this book

*Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World* features explorations of discourses of childhood and examinations of young people's own lives. Readers are invited to consult in concert its 15 chapters, which are clustered into six thematic parts as outlined below. Mobility is a recurring theme throughout, relating both to the circulation of ideas and to movements of individuals and groups of people. The agency of youth is another motif – our authors treat young people as historical actors, by no means in control of the balance of power in society, but nonetheless able to exert degrees of autonomy. Some of our contributions are *about* the British world as a system; others are set *within* particular British world locations and alert to comparative contexts. The selection is intended to provide a balanced account of the way childhood and youth were conceived and experienced in different settings, at various historical moments, from the mid-eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries.

Youth is not a 'fifth estate', an entirely separate group within society. The important interrelationship between children and adults is addressed in the first of our six parts. Ranging from youthful interactions with rulers, to exchanges with overseers and professional experts, this part of the book examines hierarchies of knowledge and power. Shurlee Swain opens this discussion in style, teasing out the links between the reign of Queen Victoria and the claims made in child rescue literature for advancement of children's causes. In examining how and why the Queen's name was invoked, the chapter assesses what kinds of childhood were being advocated and seeks to identify the legacy which such constructions left in the shaping of child welfare policy across the British world.

British colonial families in India from the eighteenth century to the end of the British Raj often employed an Indian girl or young woman, called an *ayah*, as the fulltime caregiver or guardian of their young children. Sometimes a child herself, the *ayah* assumed total responsibility for the lives and wellbeing of the British children in her care from infancy until age five to ten, when the young colonists were usually sent to England with an *ayah* as escort.

Once in England, *ayahs* faced radically altered conditions and the very real prospect of abandonment. Suzanne Conway's chapter recounts the *ayah's* story in part through an art-historical approach, and considers the questions

it raises concerning racial constructions, the colonial experience and the post-Rousseau construction of childhood.

S.E. Duff's analysis rounds out the first part of the book by assessing the introduction of Truby King's mothercraft movement to South Africa during the 1920s and 1930s. Originating in New Zealand in 1907, the Babies of the Empire Society in consultation with King opened a Mothercraft Training Centre in London in 1919. From here, nurses trained in scientific motherhood and child-rearing established mothercraft centres and clinics across the British world. Mothercraft opens a window onto the construction of a particular model of white, imperial childhood. This chapter argues that mothercraft's attractiveness to South Africa's child welfare societies illuminates both how science was mobilized in the name of improving the health of young white children, and the limits of the appeal of particular kinds of Britishness in the British world.

'Rites of Passage', the second strand of the collection, explores more intensively the movements of children and young people across the British world. In her chapter on early nineteenth-century imperial childhoods in Scotland and Madras, Ellen Filor investigates the experiences of 'British' children born in India on their return to the metropole in the Georgian period. The case of the Brunton family provides an in-depth study of global childhood and chimes with some of the themes raised in Conway's analysis of *ayahs*. Using the familial letters sent between Scotland and India, Filor illuminates the decisions of East India Company soldier James Brunton to send both mixed-race and 'white' children back to his brother Alexander in Peebleshire, Scotland. A comparison between these two sets of children affords an opportunity to interrogate the meanings of legitimacy, orphan status and race.

Mobility of a different kind concerns Claire L. Halstead. In order to shield them from the horrors of the Second World War, over 6,000 British children were evacuated to Canada between 1939 and 1940. The evacuation depended upon Canadians' willingness to assume full responsibility for evacuees for the war's duration. Canadians' motivations varied, yet were consistently rooted in war and imperial rhetoric. Evacuees' letters illuminate their wartime experiences and highlight children's ability to fashion their own narratives of being uprooted. This chapter contributes to the study of evacuation and the historiography of wartime Canada and also reconsiders Canada's place within a changing British world. Accepting British child evacuees temporarily reversed the expected imperial roles, with Canada adopting the symbolic part of parent, rather than child-like colony.

In his analysis of migration for the purposes of education, Timothy Nicholson demonstrates how students from East African countries transformed their circumstances and the wider realm of the British world during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Using relatively privileged positions in their homeland but denied access to further education, students worked to

obtain their own educational opportunities and scholarships. These students moved throughout the British world as they attended educational institutions in such diverse places as India, the United Kingdom and the United States. Establishing their own transnational networks, young East African men and women took advantage of new local and international rivalries and tackled housing issues, poverty and racism. Their endeavours allow for an important examination of late colonial and early postcolonial African youth and their relationship with local issues and global paradigms of authority.

'Indigenous Experiences' form the core theme of our third part of the collection, set within colonial contexts including Australia, Bengal and Africa. Commencing with an act of conflagration, Shirleene Robinson investigates the use of Aboriginal child labour in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia, focusing on the ways that many Aboriginal children actively attempted to oppose their exploitation by deploying imaginative and adaptive strategies of resistance. Labour represented one of the key ways that Aboriginal children and European adults interacted in this period with thousands of Aboriginal children providing crucial assistance to European adults. The extraction of this labour came at a significant cost to Indigenous children, who were often injured or left in poor health, psychologically and physically, as a result of the experience. Undertaking acts of resistance plunged Indigenous child workers into a world of possibilities and peril in their attempt to seize back power stripped from them by their adult employers.

Satadru Sen's chapter, by contrast, works more at an ideational level, drawing on the writings of an influential educator-polemicist, Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, to examine the discourse of modern conservatism in late-nineteenth-century Bengal. It highlights the place of modern and 'Western' discourses in the formulation of conservative projects of familiarity, child-bearing and childcare, and the tensions between conservatism and tradition felt by a deeply anxious colonial elite. It argues that these meanings came to be located in the norms of intergenerational interactions within the self-consciously Indian family, and to be articulated in a language of education, sickness and racial survival. Re-educating the young to new habits and reinterpreted traditions offered a potential solution, Bhudeb believed, so too imagining the family as a modern instrument of pedagogy, scientific living and health. Tradition itself hence came to be constituted by the healthy family and its normative education.

In Mary Clare Martin's chapter on the foundational years of the international Guiding movement, indigeneity is again to the fore. The movement, which was officially established in London in 1910, originated from the imperial experiences of Robert Baden-Powell. The impact of Guiding spread quickly beyond Britain's shores though, with overseas companies proliferating rapidly in the first decades of the twentieth century. Young people themselves played a significant part in the establishment and persistence of

the Guiding movement. The rise of this movement during a high period of imperial dominance entailed that issues of race and inclusion were contested in a variety of geographical settings, including in Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand and Asia. Martin investigates the extent to which indigenous children were incorporated into the movement in these British world locations and the impact of this on experiences of citizenship.

Looking beyond history writing, studies focused on children's literature have been in the vanguard of work acknowledging the centrality of children to the operation of the British world system. Indeed, there are many more literary studies in this vein than there are historical texts, perhaps because book publishing and circuits of reading have always been inherently international phenomena.<sup>80</sup> The present study recognizes this important contribution from literature scholars with two chapters on the imperial imaginaries featuring under the banner of 'Literary Childhoods'. In her analysis, Michelle J. Smith delves into nineteenth-century British children's literature set in New Zealand and Australia which fixated on the dangers of colonial environments. The chapter examines four British novels of the period, observing the ways in which they manifest elements of ecological imperialism and environmental racism in order to depict successful settlement. It compares these novels with fantasy fictions by New Zealand and Australian children's authors that constitute more complicated attempts to both understand and co-exist with the natural environment.

In examining the place of the 'willful' girl, Hilary Emmett next unravels the ways in which sentimental domestic novels of the nineteenth century were primary agents in naturalizing certain behaviours in girls as they matured into womanhood. Drawing upon well-known examples of girls' sentimental fiction from America, England, Canada and Australia, Emmett explores the way that novels at the turn of the century and up to the 1920s responded to, and reinterpreted, the paradigms of female behaviour that nineteenth-century texts sought to model. Using Sarah Ahmed's recent theorization of the 'willful' girl as a critical framework, the chapter pushes at the boundaries of the British world to consider wider circuits of exchange also involving an independent United States.

Turning from the literary to the lustful, historian Yorick Smaal opens a challenging and dynamic part of the book on 'Youth and Sexuality'. Smaal argues that age-structured experiences of homosexual relations in colonial Queensland brought with them both danger and possibility. This chapter examines the nuanced complexities between peril and pleasure and the ambiguities attendant in relationships between men and boys in a particular colony of the British world. Drawing on Queensland's criminal justice records, it pays close attention to age, physicality, power and vulnerability, and highlights a range of socially contingent assumptions about identity, agency, capacity and abuse.

Heterosexual relations concern Melissa Bellanta in her chapter on popular performance, sexuality and the disorderly girl. In the late 1800s, adolescent

boys involved in street gangs known as 'larrikin pushes' became notorious for sexual violence towards women in Australian cities. In this chapter, Bellanta grapples with how we should view female participants in this subculture. Her key concern is to avoid presenting them simply as sexually subservient to the boys, while still acknowledging that many were heavily invested in sexualized stereotypes. Bellanta argues that female larrikins worked *with* stereotypes such as the brazen 'hussy' rather than being reduced *to* them. She also suggests that they drew on modes of popular performance when doing so, most notably burlesque. Since burlesque was a form of cultural traffic traversing large parts of the globe, Bellanta's chapter relates to girls involved in late nineteenth-century street subcultures across the British world.

Our final part of the book, 'Children's Empires and Material Cultures', pairs an emergent with an established historian through a focus on the objects and ambitions of childhood. Britain's late-Victorian public parks were landscapes in which colonial identities were constructed and negotiated. Using the park landscape imaginatively by playing games of war and exploration, or else through the use of homemade and shop-bought toys, Ruth Colton argues that children embodied and explored themes of empire and sometimes challenged them through non-normative modes of play. Employing archaeology and history, this chapter explores the material culture and landscape of childhood in the late-Victorian and Edwardian public park. Landscape design, built material structures and excavated ephemera from parks across Britain – in Gateshead, Huddersfield, Manchester and London – are evaluated to assess the experience of being in the park, and the ways in which an ethos of empire influenced childhood practices.

Kate Darian-Smith's chapter surveys a still wider terrain. This chapter examines how the historical experiences of settler children within the British world have been memorialized. Through such public forms as gravestones, memorials and plaques, the too short lives of deceased children are remembered. The chapter further assesses colonial anxieties concerning white children's vulnerability to becoming 'lost in the bush' or potentially 'captured' by Indigenous peoples on the frontiers of European settlement, and how such incidents were to be memorialized within colonial communities. The final part of the chapter examines how the experiences of settler children have been publicly represented since the late twentieth century, particularly at historic sites – both institutional and domestic – and what this means for the collective (and national) memorialization of the histories of childhood with the British world today.

Our stable of authors have sifted through a very diverse range of archival evidence – and in one instance the soil of an archaeological dig – to mount their arguments. The fruits of their labours and their favoured methodological approaches are evident in the pages that follow. Of course, as with any scholarly collection, this book is an archive of its own time, reflecting current strengths and concerns within the history of childhood and youth. The

editors acknowledged that not all parts of the British world are represented in a collection this size, extensive as it is. To echo an earlier refrain, it is hoped that as the field of research continues to grow, those less studied parts of the British world (and indeed beyond) will receive further attention, perhaps influenced by the approaches elaborated here.

## Notes

Simon Sleight wishes to acknowledge his dual affiliations to King's College London (as Senior Lecturer) and Monash University (as Adjunct Research Associate) in the co-authorship of this Introduction.

1. For images of the Memorial and its statuary, together with further background information, see 'The Victoria Memorial', [www.speel.me.uk/sculptlondon/victoriamem.htm](http://www.speel.me.uk/sculptlondon/victoriamem.htm) (accessed 20 April 2015). The British sculptors of the dominion figures were Alfred Drury and (Francis) Derwent Wood.
2. On the early phase of construction, see Malcolm C. Salaman, 'Sir Thomas Brock's Queen Victoria Memorial', *The Studio*, vol. 53, no. 219 (June 1911), 29–40, <http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/brock/salaman.html> (accessed 20 April 2015). An alternative reading of the statuary, together with further analysis of context and construction, is offered by Tori Smith, '“A grand work of noble conception”: The Victoria Memorial and Imperial London', in Felix Driver and David Gilbert (eds), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 21–39.
3. In keeping with the stature of our subjects, this collection of essays uses the term 'British world' rather than the more monumental 'British World' adopted by some scholars in the field. Definitional issues are discussed below.
4. Rosalia Baena, '“Not Home but Here”: Rewriting Englishness in Colonial Childhood Memoirs', *English Studies*, vol. 90, no. 4 (2009), 437.
5. A classic – but now much contested – account of this older conception of empire is Louis Hartz's 'fragment thesis', outlined in *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964). A useful critique of such thinking is offered in David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Career in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–31.
6. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, 'Mapping the British World', in Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 7, and P.A. Buckner, 'Reinventing the British World', *Round Table*, vol. 92, no. 368 (2003), 79.
7. Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2012).
8. Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2005).
9. Bridge and Fedorowich, 'Mapping the British World', 3.
10. Among this scholarship, see particularly Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1770–1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989); Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*; Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Lambert and Lester, *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire*; Andrew Thompson,

*Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

11. For silent film footage of the event, see <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/461> (accessed 20 April 2015).
12. *Ibid.*, article dated 24 May 1909, 13. On Empire Day in Britain and overseas, see Jim English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904–1958', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2006), 247–76; Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, 116–22; Anne Spry Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 38–39 and 59–62; David H. Hume, 'Empire Day in Ireland, 1896–1962', in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *'An Irish Empire'?: Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 149–68; R.M. Stamp, 'Empire Day in the Schools of Ontario: The Training of Young Imperialists', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1973), 32–42; Stewart Firth and Jeanette Horn, 'From Empire Day to Cracker Night', in Peter Spearritt and David Walker (eds), *Australian Popular Culture* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 17–38; Jinny Kathleen Prais, 'Imperial Travelers: The Formation of West African Urban Culture, Identity and Citizenship in London and Accra, 1925–1935' (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2008), 35–36 and 78.
13. Stamp, 'Empire Day'.
14. David Cannadine, 'An Imperial Childhood?', in *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002), 181–99.
15. *Ibid.*, 182.
16. *Ibid.*, 183–84.
17. *Ibid.*, 185–87, 196.
18. *Ibid.*, 188, 192–93.
19. *Ibid.*, 195–97.
20. *Ibid.*, 198.
21. Various contributions to John M. Mackenzie's edited collection *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) address this issue for Britain. In similar vein, Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) account for imperial knowledge and what has since been termed 'banal imperialism' within Britain itself. On 'banal imperialism', see Krishan Kumar, 'Empire, Nation, and National Identity', in Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 298–329.
22. See the 'History in Education' project website: <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/conference> (accessed 20 April 2015), as well as an associated book: David Cannadine, Jenny Keating and Nicola Sheldon, *The Right Kind of History: Teaching the Past in Twentieth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Thanks to Anna Claeys for bringing these resources to our attention.
23. John Griffiths, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities, 1880–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
24. *Ibid.*, 153–82.
25. Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
26. See for instance Ymitri Mathison, 'Maps, Pirates and Treasure: The Commodification of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century Boys' Adventure Fiction', in Dennis Denisoff (ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 173–85 (174 for the quotation) and Patrick A. Dunae,

- 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870–1914', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1980), 105–21.
27. JD/P38/HiE50 and CH/T28/HiE4. Transcripts available on the 'History in Education' website, <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/browse/surveys.html> (accessed 20 April 2015).
  28. 'History school exercise book 3, Julie Johnson', page dated 29 June 1977: [http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/3249/6/Johnson%2C\\_Julie%2C\\_1974-7%2C\\_exercise\\_book\\_3.pdf](http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/3249/6/Johnson%2C_Julie%2C_1974-7%2C_exercise_book_3.pdf); 'History school exercise book 2 Ray Andrews 1953–5': [http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/3255/6/Andrews%2C\\_RG\\_\(Ray\)%2C\\_Schoolbook\\_2%2C\\_1953-55.pdf](http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/3255/6/Andrews%2C_RG_(Ray)%2C_Schoolbook_2%2C_1953-55.pdf) (both accessed 20 April 2015).
  29. FK/P69/HiE107, <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/browse/surveys.html> (accessed 20 April 2015). Similarly, Bernard Porter (slightly older than Cannadine) recounts that he did not study any imperial history at school, nor did family bookshelves hold 'imperial books of any obvious kind' (Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, x).
  30. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor, Volume 1* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2009 [originally 1861–62]), 473–74.
  31. *Ibid.*, 481.
  32. Mary Guyatt, 'The Non-European World in the Lives of British Children, 1870–1930' (PhD thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2015). On play and appropriation, also see Megan Norcia, 'Playing Empire: Children's Parlor Games, Home Theatricals, and Improvisational Play', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 4 (2004), 294–314.
  33. Guyatt, 'The Non-European World', 59, 86.
  34. Compare, for example, the Summary Jurisdiction Act 1879 (United Kingdom) and the Juvenile Offenders Act 1887 (Victoria).
  35. Howard Chudacoff documents nineteenth-century age scheduling (including grade separation in schools and the birth of paediatrics) in an American context – see *How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).
  36. David M. Pomfret, *Young People and the European City: Age Relations in Nottingham and Saint-Etienne, 1890–1940* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 3–5.
  37. On associated 'Young Australia' discourse, see Simon Sleight, *Young People and the Shaping of Public Space in Melbourne, 1870–1914* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 32–39. On 'Young Canada', see Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920 to 1950* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 1–15. On 'Young New Zealand', see as an example cartoon, 'Between buyer and lender, and non-buying vendor, Young New Zealand makes his choice', *Evening Post* (Wellington), 24 October 1940 <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/17561515> (accessed 20 April 2015).
  38. Harvey J. Graff assesses growing up as an 'integrated human developmental process', a journey towards adulthood ranging across childhood, adolescence and youth in *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), xii and 4–6.
  39. Buckner and Francis, *Rediscovering the British World*, 16.
  40. See *Young Australia: An Illustrated Magazine for Boys Throughout the English-Speaking World*, vol. XI (1903), 205 and 287, vol. XIII (1904–05), 47 and 327, vol. XV (1906–07), 167.
  41. Bridge and Fedorowich, 'Mapping the British World', 6.

42. *Young Australia*, vol. XIII (1904–05), 46. The League advertised its mission as ‘To Promote and Strengthen a Worthy Imperial Spirit in British Boys All Over the World’, an ambition later taken up by the Scouting movement.
43. Elisa Camiscioli, ‘Women, Gender, Intimacy, and Empire’, *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2013), 138–48.
44. See the article and illustration ‘Just Like You!’, *Young Australia*, vol. XII (1904–05), 28 and the exchange column in vol. XV (1906–07), 46.
45. Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender, Race and Morality in Colonial Asia’, in Micaela di Leonardo (ed.), *Gender and the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 65.
46. Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1975), 9–65. For more recent work on imperial families, see the special edition of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2013).
47. Bentley B. Gilbert, ‘Health and Politics: The British Physical Deterioration Report of 1904’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 39 (1965), 143–53 and John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883–1940* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977).
48. Shirleene Robinson and Emily Wilson, ‘Preserving the Traditions of a “Great Race”: Youth and National Character in Queensland, 1859–1918’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 94, no. 2 (2008), 166–85.
49. See Sleight, *Young People*, Chapter 5.
50. Helen May, Baljit Kaur and Larry Proctor, *Empire, Education, and Indigenous Childhoods: Nineteenth-Century Missionary Infant Schools in Three British Colonies* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).
51. Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada and New Zealand* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), 205.
52. Saul Dubow, ‘How British Was the British World? The Case of South Africa’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2009), 1.
53. Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 1, *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); P.J. Marshall, Alaine Low and William Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Judith M. Brown and William Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 4, *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and William Roger Louis and Robin Winks (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 5, *Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
54. Exceptions to this rule are few, and include Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Heidi Morrison (ed.), *The Global History of Childhood Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); and Paula Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
55. James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders: From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Penguin Press, 1996); James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001); and Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire*.

56. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
57. Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*, 6.
58. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2007).
59. Buckner and Francis, *Rediscovering the British World*, 19.
60. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xii.
61. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).
62. See particularly Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Imperial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
63. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire' in Hall and Rose, *At Home with the Empire*, 3.
64. An exception is David Pomfret, 'World Contexts', in Colin Heywood (ed.), *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Age of Empire* (London, New Delhi, New York and Sydney: Bloomsbury 2014), 189–211. Pomfret's cultural analysis compares the empires of Britain and France, noting that in the nineteenth century, 'childhood emerged as a shorthand through which anxieties over empire, and particularly its transience, could be expressed' and further observing ideological links between the adult colonization of overseas continents and the equally captivating contemporary exploration of realms of childhood (see 190–91).
65. Compare Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985) and Berry Myall and Virginia Morrow, *You Can Help Your Country: English Children's Work During the Second World War* (London: Institute of Education, 2011).
66. Hugh Cunningham, 'Combating Child Labour: The British Experience', in Hugh Cunningham and Pier Paolo Viazzo (eds), *Child Labour in Historical Perspective, 1800–1985* (Florence: UNICEF, 1996), 41–56.
67. Also see Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
68. Nelson R. Block and Tammy M. Proctor (eds), *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scouting Movement's First Century* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009); Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); and Kristine Alexander, 'The Girl Guide Movement and Imperial Internationalism During the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2009), 37–63. A chapter by Mary Clare Martin adding to this literature features in this volume.
69. Fiona Paisley, 'Childhood and Race: Growing Up in the Empire' in Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 240–59.
70. See, among many others, Gillian Wagner, *Children of the Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982); Marjorie Kohli, *The Golden Bridge: Young Immigrants to Canada, 1833–1939* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2003); Roger Kershaw and Janet Sacks, *New Lives for Old: The Story of Britain's Child Migrants* (Kew:

- National Archives, 2008); Roy Parker, *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2008); A. Gill, *Orphans of the Empire: The Shocking Story of Child Migration to Australia* (Sydney: Random House, 1998); Geoffrey Sherington and Chris Jeffery, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (London: Woburn, 1998); John Tosh, 'Children on "Free" Emigrant Ships: From England to the Cape of Good Hope, 1819–20', *History Australia*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2012), 5–26.
71. See, for example, Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995); Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*; Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997); Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India, 1850–1945* (London: Anthem, 2005).
  72. In the case of South Africa, for example, the first dedicated doctoral study on South African childhood appeared as recently as 2010. Its author, Sarah Duff, features in the present collection. Also on Africa, see Paul Ocobock, 'Spare the Rod, Spoil the Colony: Corporal Punishment, Colonial Violence and Generational Authority in Kenya, 1897–1952', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 45, no. 1 (2012), 29–56, and Saheed Aderinto (ed.), *Children and Childhood in Colonial Nigerian Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
  73. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Philippa Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia, 1880–1950* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).
  74. Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Emily Manktelow, *Missionary Families: Race, Gender and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
  75. Esme Cleall, Laura Ishiguru and Emily Manktelow, 'Imperial Relations: Histories of Family in the British Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 14, no.1 (2013), 1.
  76. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).
  77. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).
  78. See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.
  79. Steven Mintz, 'Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008), 91–94.
  80. As cases in point, see M. Daphne Kutzer's text, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Michelle Smith, *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880–1915* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). The latter uses literature to reveal how imperial concerns informed the ways in which girls were imagined as mothers and civilizers at home in Britain, and, in the colonies, as settlers, nurses and explorers who were integral to the Empire's future.

# **Part I**

## **Children and Adults**

# 1

## A Motherly Concern for Children: Invocations of Queen Victoria in Imperial Child Rescue Literature

*Shurlee Swain*

In all the advance that the world has made during the past half century and more, charity, goodness, and loving kindness owe more to Queen Victoria than any other person. Nearly all the societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, children and women drew their inspiration from . . . Queen Victoria [who] made kindness fashionable.<sup>1</sup>

This invocation, published first in a newspaper in San Francisco, and so widely circulated that it was reprinted in a newspaper in regional New South Wales, captures precisely the way in which, by the end of her reign, the narrative which Hugh Cunningham has called the 'heroic story of child rescue' became attached to the body and person of the Queen.<sup>2</sup> It was a sentiment that resonated across the Empire, reaching its apotheosis in 1897, the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Declaring it 'strange that the world had been Christian for so long yet no law had been passed to protect women and children', a New Zealand newspaper reassured its readers that 'all that had been stopped by Act of Parliament during Victoria's reign'.<sup>3</sup> The local magistrate in Bunbury, Western Australia, went one step further, personally crediting the Queen with the changes that had occurred. Addressing local school children at the jubilee demonstration, Mr W.H. Timberley asserted that:

the Queen and her Government had taken the children out of those mines and factories and sent them to school . . . because they desired that children should have the advantages of education in order that they might be trained to be good and loyal men and women . . . and had created hospitals and homes in the United Kingdom and in various parts of the Australian colonies where children found homeless were taken in and brought up to be respectable men and women.<sup>4</sup>

It is the latter claim that provides the focus for this chapter, which seeks to explain why the child rescuers who rose to prominence in Britain and beyond in the second half of the nineteenth century chose to attach their cause to Queen Victoria, and to find what evidence there is for her supporting their endeavours.

The rise of the child rescue movement has been documented in the work of George Behlmer and Harry Hendrick,<sup>5</sup> as well as a series of studies devoted to the individual entrepreneurs and the institutional empires which they founded.<sup>6</sup> In recent years a more critical history has begun to emerge with both Seth Koven and Lydia Murdoch questioning the self-representation of the child rescuers.<sup>7</sup> While these studies have focused on the British national context, the imperial aspects of the child rescue movement have also attracted the attention of historians of child migration. As survivors of a much later version of these policies have found success in bringing their plight to public attention, so these historical accounts have become increasingly critical.<sup>8</sup> A recent monograph by Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel seeks to bridge these two approaches, placing the child rescue movement within a transnational context, examining both the way in which it was shaped by Britain's wider imperial consciousness and how in turn it shaped child rescue movements across the Empire over which Queen Victoria reigned.<sup>9</sup>

The founders of England's largest child rescue movements, Thomas Barnardo (1854–1905), Thomas Bowman Stephenson (1838–1912), Edward de Montjoie Rudolf (1852–1933) and Benjamin Waugh (1839–1908), were all children of the Victorian age. The organizations which they founded – Dr Barnardo's Home (1870), the National Children's Homes (1869), the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society (1881) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, 1895) – were each established, and experienced their most rapid growth, during the Queen's reign. They drew their support primarily from middle-class Christians, either through denominational or Evangelical networks, and used the religious press to spread their message across the British world. The poor children who were all too visible on the streets of London, and the other rapidly growing cities, they argued, embodied the future of the nation. Left unreached, they would pose a threat to national prosperity, but with intervention they could be redeemed. By the end of the century, Barnardo, Stephenson and Rudolf each stood at the head of large organizations providing both institutional and foster care both in England and abroad, and the NSPCC had branches across the country with agents legally empowered to prosecute offending parents and remove their children. In his examination of the treatment of the jubilees in the religious media, Mark Looker has identified three key themes: 'the Queen as ideal wife and mother'; 'her storied sympathy with her people, particularly widows and orphans'; and 'a virtual obsession with the idea of progress'.<sup>10</sup> These were themes that resonated strongly with the image which child rescuers wanted to project to potential supporters. They claimed to be

in the business of providing families for children whose parents or guardians were unable to do so, and they constantly cast their endeavours as one of the chief indicators of progress associated with the Victorian age.

The claim for a natural affinity between Queen Victoria and the child rescue movement was best articulated by the NSPCC's honorary barrister, William Clarke Hall, in his book *The Queen's Reign for Children*, published in 1897.<sup>11</sup> Despite the title, Hall was modest in his claims, devoting a chapter to each of the reforms that had been achieved during the Queen's reign: the regulation of children in factories, as chimney sweeps, in agricultural gangs, in dangerous stage performances and those found begging; the introduction of legislation to control so-called baby farming; the provision of education, and the establishment of reformatories and industrial schools; and better provision for pauper children. But he was careful never to imply that the Queen had stepped outside her constitutional role to bring about such changes. Hall continued, in hyperbolic fashion:

When she ascended the throne the great Juggernaut car of unscrupulous commercialism, private greed, and domestic inhumanity rolled upon its way with none to hinder... [but] year by year, some new barrier erected to stay its destructive course; the number of its victims becomes more few, the shout of the happy, rescued children more loud and more glad. Narrower and narrower has grown the path that may be traversed by that grim chariot, so that where once the ground was barren with the salt of children's tears, now flourish the sweet blossoms of their joy.<sup>12</sup>

To Hall, these changes constituted 'a garland of... bright flowers' that would be 'dearer' to the heart of the Queen in her jubilee year than any other 'diadem', but the credit for implementation was imputed to parliamentarians like Lord Shaftesbury rather than to the Queen herself.<sup>13</sup>

In writing the introduction to Hall's book, reformer Benjamin Waugh exercised no such caution. 'Never has the British Crown so long been worn, nor has any brow that ever wore it lent such moral and spiritual splendour to its authority', he began, urging readers to express their gratitude and loyalty by celebrating 'the glorious laws which its Parliaments have enacted, and the Queen has sanctioned on behalf of Children, achievements without parallel in the annals of any period of this or any other realm', before finally linking into the theme of progress by claiming, breathlessly, that 'every Statue upon the Statute Book for the protection of the helpless subjects of the Crown has been passed during the reign of Queen Victoria'.<sup>14</sup> While he too acknowledges Shaftesbury, Waugh dates the 'great awakening of the nation to a true and full recognition of the rights of children, rights as subjects of the Crown, and as sentient beings capable of misery and of happiness' to the passage in 1889 of the Children's Charter,<sup>15</sup> when 'every natural demand of childhood, in food, in clothing, and in treatment... was made as much the legal right of

a child as is the personal liberty of the adult Englishman'.<sup>16</sup> 'We have every reason to believe', he added, 'that, to one with the heart of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, her people's congratulations on the great and beneficent changes made by the Parliament of her reign in the political conditions of the children of her land, will be warmly appreciated.'<sup>17</sup>

When, in 1901, the Waifs and Strays Society's children's magazine, *Brothers and Sisters*, set out to review the Queen's life in the light of the Society's work, it went even further, ascribing to her 'as daughter, wife, mother, queen' a sympathy not only to children but to the Empire as a whole, and urging its readers to cultivate a similar spirit of love and service.<sup>18</sup> This depiction played into a trope first invoked very early during Victoria's reign in order to resolve the inherent clash between a female ruler and prevailing understandings of gender.<sup>19</sup> Unlike her predecessor queens regnant, whose failure to marry and reproduce had highlighted this discordance, Victoria had blunted the edge of potential criticism by quickly marrying and reproducing abundantly. She henceforth observed a clear delineation between her 'kingly' functions, performed in the public sphere of politics and government, and her 'queenly' duties, which outwardly conformed to gendered expectations for women',<sup>20</sup> capitalizing on her maternal status by projecting it into the public, casting herself 'as a mother – of a nation, of a family, of a nation as family' (Figure 1.1).<sup>21</sup>

This identification became stronger as the Queen aged, the bodily aspects of maternity being fully subsumed into the symbolic with her figure becoming increasingly stout in images and statues produced over time. The Queen who was greeted so enthusiastically at her Golden Jubilee was, her biographer Lytton Strachey suggests, both 'the mother of her people and the embodied symbol of their imperial greatness'.<sup>22</sup> In artistic and popular representations, the Mother Victoria image 'emerged in full flower at the Golden Jubilee' and was so widely embraced that on her death it 'outshone all her faults'.<sup>23</sup> This identification was not without its dangers, though, for as Queen, Victoria presided over policies and practices that were far from maternal. As Andrea Bobotis has recently demonstrated, feminist actress Maud Gonne was able to very effectively use the figure of the Queen as mother to argue for Irish independence, pointing out the many ways in which she had failed her Irish 'children', preserving 'her well-being even when faced with the misery of her subjects' and doing 'exactly the opposite of what a mother should do: she starves her children'.<sup>24</sup> The child rescuers had no such qualms. While the children who were the focus of their work were also hungry, the name that was invoked to justify their removal from the parents who were seen as responsible for their hunger was that of the Queen rather than of a government which presided over the social inequalities that produced such poverty.

What evidence is there that the Queen held the views that child rescuers attributed to her? Victoria is remembered as a vigilant if not a



Figure 1.1 Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *The Royal Family in 1846* (1846)  
 Courtesy Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2015.

particularly affectionate mother to her own children and her diaries are replete with observations about her babies and other children in her immediate circle.<sup>25</sup> She took, Margaret Homans argued, ‘an uncommon interest in raising her children’.<sup>26</sup> However, she struggled to reconcile the conflicting expectations of her roles as mother and monarch. The demands of the latter role meant that from their earliest days her children were entrusted to the care of others, and she found her repeated pregnancies an increasingly oppressive intrusion into her official duties, a reminder of an essential, even animalistic womanliness that threatened her status as monarch. In her later years she wrote disparagingly of pregnancy, childbirth and babies, and, in her widowhood, was often demanding of her children, judging them harshly for their inability to compensate for their father’s loss.<sup>27</sup>

Her encounters with the rest of the children in her realm were more distant. ‘Charity children’ were presented to her on her travels around the country but while she remarks on their performances she says nothing about their plight.<sup>28</sup> On returning from the opening of the People’s Palace during her Golden Jubilee celebrations she commented on an assembly of ‘a number of Barnardo’s Boys, or rather Boys from his Homes, all in sailors’ dresses, each waving a little Union Jack, which’, she said, ‘had a very pretty effect’.<sup>29</sup> However, like most of her educated subjects, her understandings of poor

children were more shaped by her reading of Charles Dickens than by direct contact. While in her diary she writes of her eagerness to continue her reading of the 'descriptions of squalid vice ... [and] the accounts of starvation in the Workhouses and Schools' in *Oliver Twist*, Lord Melbourne's explanation that 'they give children the worst things to eat, and bad beer ... to save the expense' brought no condemnation, but rather only seemed to add to the book's voyeuristic appeal.<sup>30</sup>

Lord Melbourne is a dominant presence in all the instances in the diaries in which the plight of poor children is raised. He has an explanation for any observation which Victoria makes, and she transcribes his rationalizations without comment or critique. In August 1836 the young Victoria had visited a Chiswick asylum for girls run by the Children's Friend's Society, and had spoken at length with its founder, Miss Murray. The Society sought out 'poor vagrant girls' and within six months transformed them into 'perfectly good child[ren]' who could then be sent to the Cape of Good Hope to be apprenticed as servants.<sup>31</sup> Victoria was impressed with the stories she was told of the girls' moral and spiritual conversion, returning to the subject two years later in the context of a discussion with Melbourne about the various societies that were arising to improve the lot of poor children. 'All this was happening when I was a boy', he observed, 'and vice has done nothing but increase since.' When Victoria responded that without Miss Murray's intervention the girls would 'commit every sort of atrocity and wickedness', he replied pessimistically, 'and so they will now, you'll see'.<sup>32</sup>

Victoria had also been content to rely on Melbourne's judgement when the campaign to regulate child labour first began. Her initial discussion of this issue occurred in October 1838 when she shared with Melbourne her impression that Lord Ashley (later the Earl of Shaftesbury) was 'an agreeable man ... very eager', to which Melbourne responded that 'like most very eager people ... [he] took up things violently [and] drops them again'. His evidence for this statement was that Ashley had referred to such children as 'ragamuffins' even though 'in general [he] disapproved of such names'.<sup>33</sup> Two months later Victoria returned to the topic, speaking approvingly of Ashley's determination 'to ameliorate the suffering of the Factory Children', but Melbourne once again dismissed her concern, arguing: 'If they don't work they must starve; and the greatest philanthropists only wish to reduce the number of hours of work, from 14 to 10; but then the Manufacturers say they will be ruined, and that they can't compete with the Continent'.<sup>34</sup>

Following her marriage, Victoria was able to turn to Albert rather than Melbourne as her sounding board. In this context she appears to have enjoyed more freedom to develop her views on child labour. The only piece of evidence that Hall was able to produce to link the Queen to the child rescue cause comes from this period: a letter sent by Albert to Ashley in 1842,

praising him for his efforts and assuring him that the Queen was 'filled with the deepest sympathy'.<sup>35</sup> The letter, Hall argued, showed:

how warmly the Queen's heart has ever been in the children's cause . . . All the noblest legislation of her reign has met with opposition in some quarter or other . . . and it has therefore been impossible for her Majesty, seated in that calm atmosphere of the throne, which no breath of party politics can be allowed to disturb, to express her sympathy with the fight which is being waged below her. Such a glimpse, then, as this of her true noble woman's heart is all the more precious since it can be obtained but rarely.<sup>36</sup>

The reticence to which Hall points is evident even in the private space of the Queen's diaries where, although the slow passage of the legislation through the parliament is described at great length, Victoria does not allow her own opinions to intrude.<sup>37</sup>

The child labour campaigns marked the beginning of the transformation of childhood that Hall was positioning as coterminous with Queen Victoria's reign. The child rescue movement, it is worth noting, reached its peak during the final years of her rule. Nevertheless, Hall was arguing, the sympathies displayed by Victoria early in her reign continued to guide her actions if not her words. Citing her support for the NSPCC, he claimed:

It is the Queen who has . . . set the example to the State. All that she could do to promote and encourage the operations of the Society she has done; from its first foundation she has been its patron, and by conferring upon it, through her Privy Council, a charter, she has taken the greatest step which the Constitution will allow her towards creating it the recognised legal medium for the protection of children.<sup>38</sup>

In 1895 the Queen had also become a patron of the Waifs and Strays Society, but unlike her daughter, the Princess Christian, who had become a patron a year earlier, she endorsed the Society only through her name.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Hall positions these acts of patronage as conclusive evidence of the Queen's commitment to the child rescue cause, imagining her looking back 'with thankful gladness . . . for those 268,000 children whose lives have been made happier, or at least rendered more endurable' and arguing that she 'will not fail to rejoice in the joy of these many brightened lives'.<sup>40</sup>

Sean Lang's case study of another charity to which the Queen lent her patronage, the Dufferin Fund, provides some support for Hall's bold claims. Founded by the wife of the viceroy after whom it was named, the fund was established to provide female medical attendants to women in India forbidden by their culture to seek medical attention from men, but its founder credited the Queen with its inspiration. Missionaries and groups arguing for

women to be given access to medical education had urged this cause on the Queen, but while she had expressed concern for the health of Indian women she had little sympathy for its advocates, and was anxious not to alienate either her non-Christian Indian subjects or the men who dominated the medical profession. In Lady Dufferin, Lang argues, she found a neutral person to whom she could entrust the cause, and in offering her patronage made it a popular cause at home.<sup>41</sup> The two child rescue societies to which she offered patronage were hoping for a similar result.

This patronage was particularly important in the context of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, which all charities knew from the experience ten years earlier had the potential to deplete their fund-raising efforts by diverting funds amidst the patriotic fervour. When, in 1887, a reluctant Queen was asked how the money expected to be raised in commemoration of her Golden Jubilee should be spent, her only response was to suggest (yet another) statue of Albert.<sup>42</sup> The later addition of charities devoted to women and children was a suggestion from her advisors, anxious to counter criticism about the cost of the celebrations. A lengthy poem produced at this time points to the space which such celebrations created for the insertion of the child rescue cause. It began with a verse capturing the excitement of the celebrations – 'All the flags were out, and the bands were played/ To greet the advance of the cavalcade' – but then drew the reader's attention to street children, always depicted in child rescue narratives as surrounding yet being ignored by wealthy Londoners – 'At the feet of the crowd they cringe and creep/ And dream of a Queen in their feverish sleep' – before calling on people to 'give an answering cheer' to 'charity's call' that 'no child shall forget the Queen's Jubilee year!'. After suggesting several projects that could be funded, the poem concluded: 'May the day be the brightest that ever was seen/When the cheer of our children is raised for their Queen!'<sup>43</sup>

In 1887 the relatively new child rescue societies entered into this campaign in a rather half-hearted way, the NSPCC calling on the Queen to celebrate her Jubilee by making a contribution to the Society.<sup>44</sup> The Waifs and Strays Society was more anxious to tap its existing supporters, suggesting that the Jubilee might be well and unostentatiously marked by an individual, or family, school or congregation adopting 'one of our motherless children, or enabling us to take a fresh one, in honour of the Queen, in her capacity of mother, both of her private and of her national family'.<sup>45</sup> Funds raised, it was suggested, would allow the Society to establish a specialized home for crippled children. The response was less than enthusiastic and although a new home was established, the attempt to link it to the Jubilee quickly faded. In the face of a drop in income the Society berated its erstwhile supporters:

Who can doubt . . . what the Queen would say if asked, 'Shall I give this £3 towards the expense of the bronze robe of a new statue in your Majesty's honour, or therewith clothe a child for a year?' . . . If these things in

honour of the Jubilee ought to be done, the other things for the salvation of children ought not to be left undone.<sup>46</sup>

By the end of the year it was clear that while 'the Queen's reign had been happily marked by the invention or development of all kinds of ways of helping children to be or remain what all would have them', a fact commemorated in publicly funded celebrations for children across the country, the child rescue societies had not been able to benefit from this popular enthusiasm.<sup>47</sup>

A decade later in 1897, their fund-raising was far more sophisticated. Ageing and rarely seen in public, the Queen was a symbol, subject to multiple representations. In this 'proliferation of different Victorias', the child rescuers sought to reinforce the image of the Queen as the children's friend.<sup>48</sup> By capturing the Queen in this way, they hoped that at least some of the money raised in thanksgiving would fall into their hands. 'Could there, then, be', asked Hall, 'any more graceful thank offering [sic] on the part of the nation for the infinite boon of her Majesty's long reign than the continuation of that work which she has herself so well inaugurated?'<sup>49</sup> Waugh's confident assertions tended to overshadow Hall's caution as the links between the Queen and the child rescue movement were invoked to urge supporters to donate to the child savers' cause. Appeals during the Jubilee year told potential supporters that the Queen would like to be remembered through a donation to help the children.

The NSPCC, with the impetus of Hall's book, set the tone with a determined attempt to harness donations to its cause.<sup>50</sup> In an article which repeated much of Hall's theme, Barnardo tried to position his organization as the true heir of the Queen's commitment to children. '*Every single Act now standing on the Statute Book for the protection of children has been passed during Her Majesty's reign*', he told his readers in emphatic fashion. Invoking both Shaftesbury and Dickens, he located his endeavours within the heroic story of how this transformation had come about, ending with a plea that:

no memorial of all the social and philanthropic victories gained ... can be complete unless the *Children* are considered – especially the Children of the Slums, the unwanted Little Ones, the helpless Waifs and Strays of our vast city populations. They have shared profoundly in the great advances of the Victorian age. The law has given them their childhood, and the national conscience has awaked to a recognition of their immortal birthright. Shall they not therefore reap the fruits of this Memorial Year?<sup>51</sup>

This enthusiasm extended to the various societies' imperial operations. In Canada, for example, 'Barnardo boys' launched their own Jubilee appeal,

with donations to be sent back to England for the benefit of children still in the homes.<sup>52</sup>

With its royal connections now clearly established the Waifs and Strays Society took a more direct approach. Taking its mandate from the Prince of Wales's call that 'due support will be given to works of mercy amongst the sick and suffering, and to anything which may tend to brighten the lives and ameliorate the condition of Her Majesty's poorer subjects', it launched its appeal at the beginning of the year.<sup>53</sup> By March it was able to boast that the Queen herself had agreed to accept an address from the Society even though she was unable to endorse any particular appeal.<sup>54</sup> However, despite this qualified support, the appeal was thwarted when the Church launched its own Jubilee appeal with the Clergy Sustentance Fund as the official beneficiary.<sup>55</sup> The Queen Victoria Fund grew slowly, while donations to the Society's general fund plummeted as other Jubilee causes made their claims on the charitable.<sup>56</sup> When the Fund was officially wound up in 1898, the promised address was presented to the Queen, but the Jubilee experience had again been disappointing.<sup>57</sup> While the Queen expressed her 'approval and satisfaction' on hearing 'of the excellent and generous manner in which the Society commemorated the event', her sentiments had not translated into donations.<sup>58</sup>

The propaganda campaign had, however, been far more successful than the fund-raising and when the Queen died less than four years later, her link with the child rescue movement no longer needed to be argued. Commemorating her death, the NSPCC journal, the *Child's Guardian*, published a lengthy article drawing on Hall's work and describing again the transformation of childhood during the Queen's long reign.<sup>59</sup> *Our Waifs and Strays* repeated the now familiar theme commemorating Victoria 'as the Ruler of the greatest Empire the world has ever known, and a Mother, in her great sympathy, to the lowliest of her subjects, her memory will be revered for many generations'.<sup>60</sup> A longer article in the Anglican Society's magazine for children set up Victoria's 'queenly, womanly life' as a model for all to follow.<sup>61</sup> Many other similar organizations sought to join the campaign, with the result that the Queen as example was encoded in bricks and mortar across the British world in the buildings for children and women named in her honour.<sup>62</sup> In Australia, Melbourne's Methodist Homes for Children opened a Queen Victoria Cottage, while Sydney boasted a hospital for Women and Children, and South Australia a Children's Convalescent Home with the same name. Canada constructed hospitals in Toronto and British Columbia.

What were the understandings of childhood that the Queen was being used to endorse? For the NSPCC the core shift that had taken place during her reign was that children had become subjects in their own right, rather than having their rights and responsibilities mediated through their parents. This new status was encoded in the Children's Charter which both situated

the child 'as the Queen's own subject, with a right to her protection, and a right to be considered a citizen of her State' and rendered good parenting 'a duty towards the Crown, and one which the Crown would in consequence enforce'.<sup>63</sup> Barnardo chose to depict this new status not solely as a gift from the Crown but as something that the children had earned through their service or potential service to the British Empire.<sup>64</sup> The proliferation across the British world of the 'iconic image' of the 'impassive but maternal widow', Homans and Munich argue, 'seemed to validate imperialism and render it harmless, even comforting'.<sup>65</sup> Child rescuers were but one of many interest groups gaining favour for their cause by constituting it as an imperial endeavour in service of the Queen.

To Hall, 'the crowning glory of her Majesty's reign' would be the establishment of a government department with responsibility:

solely and exclusively for the care of the children of the State... an authority to whom all the various agencies existing for the good of children could look for countenance and support; a sanction that should make it impossible for the child-torturer to set the laws of his country at defiance... and lastly, a guarantee to the English people that such crimes as have been described shall not go unpunished in their midst.<sup>66</sup>

This model existed already in many of the colonies,<sup>67</sup> and was to be adopted in a modified form in the United Kingdom after Victoria's reign had come to an end. But it was a model designed more to contain than to protect children and it consistently failed to offer a system of care in which children could grow and thrive. The subtext of the child rescue message was that children were threats as well as victims: victims of their parents, but, left uncontrolled, a threat to nation, race and Empire. While the child rescue movement taught its supporters to see street children, through the eyes of Dickens, as objects of pity, it presented its 'finished products' in a similarly fictionalized way. Like Queen Victoria, supporters saw the children from a distance, packaged and presented as sturdy labourers, but they did not hear their voices or witness their complaints.

By the end of the twentieth century, inquiries in many Commonwealth countries were hearing distressing evidence of the failure of the very kind of state care for children that Hall was advocating. Although the witnesses who came forward were the successors, and all too often the descendants, of the children who were the supposed beneficiaries of 'the Queen's reign for children', there was nothing new about their plight. While the reforms of the early years of the Queen's reign did address structural issues impacting on children, the child rescuers had a different focus, seeking to protect children from neglectful parents rather than an unequal system, and retraining them in ways which ensured that inequality was perpetuated across the generations.

## Notes

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63. Hall, *The Queen's Reign for Children*, 170.
64. Anon., 'Personal Notes', *Ups and Downs*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1898).
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67. In the absence of a Poor Law, Australian colonies moved early to establish state children's departments, Victoria in 1864, New South Wales in 1881, South Australia in 1886, Tasmania in 1896, Western Australia in 1908 and Queensland in 1911. In Canada state children's departments developed from the activities of voluntary organizations from the 1880s.

## 2

# *Ayah*, Caregiver to Anglo-Indian Children, c. 1750–1947

*Suzanne Conway*

The *ayah*, variously described as a nanny, a child-minder, or a nursemaid,<sup>1</sup> was one of the most significant and distinctive figures in Anglo-Indian childhood from the eighteenth century until the end of British rule in India in 1947.<sup>2</sup> The word itself has two sources: from the Portuguese, *aia*, and from Hindi and Urdu, *aya*, both meaning ‘nursemaid’.<sup>3</sup> One of the features of colonial life most enjoyed by the British in India from the early days of their presence there was the ready availability of cheap workers. From within that enormous labour pool, specialization of servants’ activities soon emerged. An *ayah* was a natural employee wherever there were young British children to be cared for, employed cheaply as a round-the-clock caregiver and guardian. This practice continued unabated even after the official policy of racial separation was instituted in 1793. Not unique to Anglo-Indian culture, but pervasive within it, was the disjuncture between a belief in white racial superiority and the use of Indian servants in the intimate family circumstances of caring for, and raising, very young children.<sup>4</sup> This racial double standard prevailed and grew more concrete during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, precipitating the harsh manner in which *ayahs* could be treated upon their arrival in England, where they were frequently abandoned.

*Ayahs* and the children they cared for were at the most intense point of intersection between the colonial rulers and those whom they ruled. The *ayah* was the only female servant who worked, and usually lived, within the house.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, she was engaged continuously in intimate, private family spaces. At the same time, Anglo-Indian families insisted on physical separation from Indians in general and from their many servants in particular. These families lived in housing built at a distance from Indian habitations and required their numerous hired hands to live apart within the household’s compound.<sup>6</sup> Anglo-Indian children nonetheless spent most of their time with their *ayahs* and at intervals such as mealtimes with other servants as well. Not surprisingly, these children were anything but separate and as

a result experienced aspects of Indian culture and language that their parents considered detrimental to their proper development as moral, civilized Britons.<sup>7</sup>

The shifting nature of the relationship between Anglo-Indians and the indigenous population that began in the second half of the eighteenth century can be observed in several paintings depicting *ayahs* and their families made in Britain as well as in India. Paintings can serve as vivid primary historical source material if they are properly interpreted, not assumed to be merely reportorial. Paintings of a variety of types of subject matter frequently have an iconographic meaning, a significance that underlies the immediate, surface appearance. Portraits present specific challenges to successful interpretation, as the artist is limited to some degree by the actual appearance of his or her subject.<sup>8</sup> Portraits of the early eighteenth century in Britain were expected to flatter the sitter, but to the degree that the subject remained recognizable. Sir Joshua Reynolds stated that 'portraits are wanted by relations . . . who see with the eyes of affection'.<sup>9</sup> Even given such a limitation, many choices remained for the portrait painter to manipulate meaning if aiming for more than mere likeness. The setting of the scene, for instance, offers clues to later scholars about how the artist intended the portrait to be understood, with all manner of symbolism conveying significance. Reynolds himself helped lead the transition away from idealization of appearances to more 'truthful' allusions to character and emotion.<sup>10</sup> The composition became especially important in this regard, with choices to be made about what to represent in addition to the sitter and where to place the subject within the confines of the selected size and shape of the canvas. Reynolds was at the forefront of portraitists at the time in finding new 'secondary elements' to convey meaning.<sup>11</sup> Such fundamental selections are in turn reinforced by choices of clothing, colour, lighting and texture. Reynolds and his contemporary portrait specialist, Johann Zoffany, and later artists, including William Arthur Devis, all constructed iconography by skilful utilization of such devices.

In the early years of the British East India Company in the late seventeenth and early to mid-eighteenth century, a number of British officers and officials of the Company (who were either bachelors or went out to India leaving their wives at home) took Indian women as mistresses and common law wives known as *bibis*. These men headed interracial families that could include more than one 'wife', as well as children born to those multiple wives.<sup>12</sup> Such a family has been identified as the subject of Francesco Renaldi's unfinished painting, *The Palmer Family* (1786).<sup>13</sup> Palmer, an officer of the East India Company, had two Muslim common law wives by whom he eventually had six children. These women apparently came from aristocratic Indian families. In the painting, the senior *bibi* is shown with her most recent child (born at the end of 1785) on her lap, with an *ayah* immediately to her left. An additional two *ayahs* compositionally frame the extended

family group by standing to its left and right. With two noble wives and three children, aged three, four and under one, one *ayah* has been hired by this family to care for each child, a frequent situation when resources allowed. Their notable presence in this mixed-race family strongly suggests that the use of *ayahs* was common in high-ranking, wealthy Indian families. The compositional placement of the *ayahs* defines them, indeed, as almost *part* of the family, albeit occupying a lesser status. The unfinished state of the painting, probably caused by Palmer's assignment to another post within India, is perhaps also emblematic of the greatest extent of British colonial integration into a segment of Indian society, after which a sharp decline in such inter-racial family life started to occur in the late eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

Not coincidentally, in the years prior to Renaldi's portrait, few British women came out to India. Those few who did were usually the wives and daughters of men who were seeking to make their fortunes within the Company, and the daughters frequently married colleagues of their fathers, or missionaries who had come out alone.<sup>15</sup> Due to the dearth of British women in India, it was not unusual for men to take an Indian mistress or wife and have children with her, although for Palmer to have taken two high-ranking women as partners was remarkable. However, Company employees in such circumstances usually considered the taking of an Indian mistress or common law wife to be an interim arrangement until the men returned to England, where they would hope to acquire 'proper' British brides.<sup>16</sup> That some of these men were so integrated into – and comfortable with – this 'alien' lifestyle that they brought their Indian wives and children back home, was considered proof the men had 'gone native'. Such behaviour was increasingly considered unacceptable for an Englishman, and British colonial society found it deeply troubling.<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, two things resulted from this state of affairs. British women, especially those who had few marital prospects at home, were encouraged by the Company to go out to India to look for husbands in order to create a supply of 'proper' white and specifically British consorts for the British men there. Although they never numbered as many as the men who were seeking female companionship, the greater availability of British women did ameliorate the imbalance in the white marriage market.<sup>18</sup> At the same time that increased numbers of British women were migrating to India, within the Company there was also a move to require racial separation. This culminated in 1793 with policies put in place by Governor General Cornwallis that prohibited the hiring of Indians and bi-racial men in the government and the army.<sup>19</sup> The corruption that had typified the earlier administrations of the East India Company, particularly those of Clive and Hastings, was considered to have resulted from a progressive acculturation of individual officers.<sup>20</sup> As a result, at the same time that Palmer's family portrait was being made, and before Cornwallis's law, new types of images

emerged which represented or even featured an *ayah*: two made in England by Sir Joshua Reynolds and two painted in India by Johann Zoffany and Arthur William Devis.

*The Children of Edward Holden Cruttenden with an Indian Ayah*, by Reynolds, dates from c. 1759 and is in several ways an exceptional painting.<sup>21</sup> Painted in England (as Reynolds never went out to India), the setting is a very anonymous, decorative landscape, probably meant to serve as a visual metaphor for the pretty yet fragile children it depicts. Reynolds nurtured converging interests that would have carried significance in his being selected for this commission from Cruttenden, who had been a director of the East India Company: Reynolds was both a shareholder in the Company (and quite actively followed its 'progress'), and already noted as an excellent portraitist of children.<sup>22</sup> He was recognized as having an excellent rapport with child sitters, having the patience and insight to find ways to keep them engaged in the process for extended periods of time.<sup>23</sup> The portrait is the type of portrayal that Reynolds used repeatedly during his career, with its dream-like, almost romantic atmosphere (as also seen in *Miss Jane Bowles*, c. 1775). At the same time, however, it is clearly referent to the solid, stable triangular composition of the High Renaissance that Reynolds so admired. Interestingly, it is the young *ayah* who occupies both the apex of the triangle and the central axis of the composition. From her 'superior' position, but not much greater size than her apparently delicate charges, she keeps a vigilant eye on them with a downward gaze. Her exceptional presence in lieu of parents in what would otherwise be a family portrait is an apparent tribute to her for the role she played in the children's lives. The compositional emphasis on the *ayah* in her central and superior placement speaks of her as more than a mere employee, and at the same time the pastel palette of her garments indicates a great closeness to the children, who are also attired in pastels. Specific historical context is also significant here. This *ayah* – as the only adult presence in the painting – is being acknowledged and rewarded by Cruttenden for her role in protecting and keeping these children safe after the evacuation of women and children from Calcutta during the siege by the Nawab of Bengal, an episode in which the children's mother perished, leaving the children solely in the *ayah's* care.<sup>24</sup> Reynolds presents children who in their physical delicacy and pale complexions remind the viewer of their vulnerability after the death of their mother and during the dangerous voyage back to England. Reynolds has relished the visual richness of the *ayah's* very dark complexion, which is contrasted with the extreme whiteness of the children, and has also depicted a very young woman with tremendous responsibility, transplanted from her own culture and climate. She conveys a wistful, melancholic expression, perhaps thinking of her homeland. Records show that Cruttenden returned to India the four Indian servants (the *ayah*, two other women and a man) who were in his service during the journey back to Britain with his children.<sup>25</sup>

Presumably the portrait was begun just prior to the *ayah's* return to India in 1759.

Reynolds had another opportunity to represent an *ayah* in a highly unusual portrait (dating 1763–66) of George Clive with his wife and two-year-old daughter.<sup>26</sup> The *ayah* is placed at the centre of the family unit, but here in a strikingly exceptional configuration kneeling below all the other figures. One of the painter's repeated motifs is the placement of a child on something that raises him or her to the same level as the mother, or sometimes even somewhat above. This appears to be not merely a compositional preference but a visualization of the privileging of childhood in contemporary middle-class British culture.<sup>27</sup> The publication of *Emile*, available in English as early as 1762, laid out in considerable detail Jean-Jacques Rousseau's new concept of childhood. He insisted that childhood was a natural and distinctly different period in a human life with its own characteristics and qualities: 'nature wants children to be children before being men'.<sup>28</sup> Children were now to be understood as most closely connected to nature and therefore imbued with its inherent purity and goodness. They were thus born into a natural state of innocence. This 'new child' was defined as inherently good and pure, yet vulnerable physically, emotionally, morally and intellectually, and thus in need of careful and specific maternal nurturing and education within the context of a loving family.<sup>29</sup> The Clive daughter stands as an almost literal embodiment of Rousseauian childhood through the innocence of her expression, the vulnerability of her placement, the fragile whiteness of her skin and her non-restrictive loose clothing, the latter of Indian design and fabric.<sup>30</sup>

As before, Reynolds has observed the *ayah* closely: she is not a stock character of a black servant, but a real person who is the most exquisitely painted portion of the composition. She is considerably older than the Cruttenden *ayah*, who seems to be one of those who was placed into service at such an early age that she was barely more than a child herself. Increasingly, as more *ayahs* were needed by the enlarging British presence in India (especially as it burgeoned in the next century), *ayahs* tended to be married women who frequently had their own children. Members of the *ayah's* extended family would care for her own children so that she could earn what little she did by being in constant watchful attendance on English children. Reynolds has so carefully observed and recorded this *ayah's* jewelry that she can be identified as a married woman. It needs to be emphasized, however, that despite the *ayah* being central in the composition, she is simultaneously in an inferior position – kneeling – as she provides gentle protection lest the child lose her balance as she stands somewhat awkwardly on a chair. Her face is partially averted due to natural modesty, or perhaps because of a 'native' servant's mandatory humility.

A third view of the role of the *ayah* in eighteenth-century Anglo-Indian families is seen in Johann Zoffany's *Portrait of Sir Elijah and Lady Impey*,



Figure 2.1 Johann Zoffany, *Portrait of Sir Elijah and Lady Impey and Their Children* (1783)

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c. 1783 (see Figure 2.1). Having come out to India together in 1777, the Impeys seem quite comfortable with aspects of Indian culture while being depicted as standing close to but also apart from it.<sup>31</sup>

However, their three children, attended by two *ayahs*, are all dressed in Indian garments. The eldest, Marian, just off of the central axis, is literally pivotal as she dances to music played by Indian musicians, while the youngest is gently restrained from joining her by the *ayah* on whose lap he is sitting.<sup>32</sup> There is an interesting convergence of Europeanism and Orientalism here. The Impeys had left their older children in England when they departed, and the young children depicted in the painting were all born in India. The choice of the children's clothing visualizes their connections to the two worlds. The 'new child' was to be permitted great freedom from the physical constraint imposed by the tight, adult-style garments that children had worn since the middle ages, clothes that were identical except for size with adult clothing. As both Rousseau and Locke before him had advised, children should be dressed in loose, comfortable styles and fabrics. If these children had been in England they would almost certainly be wearing the basic loose, full, unwaisted white muslin 'dress' that had become the emblem of the 'new child'.<sup>33</sup> In India it must have seemed sensible to achieve the same ends by using traditional Indian clothing types that

had been developed to meet the needs of the climate. The Impey children, dressed in non-restrictive clothes, visualize mid-century European concepts concerning children's need to move freely in order to experience and learn directly from their physical environment. At the same time, the Indian style of the clothing signals that the environment about which they are learning is 'oriental'. Thus the children are depicted as mediating the two cultures, the one to which they belong by heritage and the one which they know through experience. This is further emphasized by the placement of the children horizontally across most of the composition. Metaphorically the children also represent a link between their Western-dressed parents and the 'oriental' servants and musicians present. The intense delight the dancing child exhibits while performing an Indian dance to Indian music is representative of how Anglo-Indian children in the charge of *ayahs* absorbed local culture. There was at this historical moment a growing concern about the acculturation of colonial children growing up surrounded by an alien, 'inferior' culture.<sup>34</sup> This was noticed particularly in children's ability to speak and understand Hindi or Urdu while their parents commonly possessed only a basic ability to give orders in these dialects. So in addition to the anxiety about children's health in India there was increasing concern that the longer these children resided in India the less British they would become.<sup>35</sup> As all the Impey children had been born in India, they had no direct knowledge of European culture except as it was lived by their parents and other Anglo-Indians.

Lady Impey is quite an unusual version of the 'new mother' of 'new children'. She was not involved directly in the upbringing of her very young children, who were entrusted to *ayahs* for ever-present care. In fact, she seems rather detached due to her placement in the composition and her gaze that extends only towards us and away from both children and husband. It is interesting to consider that Mary Impey had an intellectual life of her own, an aspect that Zoffany seems to acknowledge. She was intensely fascinated by Indian fauna and commissioned detailed drawings of birds from a trio of Indian artists.<sup>36</sup> At the same time in the image, her husband is encouraging his daughter's 'native' dance by clapping as she spins past him. In a quite sophisticated way, Zoffany has visualized the Impeys' situation: the adults take an intellectual interest in Indian culture while clearly remaining British and separate, while their children connect the two cultures within which they live. The expansive painting serves as a visual document of the last historical moment when it could have been considered appropriate for a white British child to be performing an Indian dance, and for this activity to be celebrated.

The increasing British desire for clearly defined racial separation is depicted in the final painting analysed here (see Figure 2.2), the Arthur William Devis portrait of Emily and George Mason with their *ayah* and bearer, dating from 1794 to 1795. It represents the coming new way of things for British children in India. The children, wearing the typical European



*Figure 2.2* Arthur William Devis, *Emily and George Mason* (1794–95)  
Courtesy Yale Center for British Art, Yale University.

‘new child’ loose muslin garments, are set in the immediate foreground, close to us, showing us their sprightly play in a spacious, airy room adjacent to a veranda that is open on the opposite side directly to the outdoors. The children display themselves to us in all their pale-skinned Britishness; they are compositionally, physically and spatially distanced from their Indian caregivers, both an *ayah* and a bearer.<sup>37</sup> So great is the sense of physical as well as psychological distance shown here, created by the exaggerated smallness of scale of the Indian servants, that there is no question but that the intent is to represent pure British children uncontaminated by ‘Indianness’

even as their caregivers keep a protective eye on them. They are *British*, referenced by the spinet and the European design of the toy gun, even though they happen at that moment to be resident in a foreign culture. They are portrayed as not being contaminated by that culture but as aloof from it and superior to it at the same time.

A conscious policy of racial separation intensified at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, the importance of the nurturing and protection of young children emerged as an unassailable construct which accompanied an ever-sharpening definition of female domesticity, one of whose most sacred responsibilities was the raising of children.<sup>38</sup> Although many Anglo-Indian families had always lived apart in British compounds centred on factories, the terror spread in British ranks by the Sepoy Revolt in 1857 resulted in an even deeper and wider divide between the British and the surrounding Indian culture. In response, the Government of India Act, which dismantled the East India Company and transferred the administration of India to royal, then imperial, authority, fixed the divide so firmly that it continued unchanged until Indian independence. The creation of the Indian Civil Service in 1858 gave rise to ever greater numbers of Anglo-Indian couples and the birth of Anglo-Indian children. This trend continued until the First World War after which the numbers declined. Prior to the Mutiny, a great obstacle to an increasing number of Anglo-Indian families was the perceived difficult nature of the Indian climate. Fears regarding the hostile nature of the physical environment – an environment which could feature extreme heat and humidity, widespread disease, deadly animals, reptiles and insects – limited the number of British women taking the passage to India. By contrast, in many cases men had knowingly risked their lives because the potential riches they could claim in India as part of the East India Company were so enormous.

Once the Indian Civil Service became an inviting career path for lower middle-class men, more wives accompanied their husbands and more single women came out seeking marriage. As a result, increasing numbers of British children were born in India. Childbirth itself not only presented a whole range of additional dangers for the mother, but was also believed to keep her debilitated for an extended time.<sup>39</sup> For those families that could afford it, mothers and their young children sought the cooler, healthier climate of higher elevations. They took up residence in hill stations during the hottest months, swelling the populations of the stations for up to six months a year.<sup>40</sup> Naturally, they were accompanied by their *ayahs*. During this time, the husband and father stayed down on the sun-scorched plains and super-heated river deltas where tropical diseases were rife. He had to remain at work pursuing promotion and success in order to afford the expense of his family's stay in the mountains.

Other means of trying to cope with the ever-present dangers to children's health were developed, including removing children from India altogether

and sending them to Britain to keep them safe in every way.<sup>41</sup> The inherent dangers of heatstroke, fever, dysentery and chronic diarrhoea entailed that boys under the age of around six and girls under eight or ten were generally considered too fragile for the long and potentially very dangerous journey to England.<sup>42</sup> Where international travel did occur, some mothers accompanied their children on the journey, but most sent them in the care of another adult who was sometimes a complete stranger. On occasion, when parents were desperate, boys were sent back to England with a soldier who was going home on leave. The results were frequently unhappy if the chaperone had no experience in childcare.<sup>43</sup> The ideal circumstance seemed to be to send the very experienced *ayah* (preferably the same woman who had been caring for the child since infancy) to accompany and take care of the child during a voyage that could take anywhere from three to six months or even longer depending on the weather at sea. Even if the mother was also to return to England, it was considered as necessary for her to have an *ayah* to care for her child or children while at sea as it was when in their Indian home.<sup>44</sup> As a result of all of these circumstances, increasing numbers of *ayahs* reached England.

What then happened varied considerably. The rich and evocative paintings assessed earlier seem to attest to as positive an outcome as was possible: the *ayah* was valued for her service and was, at some point, discharged from service with her pay and passage back home to India. There are records that show this happened frequently in the eighteenth century, for the family had to make a formal request for permission to buy passage for the *ayah* to make the return voyage.<sup>45</sup> However, even at this time there were *ayahs* who were simply abandoned after the ship had reached port in England. The Company's requirements for the return passages of 'native servants' were overlooked and then jettisoned before the end of the century. A subsequent requirement for a deposit to cover the servant's return passage was no longer enforced by 1844.<sup>46</sup> These young, sometimes very young, women were usually illiterate, unfamiliar with even basic elements of British law and the importance of written contracts. They may have been misled as to how they would get home again, or some may simply have assumed that a return ticket would be provided by their employer. The sad situation was that some were left stranded and more or less destitute in an alien land a very long and expensive way from home. Typically they tried to find work accompanying a family going out to India or as a lady's maid or child caregiver in England to earn money for their passage. Those who could not secure employment quickly still needed to pay for lodgings, even in the most derelict of boarding houses. Thus many resorted to begging in the streets.<sup>47</sup>

As the nineteenth century progressed, increasing numbers of British women went out to India as brides or as wives to the British men needed to fortify an ever-expanding British presence.<sup>48</sup> Even more women and children born in England went out after 1869 when the inauguration of the Suez

Canal cut a significant distance from the journey to and from India. The most significant result of the new route was to facilitate trips back home, trips that could now occur on an annual basis. All the while the family as a sphere of operations became increasingly important as Anglo-Indian life contracted into ever more insular communities. Children were again central in this process, along with their mothers who bore responsibility for recreating in India as much of England as possible.<sup>49</sup> However, a large part of the actual burden of maintaining this family lifestyle rested on the extensive use of *ayahs* who were considered indispensable as child caregivers in homes, as well as on the voyages to and from Britain that were undertaken by children with or without their mothers.<sup>50</sup> The result was that more *ayahs* were in Anglo-Indian employment than ever before.

Literature designed to assist British wives and mothers in their transition to Anglo-Indian wives and mothers was readily available in England as early as the second half of the nineteenth century. Methods of raising children in what was deemed to be an extremely unhealthy climate and dangerous environment were a natural inclusion in this advice. The newcomer was educated regarding expected dangers and how to cope most effectively to preserve the physical and moral health of their children. The *ayah* was often depicted both as indispensable to the hour-by-hour care of Anglo-Indian children, but also simultaneously as a live-in threat to them. Edmund Hull in *The European in India*, first published in 1878, includes a supplement concerning the care of children from infancy to the time of 'sending Home'.<sup>51</sup> Hull's was a relatively early voice among concerns that were to be repeated until the end of the Raj. His alarm was as much for the moral wellbeing of the children as for their physical health. He acknowledged the caring and affectionate nature of *ayahs* and their natural subservience to the children in their care, but viewed this as negative as he believed children lacked discipline and 'it is not unheard of to find [them] preferring the society of their native attendants to that of their own parents'.<sup>52</sup> Maud Diver in 1909 advocated hiring an English nurse to avoid such problems, especially 'the absence of nursery discipline', but admitted that British nannies were often overwhelmed by the climate and the cost of hiring them was usually prohibitive.<sup>53</sup> Other frequently reiterated fears were that Anglo-Indian children, as a result of spending so much time with their *ayahs*, learned to speak Hindi first and when they later started to learn English they spoke with what was considered a non-English and substandard accent, and that children were likely to develop 'native ways... a disregard for candour and a quickness at framing falsehoods'.<sup>54</sup>

For all the admonitions concerning the potential negative effects of hiring an *ayah*, these published guides for Anglo-Indian mothers were virtually unanimous in attesting to *ayahs* being absolutely necessary household employees. *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, first published in 1889 and then updated and reissued at least 10 times until 1921, declared that

although the *ayah's* specific work varied greatly with the situation, she was the single most vital of all the household servants.<sup>55</sup> However, Flora Steel and Grace Gardiner, who were experienced Anglo-Indian wives and mothers, expressed reservations about the negative effects of an *ayah's* care on the moral development, obedience and sense of self-discipline of Anglo-Indian children.<sup>56</sup> Dr Kate Platt, who framed her *The Home and Health in India and the Tropical Colonies* in 1923 as a supplement to advice previously published, was also of two minds in her quasi-validation of the *ayah*. She affirmed that 'the Indian ayah has many good points; she surrounds her charges with an atmosphere of love and devotion and has infinite patience' and stated that employing an *ayah* 'is almost indispensable in India'.<sup>57</sup> However, she voiced the same reservations as Hull and others about children who learned English only on the voyage home. Platt's gravest anxiety concerned the possible use of opium by some *ayahs*, who would, it was alleged, place the drug under the nail of a finger offered for sucking to keep a child calm and quiet.<sup>58</sup> Platt added her voice to all the others who insisted on the necessity of Anglo-Indian children being sent 'Home' to live between the ages of six and 18 years.<sup>59</sup>

There were further pressing reasons for parents to make the difficult decision to send their children back to England once they reached the ages when they were considered strong enough to endure the journey. The incidence of child mortality was significantly higher in India than at home in England. In Bengal, for instance, a death rate of 148 per 1,000 British children was registered between 1860 and 1869, while during the same period in England, the mortality rate was 67 per thousand children.<sup>60</sup> In addition, there was a firmly held belief that the unhealthy nature of the Indian climate would permanently damage children's physical wellbeing and mental capacities, which in turn created enormous pressure to get the children back to a Britain perceived as safe and healthy. *Ayahs* were again considered indispensable for this journey.

The greater the number of *ayahs* who took the voyage to Britain, the more became stranded. There are signs that a small number of British people were aware as early as 1825 that this was a pressing issue. One response to this problem was the establishment of a home for *ayahs*. There is a good deal of ambiguity concerning just when the original London home for *ayahs* was founded. The Matron of the *Ayahs' Home*, giving evidence before the Committee of Distressed Colonial and Indian Subjects (1910), asserted her belief that: 'some years ago women were found to have been stranded in England, and a committee of ladies resolved that there should be a home'.<sup>61</sup> A business card for the *Ayahs' Home* in the India Office files makes reference to a foundation in 1825. There was apparently a home in existence by 1863, run by Mr and Mrs Rogers at 6 Jewry Street in Aldgate, but this seems to have been closed down prior to 1891 for inadequacies in its administration.<sup>62</sup> By 1891, management of a Home for *Ayahs*, located at 26 King



Figure 2.3 Photograph of the Ayahs' Home at 26 King Edward Road, Hackney, London (1900)  
 Courtesy London City Mission.

Edward Road, Hackney, was turned over to the London City Mission. The Home at this address and several of the *ayahs* it housed are shown in a photograph published in the 1900 edition of the London City Mission Magazine (see Figure 2.3). By 1919, the Home had to move to larger quarters at 4 King Edward Road in order to accommodate the increased number of *ayahs* in need of shelter as they sought work that would afford them passage back home to India.

Joseph Salter, already the Missionary to the Home for Asiatics on behalf of London City Mission, was assigned responsibility for the Ayahs' Home. He was a natural choice, having taught himself a number of languages spoken in India and possessing experience from working with *lascars* and others at the Asiatics Home. One of the most dramatic instances of service he rendered was to assist an *ayah* to board a specific ship bound for India, despite the ship having already left the dock. In this instance, Salter travelled on the boat he had arranged to pursue the ship, and enabled an *ayah* to board. Upon his return to the dock, Salter fell into the tidal basin and was only able to keep from drowning by clutching a piece of flotsam.<sup>63</sup>

The Ayahs' Home in its various manifestations was supported privately, as was the London City Mission, each of the institutions relying upon

individual donations and fundraising events as well as the public support of people of rank. Such sponsors included the ex-Vicereine of India, the Vicountess of Chelmsford, who presided at the official opening of the new Home in 1919.<sup>64</sup> While *ayahs* were in residence awaiting work to take them home, they did a variety of handwork that was the central feature of annual sales to benefit the Home. The India Office, although reluctant to support individual requests for the financial support of an *ayah* who had been left stranded in England, was making an annual payment of ten pounds to the *Ayahs' Home* by 1928.<sup>65</sup> Not surprisingly, the Home had difficulty in offsetting its expenses. By 1917, when the First World War meant that *ayahs* had to remain in extended residence, the administrator of the Home applied to the India Office for financial assistance, acknowledging a deficit of £150.<sup>66</sup>

The principal role of the *Ayahs' Home* was to shelter those who had been left stranded by the employer who either had brought them to England or who had promised them employment to earn passage for returning to India. A particularly dramatic case of *ayah* abandonment was recorded in 1908 in correspondence between the *Ayah's Home* and the India Office in London. This incident also appears in the testimony cited earlier from Mrs Dunn, the Home's Matron. A British woman in Bombay hired an *ayah*, who had then travelled to England. Once she had arrived in England, Thomas Cook and Sons, a company which frequently served as an agent in the hiring of Indian servants, transferred her employment to the Drummond family in Scotland, where she worked for just over two weeks on the understanding that she would sail in their employ from London to India. Upon returning to London, the Drummonds left the *ayah* at King's Cross Station, having given her one pound as she stood uncomprehending on the station platform. The *ayah* made her way to the Thomas Cook office, which in turn directed her to the Home. However, as it did not take destitute women, the Matron of the *Ayahs' Home*, Mrs Dunn, sought compensation from the India Office for the *ayah's* room and board until she could arrange for passage back to India. Dunn stated that the Home accommodated 90 *ayahs* a year and that money was difficult to raise as 'the charitable public are not inclined to keep *ayahs* when people can afford to bring a servant from India'.<sup>67</sup> The British Government did provide minimal funds, reluctantly.<sup>68</sup> Legislation to ameliorate such situations was resisted, however, this in the face of the increased prevalence of abandonment and the vast wealth extracted from India.

The contrast between the sometimes callous treatment of *ayahs* by many Anglo-Indian parents and the great mutual affection and love between *ayahs* and their charges is stark indeed. Anglo-Indian children usually remembered their childhood years in India as idyllic and recalled the loving care given by their *ayahs* as the most significant aspect of that idyll. Those who have written about the relationship in fictional terms include Rudyard Kipling. In 'Ba Ba Blacksheep', published in 1888, Kipling depicts an *ayah* modelled directly on his own and for whom 'the boy of the household was very dear

to her heart'.<sup>69</sup> Joyce Wilkins, by contrast, recalls ruefully that 'Ayah was patient with Joycie-baba, and bore the brunt of the complaints about my behaviour'.<sup>70</sup> George Roche looks back to 1918 when his father, an officer in the Royal Engineers, designed and oversaw the construction of a bridge and he, his mother and younger brother accompanied him. According to his memory, the idyllic circumstances and the constant presence of his *ayah*, Lela, are inextricable. 'We had picnic lunches, napped in the shade of trees and, when we awoke, clambered on to our ayah's hips to be given forbidden sweet-meats'.<sup>71</sup> Rumer Godden and her sister Jon remember that they were so badly behaved that both an English and then a Eurasian nanny left in short order. However, with the arrival of the Indian *ayah*, Hannah, they were as docile as could be.<sup>72</sup> Hannah was with them day and night until the family left to return to England. As the sisters wrote, 'the Indians we knew best were of course our own servants'.<sup>73</sup>

However, this very intimacy was at the heart of the issue. Parents frequently came to resent the deep feelings their children held for 'mere servants', and servants of 'colour' at that, rather than for the parents themselves. They also had fears of the detrimental effects on children of exposure to 'native ways' that were repeatedly described in advice literature. It is indeed true that many Anglo-Indian children did learn to speak Hindi or Urdu as their first language. George Roche recounts that he and his brother 'could speak little English... We spoke Urdu much better than our mother tongue. We often spoke to each other... in Urdu'.<sup>74</sup> Not only could few parents speak to Indians in one of their many languages, but the ability of their children to do so seemed to be a significant breakdown in the desired separation of the rulers from those they ruled and of whites from people of colour who were assumed to be inferior. Anglo-Indian children were the site of connection between the two spheres that the British ruling class had sought since the late eighteenth century to keep as distant as possible. As a former Anglo-Indian child put it, 'It was through her (Mary, her *ayah*) that I experienced my India'.<sup>75</sup>

## Notes

1. This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Meredith Taussig, best friend always.
2. The term was also used for an Indian lady's maid, and was employed by the Eden sisters in that manner while accompanying their brother, George (Lord Auckland), when he served as Governor-General of India (1836–42). See Emily Eden, *Up the Country: Letters Written to Her Sister from the Upper Provinces of India*, Vol. I (London: Richard Bentley, 1867), 36.
3. See [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) (accessed 22 February 2015).
4. For the purposes of clarity, the term 'Anglo-Indian' will be used throughout to refer to British colonists and their families in India. This is how they referred to themselves (and were referred to) until 1911, when the term was officially recognized for those who had previously been called 'Eurasians'.

5. Mary A. Procida, *Married to Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883–1947* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 85.
6. Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), 2.
7. Rosemary Marangoly George, 'Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home', *Cultural Critique*, no. 26 (Winter 1993–94), 107.
8. On approaches to understanding paintings as historical evidence, see Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
9. James Christen Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood, 1730–1830* (Berkeley: University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 1995), 84. Although he himself had no children, Reynolds delighted in playing with and telling stories to child sitters.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25.
13. Mildred Archer, *India and Portraiture 1770–1825* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 282–83. This painting, also sometimes attributed to artist Johann Zoffany, can be seen here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/major-william-palmer-with-his-second-wife-the-mughal-prin191213> (accessed 22 February 2015).
14. *Ibid.* Mildred Archer, the acknowledged expert on Anglo-Indian portraiture, had also previously analysed the Palmer portrait in her article, 'Renaldi and India: a Romantic Encounter', *Apollo*, vol. 104 (1976), 98–105.
15. Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Gender, and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century', in Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38.
16. Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, 36.
17. *Ibid.*
18. George, 'Homes in the Empire, Empires in the Home', 122.
19. Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 118.
20. *Ibid.*, 114.
21. See [http://www.masp.art.br/masp2010/acervo\\_detalheobra.php?id=644](http://www.masp.art.br/masp2010/acervo_detalheobra.php?id=644) (accessed 22 February 2015).
22. David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 136.
23. Steward, *The New Child*, 20.
24. It must also be kept in mind that the inclusion of an Indian servant in a portrait not only accords importance to that servant, but also represents the wealth of the employer and alludes to the source of that wealth.
25. Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travelers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 62.
26. Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 156. Mannings speculates that the painting began as a pair portrait of Clive and his wife, the daughter being added later. George Clive was a cousin of Robert Clive, known as 'Clive of India'. Like his cousin, he returned to England from India having amassed a considerable fortune.
27. Steward, *The New Child*, 83.

28. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), Book One, *in passim*.
29. The exhibition catalogue by Steward, *The New Child*, is the seminal exploration of representations of children in Georgian England. The 'new child' is defined as the child who is understood by Rousseau and others as being in a definably separate and different stage of human life (rather than being considered as a mini-adult or adult-in-waiting).
30. Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 136.
31. Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, 60. Impey held the highly ranked and responsible position of High Court Judge.
32. Mary Webster, *Johan Zoffany: 1733–1810* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 462. The children were born in India, the older children having been left in England when the Impeys went out in 1774.
33. Steward, *The New Child*, 125–26.
34. Nupur Chaudhuri, '“Nellie Is Beginning to Talk, But Nearly All Hindustani”': The Life of British Infants and Children in Nineteenth-Century India', *Stories for Children, Histories of Childhood* (GRAAT 2007), 294.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Martin Postle (ed.), *Johan Zoffany RA: Society Observed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
37. Frequently boys from about age 6 also had a male servant called a bearer assigned to their care. He would perform most of the same tasks as the *ayah* but was deemed a more appropriate companion for a somewhat older male child.
38. Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 119.
39. Maud Diver, *The Englishwoman in India* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1909), 30.
40. Nupur Chaudhuri, 'Memsahibs and Motherhood in Nineteenth-Century Colonial India', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4 (1988), 528.
41. Edmund C.P. Hull, *The European in India: Or Anglo-Indian's Vade-Mecum* (London: C. Degan Paul and Company, 1878), 138.
42. Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, 35.
43. Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6–7.
44. Kate Platt, *The Home and Health in India and the Tropical Colonies* (London: Bailliere, Tindale, and Cox, 1923), 138.
45. India Office Records, file IOR/E/124, British Library.
46. Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 20.
47. Saloni Nathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 72.
48. Pat Barr, *The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976), 12.
49. Mary A. Procida, *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883–1947* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 60.
50. *Ibid.*, 50.
51. Hull, *The European in India*, 140.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Diver, *The Englishwoman in India*, 35–36.
54. Hull, *The European in India*, 140–41.

55. Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011 [originally 1888]), 92.
56. Ibid.
57. Platt, *The Home and Health in India*, 138.
58. Ibid., 128.
59. Ibid., 143.
60. Chauduri, Nellie Is Beginning to Talk, 290.
61. India Office Records, file IOR/L/PJ/6/1952, no. 71, 1909, British Library.
62. Visram, *Asians in Britain*, 51.
63. Joseph Salter, *The East in the West: Or Work Among the Asiatics and Africans in London* (London: S.W. Partridge & Co., 1895), 16.
64. *London City Mission Magazine*, no. 18 (December 1921), 140.
65. India Office Records, file IOR/L/PJ/6/1952, no. 71, 1928, British Library.
66. Ibid.
67. Minutes of Evidence, 'Committee on Distressed Colonial and Indian Subjects', 19 November 1909, 72.
68. India Office Records, file L/PJ/6/881, no. 2622, British Library.
69. Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself and Other Autobiographical Writings* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 138.
70. Joyce Wilkins, *A Child's Eye View: 1904–1920* (Brighton: Book Guild, 1992), 11.
71. George Roche, *A Childhood in India: Tales from Sholapur* (London and New York: Radcliffe Press, 1994), 2.
72. Jon Godden and Rumer Godden, *Two Under the Sun* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 35.
73. Ibid., 31.
74. Roche, *A Childhood in India*, 11.
75. As quoted in Vyvyen Brendon, *Children of the Raj* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 164.

# 3

## Babies of the Empire: Science, Nation and Truby King's Mothercraft in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa

*S.E. Duff*

In 1923, a coalition of South African child welfare societies invited a nurse trained in Dr Truby King's mothercraft programme to tour the country, providing a series of public lectures on childrearing. Miss Paterson was met with large audiences and approving newspaper coverage wherever she spoke. Her purpose was to communicate why and how King's programme of scientific childrearing had contributed to the dramatic reduction in the rate of infant mortality in New Zealand, where King had originated mothercraft in 1907. As Cape Town's *Argus* newspaper reported, of every 1,000 babies born in the city in 1922, 137 died, more than half of whom were black. In contrast, in New Zealand, the figure was only 41.8 deaths per thousand – then the lowest in the world. 'How', asked the newspaper, 'do they manage it?'<sup>1</sup>

As the Cape Province's Medical Officer for Health, Dr T. Shaddick Higgins, noted, South African interest in mothercraft was to some extent part of a global, particularly imperial, embrace of King's programme: 'The success of [King's] work in New Zealand has prompted people throughout the British Empire and in other parts of the world to endeavour to share in its benefits.'<sup>2</sup> In 1917, the aptly named Babies of the Empire Society had invited King to open a Mothercraft Training Centre in London, and from there qualified mothercraft nurses took King's mothercraft around the British world. Mothercraft's appeal was linked to its apparent efficacy in reducing infant mortality and in improving the overall health of babies and young children. It was a scientific intervention with proven results. But accompanying King's advice to mothers (and network of nurses and clinics to support young families) was a set of ideas on how children should be raised. King wanted mothercraft to produce physically and intellectually strong, self-reliant and hardworking loyal subjects of the empire. Because mothercraft operated on an international scale, it opens a window onto the construction of an idea

of what white childhood should be in the British world, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s.

The focus of this chapter falls on mothercraft in South Africa.<sup>3</sup> The South African National Council for Child Welfare (SANCCW) opened the Cape Town Mothercraft Training Centre in 1925, and established a Mothercraft League in 1927. The Centre was envisaged as the first in a collection of mothercraft clinics spread across South Africa, which would provide mainly white mothers with scientific advice on pregnancy, childbirth, child feeding and childrearing. To some extent, King's stated aim of improving the health of the white 'stock' in New Zealand and the empire was echoed by South African medical professionals. However, the Union's position within the British world was more ambiguous and more ambivalent than those of the other settler dominions. Accumulated over the course of a century largely through conflict with African polities and, finally, the two Boer republics between 1899 and 1902, South Africa was not as anglicized as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and, like India, hosted a majority black population. As John Darwin notes, the Union of South Africa, declared on 31 May 1910, was 'an awkward element in the imperial system at the best of times'.<sup>4</sup> This awkwardness was particularly marked during the early twentieth century – the period under consideration in this chapter – as the Union negotiated for itself a position within the empire. A decline in imperialist, jingoistic fervour after the South African War (1899–1902) was matched by emergent African and Afrikaner nationalisms, as well as a 'South Africanist' discourse which, as Saul Dubow observes, 'connoted an inclusive form of patriotism which [white] English-and Afrikaans-speakers could both subscribe to, one that was sufficiently capacious to reconcile local nationalisms with continued membership of the British empire'.<sup>5</sup>

Science and technology – in the form of professional organizations, international research projects and museums, for example – were crucial both to the construction of this new, progressive South African nationalism, as well as to knitting the Union more closely into the empire. These served to strengthen the South African state, as well as to build closer links, and on an equal footing, with both scholars and researchers in Britain.<sup>6</sup> South Africa complicates the idea of the British world.<sup>7</sup> Britishness possessed a range of meanings in early twentieth-century South Africa, one of which was bound up with the use of science and technology to boost the health, prosperity and productivity of the Union. Drawing largely on the records of the Mothercraft Training Centre, I argue that an analysis of King's mothercraft in South Africa illustrates the ways in which ideas linked to being in the British world were adopted and adapted by organizations within the Union, in this case by the child welfare movement. Although connected explicitly to the moulding of (white) imperial childhoods, mothercraft found support among societies affiliated, for example, to Afrikaner nationalist politics.

## Truby King and the infant welfare movement

Understandings of infant life, health and welfare were changing at the beginning of the twentieth century. Particularly after the South African War, children were increasingly seen, in Anna Davin's words, as a 'natural resource'.<sup>8</sup> Emerging in various forms around the world,<sup>9</sup> the infant welfare movement pushed for the better provision and regulation of medical and educational facilities to mothers, babies and young children.<sup>10</sup> In Britain, this interest in children's health and welfare was driven by anxieties about the country's ability properly to rule an empire in which white Britons were a minority; the declining birth rate and an apparent increase in infant mortality; the emergence of a range of public health organizations which linked poor health with bad sanitation; and scientific research on the causes of infant mortality. In New Zealand, despite having the lowest recorded infant mortality rate in the world, politicians worried that declining birth rates rendered the country particularly vulnerable to the effects of mass immigration from Asia. In 1904, Premier Richard John Seddon declared, 'Babies are our best immigrants'. He added, 'population is essential and if increased from British stock the self-governing colonies will still further strengthen and buttress our great Empire'.<sup>11</sup>

Although not trained in the fledgling field of paediatrics, Truby King (1858–1938) shared such views about the need to raise healthy white children for the future stability of the state. He asserted in 1910 that 'the destiny of the race is in the hands of the mothers'.<sup>12</sup> King's interest in children's health drew on research on the link between infant mortality and nutrition, which emphasized that mothers needed to be encouraged to breastfeed or should have ready access to clean supplies of milk.<sup>13</sup> King, a strong proponent of breastfeeding, proposed that making available both information and support for new mothers would result in an increase in breastfeeding. Although King wrote that it was 'necessary to be guided by the laws of nature', as his internationally best-selling *The Feeding and Care of Baby* (1907) demonstrated, he believed that mothers needed to be taught how to breastfeed.<sup>14</sup> In his view, there were correct and incorrect ways of going about breastfeeding. Although not the first advocate of feeding 'by the clock', King became one of the most influential proponents of an infant feeding regime that emphasized the training of the infant's body and will. According to the age of their baby, mothers were to breastfeed at regular intervals, ignoring cries or appeals to be fed at other times.<sup>15</sup> Anything else was dismissed as both unscientific and as potentially harmful to the infant, who risked being overfed or insufficiently disciplined.<sup>16</sup>

In New Zealand, King's child-feeding and childrearing advice was disseminated through a network of specially trained nurses overseen by the Plunket Society, the organization – named after Lady Victoria Plunket, the wife of the governor of New Zealand – established in 1908 to put King's policies

into practice.<sup>17</sup> Parents received advice and monitored their children's health and development through regular weighing and measuring at Plunket clinics.<sup>18</sup> Such was the success of King's mothercraft – as it came to be called – that it was credited with keeping New Zealand's infant mortality rates the lowest in the world.<sup>19</sup> The appeal of the programme was that it was based on scientific evidence, seemed to be effective and was easy to follow. The first regions outside New Zealand to adopt the Plunket model, shortly after 1919, were Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, where a similar set of anxieties existed about shoring up the physical and intellectual strength of the country's white population, fears further heightened during a period of national soul-searching in the wake of the Gallipoli campaign of 1915. King's mothercraft was seen as a particularly effective strategy in building up the health of Australia's 'white stock'.<sup>20</sup>

In 1917, the Babies of the Empire Society was founded in London with the specific goal of educating mothers about the most effective ways of raising their children for the good of the empire. Two of the Society's founders were Lord and Lady Plunket and they invited King to establish a Mothercraft Training Centre in London.<sup>21</sup> Although one of several welfare centres around Britain, what set the Mothercraft Centre apart was its emphasis on teaching women how to breastfeed.<sup>22</sup> Also, it offered training in midwifery and King's mothercraft to nurses. Several of these women were drawn from around the empire, having travelled to Europe to assist in the war effort, and it was they who established similar mothercraft centres in Canada, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South Africa and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

Although the work and aims of mothercraft societies around the world tended to differ as they were influenced by local conditions and preoccupations, they all shared the view that women needed to be taught how to be mothers: that knowledge about the proper and scientific feeding and care of infants and young children needed to be passed from medical professionals to parents. This medicalization of early childhood was one of the most important reasons for the appeal of mothercraft to the infant welfare movement in South Africa.

### **The South African infant welfare movement**

South Africa's infant welfare movement emerged after 1902 during a period of post-war reconstruction and nation building. Dominated by English speakers who identified both as South Africans and as imperial subjects, the country's two most influential societies – the Society for the Protection of Child Life (SPCL), founded in Cape Town in 1908, and Johannesburg's Children's Aid Society (CAS), established in 1909 – explicitly linked their aims to a South Africanist project.<sup>24</sup> They and the increasing numbers of smaller welfare societies across the country were interested particularly in improving the health of white children.<sup>25</sup> By 1924 – when CAS, SPCL and smaller

societies came together to form the South African National Council of Child Welfare (SANCCW) – there were 33 child welfare organizations around the Union. There were 81 by 1930.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the SANCCW's broad allegiance to the British Empire, it worked alongside Afrikaner nationalist organizations concerned about the growing numbers of impoverished whites leaving the economically depressed countryside for South Africa's cities. This was due partly to the fact that before the creation of a national Department of Welfare in 1937, child welfare was the responsibility of the SANCCW, church groups, societies like the Red Cross, district nurses and municipal welfare departments.<sup>27</sup> But it was also because the SANCCW and the Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging (ACVV, the Afrikaans Christian Women's Society), for example, were equally concerned about the implications of poor whiteism for the maintenance of white rule in the Union.

Industrialization, mass urbanization of both poor blacks and whites (the number of African children in Johannesburg increased by five times between 1921 and 1936)<sup>28</sup> and the impoverishment of the countryside animated efforts to improve white children's health and reduce infant mortality rates.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, because whites comprised only around 20 per cent of the Union's population, white families were encouraged to grow.<sup>30</sup> Central to all of this work was the education of white mothers.<sup>31</sup> The journalist and founder member of the ACVV, M.E. Rothman, who contributed a volume on women and children to the report of the landmark Carnegie Commission of Investigation into the Poor White Question (1932), remarked that young white women ('the potential mothers of our nation') needed, at the very least, 'social or home education' to transform them into the kind of women who would produce and raise healthy white children for the good of the *volk* (nation).<sup>32</sup>

Rothman invoked both the ideology of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) and science in her appeal for educating white women about motherhood and for providing better maternity services to them. She argued that poor, rural white mothers deserved the same standard of care as their urban, middle-class contemporaries who, by the 1920s and 1930s, had increasing access to doctors trained in obstetrics and gynaecology. Mothers, noted Rothman, were responsible for shaping the citizen and, precisely for this reason, they deserved the best care that medicine and science could offer. She did this in the context of the growing medicalization of pregnancy, childbirth and early childhood in South Africa – part of a global trend – and also the professionalization of nursing and midwifery.<sup>33</sup> The 1928 Public Health Act instituted strict regulations around the practice of midwifery, partly to encourage women to give birth in hospitals, something only a small minority did until the 1950s.<sup>34</sup> Both in the Union and elsewhere, scientific motherhood and childrearing were underpinned by the argument that children were so valuable to the future of

the nation that mothers needed to be guided by childcare experts familiar with the most up-to-date medical and scientific knowledge.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, a clutch of child sciences – including psychology, sociology and medicine – became closely intertwined with policymaking in education, and influenced state and other organizations' advice regarding childcare and childrearing.<sup>36</sup>

The child study movement, which originated in the United States, influenced some of South Africa's most powerful researchers and policymakers of the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> People like Ernst Malherbe, the founder of the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research which pushed for social engineering through schooling,<sup>38</sup> studied at Columbia University and its affiliated Teachers College during the 1920s and 1930s. They advised government ministers, but also worked alongside child welfare societies, who, in their turn, were part of an international network of organizations which shared similar aims and concerns. Representatives of the Union's main welfare societies attended international conferences and corresponded with like-minded campaigners abroad. The sisters Dorothy Buxton and Eglantyne Jebb pioneered child welfare work both in South Africa and abroad. Jebb established the Save the Child Fund – the first organization to develop and pursue the idea of international children's rights – in Britain in 1919.<sup>39</sup> Buxton, the wife of the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, was Honorary President of both the SPCL and the CAS, and was the moving force behind the decision to hold the first national conference of child welfare societies in 1917.<sup>40</sup> Word about the success of Plunket in New Zealand spread along these networks, which spanned both the empire and the United States. These international webs of connection included not only South Africans who considered themselves to be part of a British world, but also Afrikaner nationalists interested in the global child study movement. In other words, imperial networks were entangled with networks emanating from beyond the empire, and facilitated the exchange of information even among those sceptical of the imperial project.<sup>41</sup>

The question, though, is why mothercraft was so attractive at a time when white women's organizations were already going about doing comparable work. In 1919, a group of Afrikaner nationalist women's organizations opened a midwives' training school and *kraaminrigting* (maternity clinic) in Pretoria. Rather like the Mothercraft Training Centre, its purpose was to train midwives specifically for rural areas, and to provide pregnant and new mothers with free medical assistance and childcare advice.<sup>42</sup> The ACVV mobilized to promote *volksgesondheid* (the health of the nation) by demanding that the state subsidise maternity clinics for poor whites, arranged to train nurses in midwifery, and employed these professional midwives and health visitors in rural areas. Rothmann and the leadership of the ACVV were well aware that poor white women in rural areas used a variety of *boererade*, or home remedies, as well as the services of local women, many of them black,

as midwives.<sup>43</sup> The purpose of these programmes was to encourage white women to place themselves in the care of trained professionals.<sup>44</sup>

As Susanne Klausen's analysis of debates about mothercraft in the *South African Medical Record* shortly before the founding of the Mothercraft Training Centre demonstrates, part of its appeal was that it could easily be incorporated into eugenicist projects which sought to raise healthy white children.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, its status as an imperial intervention attracted other doctors and welfare workers. Writing in support of King's mothercraft, Dr G.P. Mathew, President of the Eastern Province Branch of the British Medical Association in South Africa, asked: 'Are the women in the truest sense "Empire-building"? Is it not a truism that healthy children are the greatest future asset of a strong nation . . . ?'<sup>46</sup> However, it would be simplistic to argue that there was a tension between nationalists and imperialists within the SANCCW. After all, the segregationist Pact government led by J.B.M. Herzog of the National Party funded the Mothercraft Training Centre with some enthusiasm.<sup>47</sup> But, unlike the ACVV's work, King's programme enjoyed the status of a proven, scientific intervention which had succeeded in reducing infant mortality rates in white populations abroad. In other words, mothercraft's initial success in the Union derived from its appeal to a range of interests within the child welfare movement: while its presence within the empire spoke to some members, its scientific foundations were lauded by others.

### Lady Buxton and the Mothercraft Training Centre

In the lectures she presented to South African audiences in 1923, Nurse Paterson argued that New Zealand's low infant mortality was due entirely to the 'uniform authoritative guidance' of advice – which served neither to 'distract' nor to 'confuse' mothers – provided at Plunket clinics. As she said to mothers in Cape Town, it was 'extremely rare' for mothers not to be able to breastfeed their babies 'for at least part of the first nine months'. It was 'all a question of understanding the technique of breastfeeding' and of preparing for motherhood.<sup>48</sup> Professor Fred Clarke of the University of Cape Town's Education Department had made a similar point two years previously, when he called for the acknowledgement of 'the importance of *knowledge*, and yet more knowledge, in our handling of the condition of child-life'.<sup>49</sup> The Mothercraft Training Centre was intended precisely to convey this knowledge to the city's white mothers. It was opened in the leafy, middle-class suburb of Claremont on 14 July 1925. Present were HRH Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, the wife of the Governor-General of the Union and the Centre's Patron, and Dr D.F. Malan, the Minister for Health and the future first apartheid prime minister. Although partly funded by annual grants from the Union's Department of Public Health and the Cape Town City Council, the Centre was run by the SPCL and the SANCCW, who

also raised extra money to support its work. The SANCCW hoped that this model – centres funded by the state, but under the control of local child welfare societies – would be replicated first in Johannesburg and then across South Africa.<sup>50</sup>

The Centre trained nurses and midwives in mothercraft, using the same curriculum as at institutions in New Zealand and at the London Mothercraft Training Centre. Graduates were known as Athlone Nurses, named in honour of the Governor-General and his wife. The SANCCW justified its petition to the Union government in 1924 for assistance in funding the Centre on the grounds that it would train the professional nurses and midwives needed so urgently among poor white women in the countryside. Indeed, the Centre encouraged women fluent in both English and Afrikaans to enrol on its courses.<sup>51</sup> The Centre also gave ‘guidance and direction to mothers in the care and feeding of their infants’.<sup>52</sup> To this end, the Centre opened a dietetic hospital where malnourished or sickly babies could receive treatment, and where mothers could stay for up to a fortnight, learning how to feed their infants correctly. All care was free of charge, and only open to whites, and it opened with space for 15 infants and three mothers to stay.<sup>53</sup> Centre staff presented talks to women’s organizations and girls’ schools; school pupils and Girl Guides were regular visitors.<sup>54</sup> It also received ‘hundreds of letters ... from all parts of South Africa, written by mothers seeking advice’.<sup>55</sup> Although none of these letters are in the Centre’s archive – and it is reasonable to assume that they were destroyed – its management committee referred, often, to the volume of correspondence undertaken by the matron and her staff. In December 1925 alone, ‘170 letters were received, and 174 despatched during the month’.<sup>56</sup>

From its opening, the Centre emphasized its credentials as a scientific institution linked closely to the Plunket movement in New Zealand: its first matron, Miss Mitchell, and the senior nurse in charge of the dietetic hospital, Sister Bowron, were New Zealanders, had worked at the Mothercraft Home in London and had met Truby King.<sup>57</sup> It also maintained close ties with the University of Cape Town, reporting in 1926:

A very pleasing feature is the increasing use the Medical Men in Capetown are making of the Institution. Every effort is made to satisfactorily carry out the treatments ordered by them. During the year Dr Simpson Wells and Professor Crichton have brought their classes of University Students to the Centre.<sup>58</sup>

The Centre was to be not only a site of study, where medical students could observe the treatment of malnourished children in the dietetic hospital, for instance,<sup>59</sup> but also an organization which facilitated greater contact between these professionals and the public. At their first meeting, the Centre’s management committee decided that ‘professors’ from the

University of Cape Town would be invited to lecture the Centre's nurses and parents about 'hygiene and psychology'.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Centre described itself and its work as being fairly similar to that being undertaken in the London Mothercraft Training Centre, it differed from this and other mothercraft institutions because it operated alongside an existing children's home run by the SPCL. The same Lady Buxton who had encouraged the formation of the SANCC lent her name to an emergency home opened in Cape Town in 1909, and run by the SPCL. The home provided short-term care for white children between the ages of three months and six years, whose parents could not, for reasons ranging from exhaustion to financial problems, care for them adequately.<sup>61</sup> When the SPCL cast around for a site for a Mothercraft Centre, this existing property and institution seemed to be a practical space on which to graft mothercraft.<sup>62</sup> Staff at both institutions overlapped. Nurses training in mothercraft worked at the Lady Buxton Home, and some children who received treatment for malnutrition at the dietetic hospital were subsequently cared for at the Lady Buxton Home.<sup>63</sup> But there is no evidence to suggest that the parents or guardians of the children admitted to Lady Buxton sought childrearing advice at the Mothercraft Training Centre. It would seem that while Lady Buxton's charges were drawn mainly, although not exclusively, from the city's less affluent white population, it was predominantly white, middle-class mothers who consulted the Training Centre. In 1926, for instance of the 'Nearly six hundred patients' seen at the institution, 'Practically all the mothers' were 'of a superior and educated class'.<sup>64</sup>

In the words of one member of the Centre's committee, it tended to treat mothers and babies of the 'better class'. The Centre did not interpret this as a failure, and even acknowledged that the nearby municipal clinic on Claremont's main road, which was far longer established and better served by public transport, enjoyed 'the full confidence of the poorest classes'. It was an 'asset' to the Centre because trainees could gain experience in treating a greater range of mothers and babies there.<sup>65</sup> The Centre's management also noted that the women applying to study to be nurses were overwhelmingly middle class: 'The Committee have cause for congratulation that a very satisfactory type of girl is coming forwards for training, for it is recognised more and more every year that the early training of our children should lie in the hands of women of a definite standard of education and breeding'.<sup>66</sup>

It advertised its bursaries and prospectus among the girls' schools of the Cape Province, hoping to encourage pupils to train as Athlone Nurses, at a time when high-school education was largely reserved for the white middle class.<sup>67</sup> However, there was some debate over whether it was desirable only to attract the 'higher grade' of nurses. Some committee members argued that it would be more reasonable to train 'nurses of the domestic servant-type' because these women would be more likely to find employment (they would

be paid less) and would be more willing to work in distant rural areas.<sup>68</sup> Despite the fact that by 1934, the Centre had trained 140 mothercraft nurses, the demand for nurses and midwives in rural areas remained just as strong. Part of the problem was that the women who had been educated in Cape Town tended to work in larger towns and cities.<sup>69</sup> Most of them were, despite the Centre's efforts to attract Afrikaans-speaking trainees, English-speaking. The Centre advertised in both the English *Cape Times* and the Afrikaans *Die Burger*, and offered bursaries specifically to bilingual trainees.<sup>70</sup> One of the Centre's first projects was the translation of King's first and most widely read book, *The Expectant Mother and Baby's First Month*, which appeared as *Die Verwagte Moeder en Haar Kind se Eerste Maand* in 1925. A note in *Child Welfare* explained that the translation would help to demonstrate 'how far removed are some old-fashioned methods from what medical and nursing science had proved to be the best'.<sup>71</sup>

Despite these efforts to reach poor white Afrikaans women, the Mothercraft Training Centre felt that, nonetheless, it was doing important work among the affluent. There was a strand within the discourse on maternal ignorance which focused on the arrogance of middle-class mothers who thought that clinic attendance and nurses' advice were beneath them. Nurse Paterson accused 'mothers of the upper classes' of waiting 'for the baby to fall sick before they ask the advice of the family doctor'. They needed 'as much . . . help as other women'.<sup>72</sup> In an article titled 'The Middle-Class Baby's Handicap', Dr Marion Mackenzie, a Cape Town-based GP, wrote:

if the middle class is to survive, it is up to us to see Infant Welfare Centres in middle-class districts; it is up to the middle-class mother to see that she takes advantage of them. It is a disgrace that middle-class infants' death-rate should be no lower than that of the slum babies attending a Centre.<sup>73</sup>

It was certainly true that white, middle-class women in Cape Town sought the Centre's assistance with enthusiasm, particularly about breastfeeding. The dietetic hospital was constantly in demand and in need of more room for mothers asking to spend time there, learning how to breastfeed. In addition to this, the Centre held breastfeeding clinics around Cape Town, and exclusively in the city's wealthier districts, until the early 1970s. Arguably, mothercraft's greatest success in Cape Town was in providing advice to white, middle-class mothers interested in breastfeeding.<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

Mothercraft was introduced to South Africa because it appealed to a group of child welfare organizations with similar aims – the improvement of white children's health – but disparate politics. Its imperial reach, and King's stated

aim of improving the white stock of empire spoke to white, English-speaking South Africans who understood themselves as existing firmly within a British world: loyal both to empire and to a fledgling Union of South Africa. However, mothercraft's status as a scientific intervention which had, apparently, successfully and dramatically reduced infant mortality in a white population made it attractive to societies with links with Afrikaner nationalist politics, like the ACVV. However, mothercraft failed to take root in the Union partly because it was never able to mobilise poor, white, Afrikaans mothers – the women deemed to be most in need of assistance. Partly because of its location in a white, middle-class suburb in Cape Town close to an already well attended child welfare clinic, the Mothercraft Training Centre was patronised largely by English-speaking, white, middle-class women. It was these women who also applied to its nursing programmes. Mothercraft could not, despite some effort, attract Afrikaans women to its courses, and it failed to compete with existing, well-established, and trusted networks providing mothers with childrearing and child-feeding advice, most notably municipal clinics and those run by Afrikaans organizations in the countryside. Whether the ACVV appealed to poor, white Afrikaans women because of the organization's nationalist politics, or the Mothercraft Training Centre to Cape Town's white, English middle classes because of its 'Britishness' is impossible to ascertain. Yet the study of mothercraft illustrates white South Africans' complicated position within the empire. Although Afrikaner societies welcomed its introduction – and the National Party government funded the Mothercraft Training Centre – its links to imperial networks were not enough to cause it to succeed in South Africa in the same way as it had in New Zealand.

## Notes

1. *Argus*, 1 August 1923.
2. *Cape Times*, 9 August 1923.
3. For the sake of clarity, this chapter deals only with Truby King's mothercraft programme. Other attempts to teach women how to be mothers were also called mothercraft, both in South Africa and elsewhere. Mothercraft Leagues were established in Natal (1912) and the Transvaal (1914), but these were aimed largely at young black women. In South Africa, King's mothercraft was, until the 1950s, directed overwhelmingly at white women. On the Natal and Transvaal Leagues, see Prinisha Badassy, *A Severed Umbilicus: Infanticide and the Concealment of Birth in Natal, 1860–1935* (PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011), 135–39; and Catherine Burns, *Reproductive Labours: The Politics of Women's Health in South Africa, 1900 to 1960* (DPhil thesis, Northwestern University, 1995), 238–49.
4. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: the Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 217.
5. Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 162.
6. Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 165–68.

7. Here I draw on Saul Dubow's essay 'How British Was the British World? The Case of South Africa', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2009), 1–27.
8. Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1978), 9.
9. See, for example, the essays in Marian van der Klein, Rebecca Jo Plant, Nichole Sanders, and Lori R. Weintrob (eds), *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare, and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012).
10. Deborah Dwork, *War Is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant Welfare Movement in England, 1898–1918* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 3–21, 208–20.
11. Linda Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers: The Plunket Society and Infant Welfare, 1907–2000* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), 1.
12. Quoted in Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers*, 12.
13. Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers*, 11–13. On infant mortality and contaminated milk, see for example, Peter Buirski, 'Mortality Rates in Cape Town 1895–1980: A Broad Outline', in Christopher Saunders, Howard Phillips, Elizabeth van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith (eds), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, vol. 5 (History Department and the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1983), 138–49.
14. Although critical of formula manufacturers, King originated his own methods of artificial infant feeding, some of which proved to be controversial. A discussion of these debates is beyond the scope of this chapter, but for more on the subject, see Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers*.
15. *Ibid.*, 41–43, 96–99.
16. Philippa Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby: Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880–1950* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 66–67.
17. Plunket continues with this work in contemporary New Zealand, see <https://www.plunket.org.nz/>.
18. Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers*, 17–25. The most comprehensive account of the Plunket Society remains Linda Bryder's *A Voice for Mothers*. See also Smith, *Mothers and King Baby*.
19. See Philippa Mein Smith, 'Infant Welfare Services and Infant Mortality: A Historian's View', *Australian Economic Review*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1991), 22–34; Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers*, 41.
20. Philippa Mein Smith, 'Blood, Birth, Babies, Bodies', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 17, no. 39 (2002), 314–16.
21. The Society was eventually renamed the Mothercraft Training Society.
22. Linda Bryder, 'From Breast to Bottle: A History of Modern Infant Feeding', *Endeavour*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2009), 56–57; Bryder, *A Voice for Mothers*, 8–9; Smith, *Mothers and King Baby*, 99.
23. 'Draft: Development of South African Mothercraft Training Centre', University of Cape Town Special Collections (hereafter UCTSC), BC 1149 LBCA (hereafter LBCA), A1, 3. King's writing was influential beyond the Empire and the English-speaking world and, indeed, he travelled widely, visiting Japan and parts of Europe.
24. Linda Chisholm, 'Class, Colour, and Gender in Child Welfare in South Africa, 1902–1918', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 23, no.1 (1990), 100–101, 106.

25. There were a series of baby farming scandals around the world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See M.L. Arnot, 'Infant Death, Child Care and the State: The Baby-Farming Scandals and the First Infant Life Protection Legislation of 1872', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1994), 271–312; Shurlee Swain, 'Toward a Social Geography of Baby Farming', *History of the Family*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2005), 151–59.
26. Jennifer Muirhead, *'The children of today make the nation of tomorrow': A Social History of Child Welfare in Twentieth Century South Africa* (MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2012), 29.
27. Chisholm, 'Class, Colour, and Gender', 104–05. The most comprehensive history of the ACVV remains Marijke du Toit, *Women, Welfare, and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Social History of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging, c.1870–1939* (DPhil thesis, University of Cape Town, 1996).
28. Debby Gaitskell, '"Getting close to the hearts of mothers": Medical Missionaries among African Women and Children in Johannesburg between the Wars', in Valerie Fildes, Lara Marks, and Hilary Marland (eds), *Women and Children First: International Maternal and Infant Welfare 1870–1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 179.
29. Philip Bonner, 'South African Society and Culture, 1910–48', in Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, and Bill Nasson (eds), *Cambridge History of South Africa*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 259–70, 286–93; H.E. Norman, 'The State and the Child', *Child Welfare*, June 1926, 7–8.
30. Susanne M. Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 13–14.
31. Niel Roos, 'Work Colonies and South African Historiography', *Social History*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2011), 63.
32. Elsabe Brink, 'Man-Made Women: Gender, Class, and the Ideology of the *Volkmoeder*', in Cherry Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town and London: David Philip and James Currey, 1990), 282.
33. Marijke du Toit, '"Dangerous Motherhood": Maternity Care and the Gendered Construction of Afrikaner Identity, 1904–1939', in Fildes et al. (eds), *Women and Children First*, 210–12, 215.
34. Burns, 'Reproductive Labours', 108–09.
35. Rima D. Apple, '"Training" the Baby: Mothers' Responses to Advice Literature in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', in Barbara Beatty, Emily D. Cahan, and Julia Grant (eds), *When Science Encounters the Child: Education, Parenting, and Child Welfare in 20th-Century America* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2006), 198–201.
36. Barbara Beatty, Emily D. Cahan, and Julia Grant, 'Introduction', in Beatty et al. (eds), *When Science Encounters the Child*, 2–5.
37. Saul Dubow, 'Scientism, Social Research, and the Limits of "South Africanism": The Case of Ernst Gideon Malherbe', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2001), 99–142; Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 221–34.
38. Brahm David Fleisch, 'Social Scientists as Policy Makers: E.G. Malherbe and the National Bureau for Educational and Social Research, 1929–1943', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1995), 349–72.
39. On the Save the Children Fund in an imperial context, see Emily Baughan, '"Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!" Empire,

- Internationalism, and the Save the Children Fund in Inter-War Britain', *Historical Research*, vol. 86, no. 231 (2013), 116–37.
40. Muirhead, "The children of today", 33–34.
  41. On the international networks which sustained humanitarian and child welfare initiatives, see Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Special Issue on Empire and Humanitarianism, vol. 40, no. 5 (2012), 729–47.
  42. F. Webb, 'Bond van Afrikaanse Moeders, Pretoria', *Child Welfare*, December 1924, 6; Mrs G.S. Pullen, 'Bond van Afrikaanse Moeders: Sy Werk en Strewe', *Child Welfare*, December 1925, 5–6; Burns, 'Reproductive Labours', 109–10.
  43. Rothmann describes the lives of rural white women and girls in evocative and sympathetic detail in her contribution to the Carnegie Commission's report: M.E. Rothman, *Sociological Report: The Mother and Daughter in the Poor Family*, Part V of *The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932).
  44. Du Toit, "Dangerous Motherhood", 211–13; Burns, 'Reproductive Labours', 95–101.
  45. Susanne Klausen, "For the Sake of the Race": Eugenic Discourses of Feeble-mindedness and Motherhood in the *South African Medical Record*, 1903–1926', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1997), 46–48.
  46. Quoted in Klausen, "For the Sake of the Race", 27.
  47. *Argus*, 12 March 1925; *Cape Times*, 15 July 1925.
  48. 'The Truby King Nurse, Miss Paterson Arrives'.
  49. F. Clarke, 'Forward: Our Objective', *Child Welfare*, June 1921, 1. On Fred Clarke see Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 224, 230.
  50. 'Mothercraft Training Centres', *Child Welfare*, June 1924, 7; 'Our Children's Day', *Child Welfare*, June 1926, 1–2.
  51. 'Cape Town', *Child Welfare*, March 1926, 7.
  52. 'Mothercraft Training Centre and Dietetic Hospital Infants', *Child Welfare*, March 1925, 4.
  53. 'Society for the Protection of Child Life: Lady Buxton Home', UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4; H.P. Horwood, 'Mothercraft Training Centre at Cape Town', *Child Welfare*, September 1925, 5–6.
  54. 'Cape Town', *Child Welfare*, December 1925, 6–7.
  55. Geddes, 'Report of the Mothercraft Training Centre', 27.
  56. 'Cape Town', *Child Welfare*, December 1925, 6–7.
  57. *Ibid.*, 9; 'Mothercraft: A Training Centre', UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4.
  58. A.M. Geddes, 'Report of the Mothercraft Training Centre', *Child Welfare*, September 1926, 27–28.
  59. Mothercraft Training Centre (hereafter MTC) Committee Minutes, 6 March 1925, UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4.
  60. Committee Minutes, 24 February 1925, UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4: MTC.
  61. 'A Short History of the Lady Buxton Home for Young Children', UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, A1, 1–2.
  62. 'Draft: Development of South African Mothercraft Training Centre', UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, A1, 3.
  63. Report of the Lady Buxton Home and Mothercraft Training Centre, December 1925, UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4.
  64. Geddes, 'Report of the Mothercraft Training Centre', 27.
  65. *Ibid.*, 28.

66. H.P. Horwood, 'Mothercraft Training Centre at Capetown', *Child Welfare*, December 1925, 5.
67. MTC Committee Minutes, 5 February 1926, UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4.
68. Ibid.
69. SANCCW Council Meeting, 1934, University of the Witwatersrand, Historical Papers, SANCCW Collection, AD 1960.
70. MTC Committee Minutes, 30 March 1925, 5 February 1926, UCTSC, BC 1149 LBCA, C1.4.
71. 'Die Verwagende Moeder en Haar Kind se Eerste Maand', *Child Welfare*, March 1925, 8.
72. *Argus*, 10 August 1923.
73. Marion Mackenzie, 'The Middle-Class Baby's Handicap', *Child Welfare*, September 1924, 4.
74. 'Report of HC Horwood of the Mothercraft Training Centre', *Child Welfare*, February 1926, 28-29.

## **Part II**

# **Rites of Passage**

# 4

## 'He is hardened to the climate & a little bleached by it's [sic] influence': Imperial Childhoods in Scotland and Madras, c. 1800–1830

*Ellen Filor*

In 1807, 11-year-old William Brunton wrote from Edinburgh to his father in Madras:

Major Bruce is in London, he is going out to Madras. I have seen your picture, it is not like you in the under part of the face. It makes you fatter than you are; at least since I saw you last. I hope you will be over soon. You always say that certainly you will be over in the first fleet. I was Dux at the examination and got Johnson's lives of the Poets, in four volumes.<sup>1</sup>

From his father's 'fatter' visage in a portrait to the annual broken promise that his parents 'will be over in the first fleet': the non sequiturs of this extract speak to the difficulties of maintaining a relationship between parent and child conducted at a distance of thousands of miles. As Kate Teltscher has argued, family letters 'supply new ways to read the colonial archive... Indeed, familiar letters offer as valuable a resource to historians of empire as official correspondence, state papers, or government proceedings'.<sup>2</sup> Held at the National Archives of Scotland, many of the Brunton family papers detail childhoods – some white and some mixed-race – spent in Madras and Scotland that the official archive does not recognize and cannot illuminate. Much recent work has focussed on the exchange of letters between metropole and colony as sustaining family ties over vast geographical distances.<sup>3</sup> In the context of Raj-era India, Elizabeth Buettner suggests letters were 'a tangible reminder of an absent loved one regardless of their contents'.<sup>4</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that these 'tangible' letters were not the only objects sent to and from India: they are merely surviving examples from an international circuit of exchange in which books,

paintings and other gifts also featured. Beyond personal correspondence, one of the key objects that helped to connect Georgian families divided by empire were the children, white and mixed-race, sent from India to be brought up by relatives in Britain. By placing these children at the centre of this story, the focus on epistolary exchange that has come to dominate the current historiography is situated alongside the intermittent exchange of children.

This chapter is concerned with two interconnected families and the lives of their children in Madras and Scotland. It incorporates those children regarded by these families and wider society as illegitimate and legitimate, white and mixed-race, orphaned and not.<sup>5</sup> Major Thomas Gordon (d. 1798) and Colonel James Brunton (d. 1810) were lowland Scots who served in the Madras Army. Like many European men posted overseas during the period, they had Indian concubines.<sup>6</sup> By their respective concubines, Gordon had three sons, and Brunton a son and a daughter. While Gordon left no legitimate heirs, James Brunton married Mary Collins while still in India, and the couple had three white children. The family tree below (Figure 4.1) demonstrates the complicated intersections of colonial families and also the difficulties inherent in such reconstruction. Historians such as Margot Finn and Emma Rothschild have argued convincingly that the political and racial tensions of the British Empire emerge from an examination of the intimate and domestic interactions of East India Company families.<sup>7</sup> This chapter takes these concerns forward by placing the child instead of the adult at the centre of the narrative. Looking at these global ‘British’ children born in Madras at the end of the eighteenth century enables the intersections of race, legitimacy and orphanhood within these imperial families to be explored.

As the legitimate and white Bruntons were christened at Madras, their birth dates can be ascertained. The same does not hold true for their

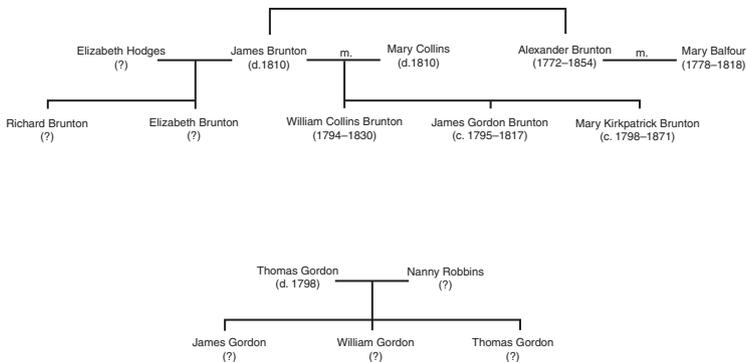


Figure 4.1 The Brunton and Gordon family trees, as reconstructed by the author

mixed-race counterparts.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Indian mothers can be known to us only by the Anglicized names given to them by the Scottish men.<sup>9</sup> While the family archive does little to illuminate the lives of such Indian women, the mixed-race child is far better represented. Examining mixed-race children also reveals the manifold tensions in the imperial project. Of the ‘nineteenth-century anxieties’ surrounding mixed-race people in Europe, Ann Laura Stoler has written that ‘They were the “enemy” within, those who might transgress the “interior frontiers” of the nation-state’.<sup>10</sup> One of the strengths of the Brunton archive is that it allows these mixed-race children to be situated within the wider context of the imperial family and for their experiences to be compared directly to those of their white counterparts. Indeed, a focus on the Georgian period offer insights into an era when racial boundaries were less strictly drawn than later.<sup>11</sup> The men and women under analysis in this chapter understood and described race with reference to climate, religion, education, blood, skin colour and language. This family reconstruction looks to the offspring of these Scottish officers, born in Madras, and the tactics utilized either to integrate these children into Scottish society or instead to mark them out as different and discriminate against them. In the archive, these children grow up visibly through their handwriting: from the large and childish writing of their early letters through the copperplate of adolescence to the less uniform (and often hard to read) scrawl of their adult years. The male children raised in Scotland sought to return to India in their mid-teens to work. This chapter is partly, then, about manpower and the children who were bred in and for Empire. But such a reconstruction also highlights the methods of the children themselves as they sought careers in the British world, (re)integrating the child as an agent of Empire.

Major Gordon died on the subcontinent and his will is representative of many others from the period in that it recognized his Indian family.<sup>12</sup> For his Indian mistress, Gordon provided ten pagodas monthly to be paid to ‘Nanny Robbins (my Girl)’. The welfare of his mixed-race children was likewise made explicit, with Gordon requesting that they gain ‘a good Education, & [be brought] up to some creditable profession, at the discretion of my Executors’.<sup>13</sup> In leaving the education and future prospects to the discretion of his executors, Gordon did not explicitly request the removal of the boys from their mother but he did severely erode Nanny Robbins’ power and her control over her own children. His executor was James Brunton. Brunton did separate the boys from their mother, and determined to send them to his brother Reverend Alexander Brunton who was then living in the rural Scottish Borders. ‘I shall leave entirely to you the placing them at school’, Brunton wrote to his brother, ‘or keeping them in your own house if there is school at hand or whatever mode may appears [sic] to you to be the best to adopt for them good’.<sup>14</sup> This extract demonstrates the powerlessness of the boys’ mother and the dominance of Brunton’s views. Sending these boys

to provincial Scotland not only removed them from their mother but also from the country of their birth. This is not to suggest that Brunton's intentions were entirely callous. Sending the boys to Scotland in the care of one Captain Patrick Sampson, he advised their host that 'You must be a Father to those boys whilst under your charge let them remain with you untill [sic] matters will admit of you carrying them to Edinburgh – when every expense attends that trip, I will cheerfully pay'.<sup>15</sup> As well as displaying the practicalities of shipping children to Britain, this letter reveals more sentimental concerns.

It is difficult to determine whether Alexander or his wife begrudged this imposition during the early years. Alexander did, however, 'think myself more than repaid by the attach[men]t of the children for any anxiety & trouble the superintending of them may cause'.<sup>16</sup> Race, at the beginning, played a large role in how Alexander perceived William Gordon and sought to raise him. Alexander wrote of Gordon soon after his arrival: 'for languages indeed he seems to have no turn – His memory is remarkably defective in retain[ing] [sic] words – & he acquires even Engl slowly . . . [he] is hardened to the climate & a little bleached by it's [sic] influence.'<sup>17</sup> Here, multiple strands of difference overlap as William's poor English and accent, brown skin and lack of polite manners all mark him as Indian born and mixed-race. Yet, Alexander did not see any of these markers of difference as insurmountable. Instead he commented that William was already 'bleached' whiter by Scotland's climate and praised his 'dispositions'. Similarly, the lack of English too was combated by Alexander 'superintending' William's education, as he claimed in the same letter: 'I endeavor [sic] to direct his Education to such objects as may be of use to him – whatever be his destin[at]io[n] in life – & if Latin makes part of this plan, it is rather to teach him those general principles of grammar wh[ic]h every Gentleman ought to know.'<sup>18</sup> Learning Latin here forms a dual and interlocking purpose: targeting William's bad English that marked him as 'Indian' and giving him the educational grounding necessary to be accepted as a 'Gentleman'.

Indeed, Alexander began planning William's eventual genteel career almost as soon as the boy had arrived in Scotland, rejecting a 'literary profession' because of William's poor grasp of English. He wrote to the lawyers in London for advice, stating 'You that know best his prospects, will be best able to decide whether he should be a man of Business or whether his fortune will enable to enjoy the plain independence of a resident country gentleman'.<sup>19</sup> The inheritance due to William became the other primary means of ensuring that he would be a 'gentleman'. Money thus allowed Brunton to hope that Gordon could become 'respectable & happy in Scotland' – a belief that seeks to naturalize Gordon and elide his foreignness. The experience of William Gordon in provincial Scotland as presented by Brunton does not seem to have been greatly impacted by his racial difference, as demonstrated by Alexander's belief that the climate would 'bleach' him white, and the idea

that education could render William a 'gentleman'.<sup>20</sup> Brunton's imaginings thus saw William Gordon growing up to be a white gentleman who could integrate almost seamlessly into genteel Scottish society.

Racial distinctions became clearer when James Brunton sent his own white children back to Scotland in 1803. Alexander Brunton wrote in the early summer of 1804 from the coastal village of Queensferry to his mother-in-law, noting that 'To keep my young Englishmen out of mischief and strengthen my little Indians by sea-bathing, we removed to this place in the middle of May. It answers my expectations in both these respects'.<sup>21</sup> This observation is one of the few direct comparisons that exists between the two sets of children, presenting the difference between white and mixed-race status as predicated on one's ability to deal with the Scottish climate – a version of the racial thinking proposed by Scottish Enlightenment scholars including David Hume.<sup>22</sup> Even though the Brunton boys were the more recently returned from India, their 'whiteness' makes them – at least in Alexander's eyes – immune to the colder climate, hence naturalizing them in Scotland. In contrast, the Gordons remained 'weak' once removed from the Indian context, even while there remains a sense that being exposed to the Scottish sea will 'harden them'.

Differences in monetary support also distinguished the two sets of children. The relative wealth of James Brunton meant his sons could possess a servant each, their clothes 'to be of the best' and that they 'must never be permitted to walk out by themselves'. In contrast to the relatively sparse instructions offered for the Gordons' upbringing, James is very clear on what the boys' education should include: 'I mean that they shall have the most liberal education, and that they shall cultivate every branch, English, Latin, Greek, French, Italian and such other languages as you please, they must also at a proper time be instructed in Dancing, Drawing, Music &c.'<sup>23</sup> While the Gordons learnt French, none of the accounts that Alexander kept of their education suggest they had such a full array of languages and extra-curricular activities.<sup>24</sup> James maintained the link with his children by sending them toys from India: 'I shall send the Children some toys of this Country not as play things, for William is by this time above that, but as remembrances of their Native land'.<sup>25</sup> It is not known exactly what these toys were, but the records for one of the toys for his daughters do survive. In the inventory taken after James Brunton's death in 1810, an addition notes 'also, 1 model of a palanquin belonging to Mary'.<sup>26</sup> This miniature palanquin (representing a covered chair, carried by four servants) is of interest not only as a global toy from India, but also as an object of the racial power that Mary had exerted as a child in India. Captain Jeffery Prendergast wrote to Brunton from Madras in 1808: 'Remember us also most kindly to Mary & your Sons – tell her my Son Harris is the envy of the Mount Road every Evening in her little Palanquin which is very highly prized.'<sup>27</sup> Mary Kirkpatrick's toy palanquin therefore becomes not only a memory

of her 'native land', but also of her superiority there, lifted physically and racially above the Indians (by Indians). Mary's wayward behaviour when in Scotland was often commented upon in family letters. Her brother William tied this behaviour explicitly to her Indian childhood and her being spoilt by their parents.<sup>28</sup> In a letter, William expressed that 'I had some hopes that after her arrival in Scotland, she might have applied herself with diligence to make up for lost time but I am afraid it was then too late in life to expect, that she should acquire what it was necessary for her to have learnt in early youth'.<sup>29</sup> Even while Mary's Indian birthplace was not marked on her skin, it was seen to exert a deleterious impact on her conduct even in Scotland.

For Alexander Brunton, one of the key means of integrating into Scottish society both sets of children, white and mixed race, was education. While the public school has been widely studied by historians as an institution that sustained and nurtured future servants of the British Empire, it has largely been perceived as an implicitly 'white' space.<sup>30</sup> Yet evidence from Scottish schools and our global families suggests alternative interpretations. Innes Munro, a soldier who served in India, wrote of mixed-race students in 1789 that 'If you were only to examine all the seminaries in Britain for the education of youth, it would be found that nearly one out of ten in the numbers they contain is of that description.'<sup>31</sup> Munro feared explicitly that this migration to Britain would 'degenerate the race' and give a 'sallow tinge' to Britons; believing this, he called for the fathers to keep their children in the colonies and for the state to prohibit inter-racial sex.<sup>32</sup> Munro's paranoid assessment of the racially mixed nature of British schools has been considered hyperbolic by later scholars.<sup>33</sup> But Munro was Scottish and the schools he had in mind could very well have been those of Edinburgh. As Madras civil servant Alexander Pringle wrote – disgustedly – of Scotland in 1816, 'our boarding schools teem with East & West India bastards of various shades of colour, & tho' disguised with fine clothes & paying good board, of all won't do to bring them into play or make them be taken proper notice of'.<sup>34</sup> Lillian Faderman has argued that the teachers in these schools often resented these mixed-race children and would look after even those with powerful relatives only grudgingly.<sup>35</sup> Yet there is evidence to suggest that those who ran these schools often actively pursued parents of mixed-race daughters as customers. In 1789, one Miss B. Macpherson wrote that she was 'anxious I should have some Children from abroad' for her school in Edinburgh.<sup>36</sup> She requested the help of her relatives, Colonel Allan and John Macpherson, who had both served in India, to secure her such mixed-race children. For a later period, Bernard Porter has argued that 'the public schools were geared to the empire's needs... To this extent the upper and middle class and the schools which nurtured them, had a vested interest in empire'.<sup>37</sup> If public schools increasingly catered for a white imperial elite in the second half of the nineteenth century, then in the Georgian period many Edinburgh schools had a

'vested interest' in another of 'empire's needs': catering for the mixed-race children sent to Scotland.

When Alexander Brunton moved to Edinburgh to become minister of Greyfriars Kirk, he took the opportunity to send the male children under his care to the Edinburgh High School, the oldest school in Scotland and arguably that country's most prestigious educational establishment in the Georgian period. Alongside the mixed-race Gordons and his brother's white Indian-born children, Alexander Brunton cared for the children of other Presbyterian ministers from beyond Edinburgh.<sup>38</sup> All the boys attended the Edinburgh High School, whether they were mixed race or white, Scottish or Indian born.<sup>39</sup> That the Gordons and these other boys received a broadly similar education suggests some form of parity on racial grounds. Brunton's understanding of the High School as egalitarian and welcoming was exemplified by his presentation of a medal for Dux in 1824 in memory of one of his charges, William Bain, who had during his own time at the school 'gained the Murray medal in the rector's class in 1809, with marked applause'.<sup>40</sup> Brunton went on to describe Bain's Dux as 'it had been awarded to the unknown, the unfriended son of a widow, merely from his merits as a scholar... No one could ever wear or look upon this ornament without being reminded that the honours of the High School are distributed with the strictest impartiality, and without drawing from this consideration, the strongest incentives to vigorous exertion.'<sup>41</sup> Success at the High School was thus perceived as based neither on class nor on racial superiority, but rather, was earned through good behaviour or intelligence, and prizes were handed out with 'strictest impartiality'. Indeed, this 'impartiality' did not go unnoticed by contemporaries of the Gordons. In 1880, a pupil of Scottish descent recalled what 'distinguished' the High School between 1810 and 1820: 'the variety of nations: for in our class under Mr. Pillans there were boys from Russia, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, Barbadoes, St. Vincent, Demerara, the East Indies, besides England and Ireland'.<sup>42</sup> Concerning the school's role in crafting well-rounded men, the author places great emphasis on the role of (often racially distinct) foreigners. While this kind of racial mixing was not unknown in India during this period, such inter-mixed schools have largely been seen as limited to the subcontinent and to poor white pupils.<sup>43</sup> The High School is an exceptional case both in its situation close to the heart of Empire and in the broad range of ethnic backgrounds represented.

Alexander upheld these sentiments of 'impartiality' when dealing with the boys under his care. When his nephew William Brunton ran away to his parents' house in Peebles (to which they had recently returned), after having truanted from several classes at the High School, Alexander wrote to his brother: 'He may however, I have no doubt, if he returns immediately, be still at the head of his class on the examination day – How far that may benefit his general character I am more doubtful.'<sup>44</sup> Even though

William Brunton appeared likely to have gained the Dux of his class, his uncle resisted his taking the examination, considering him not equal to it in moral terms. Alexander made clear that the failings of William Brunton were tied to the influence of India. 'I have always been an enemy to your having the command of money', William stated in a letter to the boy, 'I told you so whenever you received a remittance from India. I told you so, when I first saw the ungenerous use you made of your parents' indulgence on their arrival – money which you wasted.'

Alexander went on to detail how his nephew pawned presents from his parents and spent over one-and-a-half guineas on strawberries, barley sugar, rum and brandy. After this he proceeded to 'seduce your own little Brother & the other little boys under my charge twice in one day to a Tavern & find amusement in intoxicating yourself & them'.<sup>45</sup> The corrupting effect of Indian money and luxurious excess associated with the East – in Alexander's use of the word 'indulgence' in reference to William's parents – is exemplified by William turning to drink, a path followed by many Europeans in India.<sup>46</sup> As William himself would write from India six years later about life there, 'you must probably in the end, fall a victim to your own folly and imprudence, in having recourse to the bottle; as a soother of all care, which almost always brings the person to an early grave'.<sup>47</sup> At least from the perspective of Alexander Brunton, the 'impartial' schooling of the Edinburgh High School suggests that the discrimination the Gordons faced was minimal even as the Scottish weather failed to 'bleach' them white. Indeed, James Brunton's white children were seen by their uncle as, if anything, more corrupted by the wealth of India from having spent too long a period of their childhood abroad.

Against Brunton's construction of an egalitarian Scottish childhood, I want to set the descriptions written by those children under his care as young adults. The Gordon brothers inherited less money than they had been led to expect. Despite Alexander Brunton's earlier pronouncement that these boys would become gentlemen by virtue of their education and wealth, they struggled to provide for themselves throughout their lives. In the years after leaving school, William Gordon struggled to find employment in the merchant houses of Leith and was rejected for a job at the Bank of Scotland. By 1827, however, he had settled in London. He found work at the St Patrick Assurance Company and rented a house on the outskirts of the city. Following the company's engagement in embezzlement, William was the only member of staff not dismissed and he wrote to his uncle of his job that 'I have so much writing & intricate calculations with the monies of the Known World – that I really hate the sight of Pen & paper – but you will perhaps think that under the then existing circumstances – it was an act of selfishness (having gained my object [of employment]) not to write'.<sup>48</sup> The opportunities in London saw William gain a good job and recognition of his skills in being the only employee retained. While support from Alexander

Brunton partly enabled William to get such a position, the relative lack of racial prejudice he experienced was also important. William made this clear later in the same letter:

I regret every day – that I did not come to London – instead of going to that ill fated St Andrews – there is so much scope – & an active man is sure to get on – the liberality in London – exceeds every thing – far beyond – what I could have supposed – my London As[sociates] blame me – & ask why do you remain so passive – they know not – the illiberality of the folks beyond the Tweed.<sup>49</sup>

Even though Gordon benefitted from a superior education in the Borders and Edinburgh, his illegitimacy and mixed-race heritage acted as a bar to progress in his profession and integration into ‘illiberal’ Scottish society. This discrimination is exemplified in the description of Gordon as ‘passive’ by his fellow London accountants. London for William was therefore more accepting than Scotland, a space where his race mattered less and where he could find his own voice.

William’s brother Thomas sought to overcome such prejudice by seeking employment in the wider British world. Thomas wrote to Brunton from London in 1822 that he had done ‘a considerable deal of business for the last two years; but owing to losses and other circumstances, I was involved with two Individuals to a considerable extent and was obliged to suspend; my Object is to leave Edinh immediately and to Endeavour to get out to West Indias or the Spanish Main without loss of time either from Glasgow or Liverpool’.<sup>50</sup> He did not immediately consider India, probably due to the impact of the Cornwallis reforms of 1791 which stated that ‘No person, the son of a Native Indian, shall henceforward be appointed by this Court to Employment in the Civil, Military, or Marine Service of the Company’.<sup>51</sup> While not always strictly upheld, these laws increasingly meant that Eurasian males were seen as second-class citizens. But by 1824 his plans had shifted again and he wrote to Alexander Brunton asking for £15–£20 as he was ‘very anxious if possible to get out to India & can get out for about £30 in the Steerage Provided I make myself useful’.<sup>52</sup> Although Thomas Gordon never actually went to India, that he was reduced to considering going steerage suggests the poverty of the Empire experienced by many mixed-race children.

Instead of departing overseas, Thomas returned to Scotland, claiming that if he stayed in London any longer he would be imprisoned.<sup>53</sup> He continued to rely on the support of Alexander Brunton, writing multiple letters begging for small sums of money. Brunton became increasingly less receptive and, as his support waned, Thomas’s letters became still more frantic and the handwriting messier. The two met in 1828 and Brunton lodged an account of it with his solicitor. In this account, Thomas is recorded as

referring back to injustices in his childhood: 'You kicked me in 1810 – Ah Sir, was that behaviour for a man who knows what belongs to a Gentleman, towards a poor boy cast upon your care.'<sup>54</sup> In exchange for a loan and help in securing a job, Thomas promised not to contact Brunton again. If Brunton refused, Thomas threatened that 'I will not let the son of a Haymaker Kick me for nothing – I will accuse you to the presbytery of Edin of Onanism – I can swear that I once saw you in St John Street – put your hand into your breeches, & make motions there'.<sup>55</sup> Here, Thomas asserted himself as a 'gentleman' higher up the social hierarchy than 'son of a Haymaker' Brunton. Whereas his brother William appealed implicitly to his race and illegitimacy as the reason for his hardship, Thomas instead referenced physical abuse as a child at the hands of his guardian. Brunton deflected these accusations, writing to a friend that he would not 'be affected by the Ravings of a maniac – I fear the poor creature is plunging into irrevocable ruin'.<sup>56</sup> Despite Gordon's accusations of sexual impropriety, Brunton continued to support him. Indeed, the final letter to concern Thomas is a receipt from 1829 recording that Brunton paid off his debt of £10.<sup>57</sup>

The limited scope of career options for Eurasians is also reflected in the different career paths of the Gordon and Brunton boys. Both the Gordons struggled to find work, while the Brunton boys had relatively good military positions in India. After being removed from the Edinburgh High School in disgrace, William went to Madras as a soldier at the age of 15. His early letters recount an interest in the sights of India and his hopes that his father would soon return as military auditor at Madras.<sup>58</sup> This optimistic tone changed when his father died in 1810 of 'the old indian disorder, the liver', exacerbated by his heavy drinking.<sup>59</sup> Now orphaned, William found his opportunity for promotion blocked and in 1813 blamed this on his father's former friends who 'have buried their precious friendship with him in the grave'.<sup>60</sup> Being orphaned also harmed William's brother James's opportunities. From 1811, Alexander wrote various letters to try and gain a cadetship for his nephew in vain.<sup>61</sup> In 1812, at the age of 17, James wrote to his uncle, 'I shall never wish to be any thing else but a soldier or to go out to Madras'.<sup>62</sup> Eventually, James was procured a position in the Madras Cavalry and went to India in 1814. His brother William wrote from Madras, cautioning against this course, partly because he did not believe James a suitable soldier, 'however captivated he may be at present by a red coat and gold lace', and partly because of the reduced opportunity of making a fortune.<sup>63</sup> Instead, William wrote dispiritedly, 'you must expect nothing in the company service now but misery and wretchedness, cut off from all your friends, and longing in this miserable country for all you hold dear'.<sup>64</sup>

This 'longing' was one explicitly tied to nostalgic memories of his own childhood: 'I look back with regret to the days I passed at home, with my aunt and yourself in St John Street; and wish myself there a hundred times. I hope, when a few fleeting years have elapsed, to return to old Scotland'.<sup>65</sup>

While William had spent barely six years of his life in Scotland, in comparison to the 13 spent in Madras, Scotland remained 'home', a place to return to after years of 'misery and wretchedness'. For both the Gordons and William Brunton, it was their childhood in Scotland rather than in India that became a reference point in their adult lives. Thomas Gordon understood Scotland as a site of physical abuse and his brother William believed it 'illiberal', while for the more nostalgic William Brunton it became a sustainer of imperial service and a 'home'.

Even despite their varied (and often disliked) careers, by virtue of their inheritance and education, the Gordons and the white Bruntons were far more mobile and had more opportunities than the mixed-race Brunton children. Turning to the hitherto neglected branch of the Brunton family tree reveals the relative benefits a Scottish childhood bestowed. Brunton left his illegitimate, mixed-race children in Madras largely because he married a European woman and had white heirs to look after. His will made this temporal distinction clear: 'two natural children which were borne [sic] to me previous to my marriage to a Country borne woman Elizabeth Hodges'.<sup>66</sup> While Brunton did provide £2 a month for these mixed-race children in his own will, this was the same amount he left as a 'pension' for his favourite riding horse, also left behind in India.<sup>67</sup> Of these children, Brunton's friend Charles Rundall wrote to Alexander Brunton, 'There is also a son who however is provided for, but were he otherwise I should not have recommended him to your consideration, as he is... Undeserving of Notice.'<sup>68</sup> In 1813, this son wrote from Madras to his uncle Alexander for money. Richard Brunton recounted that his father 'during his residence in India treated me with the tenderness of a Father and unfortunately for me soothed and taught my tender Youth to expect in my more mature days, to tread a different path than that I have subsequently experienced'.<sup>69</sup> Placed under the care of his father's friend, Charles Rundall, he found his monthly allowance cut and claimed he was forced to marry one Ann Douglas to sustain himself.<sup>70</sup> In the face of such disregard from their father and disdain from his friends, the mixed-race Bruntons formed an unlikely alliance, cultivating the friendship of their half-brother, James Brunton, similarly neglected after the death of his father and the waning of the patronage network that sustained his career. When James died in 1817 (from a liver complaint brought on 'by hard living'), his will left 1,000 star pagodas apiece to his 'natural sister', Elizabeth Wiltshier, and the 'Wife of my natural Brother'. The remainder of his wealth, after funeral expenses, was to be divided between his full siblings Mary and William.<sup>71</sup> This reduced inheritance incensed William and he threatened to dispute the will, conceding only 'out of respect for his Brother's Memory'.<sup>72</sup> The shared orphanhood of James, Richard and Elizabeth Brunton bridged the divide between legitimate and illegitimate children, suggesting the often unusual family formations that Empire begot.

William Brunton married a woman of Portuguese (and therefore also likely Eurasian) heritage in 1820 and had at least one son before he died in 1830 on the Isle de France. In what is the last reference to childhood and children among his letters, Alexander Brunton wrote to a friend on hearing the news 'He states that the little boy is to be sent home this Season – If so I must do the best I can for him.'<sup>73</sup> Despite his varied successes with the previous generation of children under his care, Alexander Brunton's concern for his great-nephew demonstrates how this imperial family had come full circle, William Brunton himself having been born in Madras and raised in Scotland. This continued cycle of raising a further generation of imperial children in Scotland points not only to the breeding of imperial subjects but also to the often neglected role of the child in the functioning of the Georgian British world. However, Alexander's lack of success with his charges should suggest that the mixed-race child was not the sole 'enemy within' posited by Stoler.<sup>74</sup> Rather, race was only one facet of these global children: the luxurious 'excess' of an Indian childhood threatened to corrupt all children, whether white or mixed race. After these machinations of marriage and inheritance, binge drinking and liver failure, passivity and madness, onanism and racism, the Brunton archive falls silent – the children that propelled the archive's earlier epistolary paper trail either grown up or dead. This silence should serve to assert one final time the importance of these children who were often the subject of these letters and 'shipped' from India alongside them. Indeed, these children offered an embodied connection between family members divided by vast geographical distances, a fact often lost in the recent turn towards theorizing only epistolary exchanges.

## Notes

1. William Brunton to James Brunton, 11 February 1807, GD214/689/1, National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS).
2. Kate Teltscher, 'Writing Home and Crossing Cultures: George Bogle in Bengal and Tibet, 1770–1775', in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 282.
3. See, for example, Sarah M.S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Bruce Elliott, David Gerber and Suzanne Sinke (eds), *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Erika Rappaport, '“The Bombay Debt”: Letter Writing, Domestic Economies and Family Conflict in Colonial India', *Gender and History*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2004), 233–60.
4. Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 130.
5. In using these terms, this chapter works with the labels of the period rather than more recent descriptors – including 'mixed ethnicity' or 'mixed heritage' – which are often seen as more acceptable in a postcolonial context.
6. See, for example, Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

7. Margot Finn, 'Anglo-Indian Lives in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2010), 49–65; Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
8. Baptism of William Collins Brunton, 19 March 1794, N/2/2, 225, British Library, India Office Records; Baptism of James Gordon Brunton, 23 December 1795, N/2/2, 267, British Library, India Office Records; Baptism of Mary Kirkpatrick Brunton, 25 October 1798, N/2/2, 336, British Library, India Office Records.
9. On naming practices, see Ghosh, 'Decoding the Nameless: Gender, Subjectivity, and Historical Methodologies in Reading the Archives of Colonial India', in Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History*, 297–316.
10. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (London: Duke University Press, 1995), 52.
11. See, for example, Nicholas Hudson, 'From "Nation" to "Race": The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1996), 247–64; Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–110; David Arnold, 'Race, Place and Bodily Difference in Early Nineteenth-Century India', *Historical Research*, vol. 77, no. 196 (2004), 254–73.
12. On the prevalence of Indian women in wills, see Christopher Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773–1833* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), 4.
13. Last Will and Testament of Major Thomas Gordon (Copy), August 1800, GD1/1153/1/5, NAS.
14. James Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 14 October 1798, GD1/1153/1/4, NAS.
15. James Brunton to Captain Patrick Sampson, 15 October 1798, GD1/1153/1/6, NAS.
16. Alexander Brunton to James Brunton, 13 August 1801, GD1/1153/1/12, NAS.
17. Alexander Brunton, to Messers Chase Chinnery & McDoval, 7 January 1803, GD1/1153/3/1, NAS.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. On climatic arguments, see Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 7–10.
21. Cited in Mary McKerrow, *Mary Brunton: The Forgotten Scottish Novelist* (Kirkwall: Orcadian, 2001), 78.
22. On the role of climatic arguments of race and the Scottish Enlightenment, see Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 181–90.
23. James Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 22 January 1803, GD1/1153/3/3, NAS.
24. Account book of expenditure on William and James Brunton and Thomas and William Brunton, 1806–1810, GD1/1153/47, NAS.
25. James Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 15 October 1804, GD1/1153/4/3, NAS.
26. Inventory, taken at Dawlish, 10 January 1810, GD1/1153/11/4, NAS.
27. Captain Jeffery Prendergast to James Brunton, Madras, 25 October 1808, GD214/682/14, NAS.
28. Analysis of Empire spoiling children has largely focussed on the Raj era, with *The Secret Garden* (published in 1911) being held up by Buettner as offering 'one

- of the most enduring images of India's impact on British children in popular culture' (Buettner, *Empire Families*, 25–71). See also Georgina Gowans, 'Imperial Geographies of Home: Mem Sahibs and Miss Sahibs in India and Britain, 1915–1947', *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2003), 424–41.
29. William Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 22 February 1813, GD1/1153/22/6, NAS.
  30. See for example, J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1986); J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
  31. Innes Munro, *A Narrative of the Military Operations of the Coromandel Coast* (London: Privately Printed, 1789), 50.
  32. *Ibid.*, 51.
  33. Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day* (London: Viking, 2013), 18; Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 63.
  34. Alexander Pringle to John Alexander Pringle, March 1816, GD246/46/14, NAS.
  35. Lillian Faderman, *Scotch Verdict: Miss Pirie and Miss Woods v. Dame Cumming Gordon* (New York: Quill, 1983), 28–29.
  36. B. Macpherson to Colonel and Mrs Macpherson of Blairgowrie, 21 February 1789, GD80/927/1, NAS.
  37. Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850–1983* (London: Longman, 1975), 199–200.
  38. Account book (kept by Reverend Alexander Brunton) of expenditure on children under his care, 1806–10, GD1/1153/47, NAS.
  39. Records of pupils paying subscriptions to the school library, Sessions 1806/07–1819/20, SL/137/15/4, Edinburgh City Archive.
  40. William Steven, *The History of the High School of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart, 1849), 209.
  41. *Ibid.*
  42. Cited in James Grant, *Old and New Edinburgh* (London: Cassell, 1880), vol. 4, 296.
  43. For example, at David Drummond's school in Calcutta, European, mixed-race and Indian students were all taught together from around 1814–25 – see Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 126. Also refer to: David Arnold, 'European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1979), 104–27; Buettner, *Empire Families*, 72–104.
  44. Alexander Brunton to James Brunton, 12 July 1807, GD1/1153/8/4(1), NAS.
  45. *Ibid.*, GD1/1153/8/4(2), NAS.
  46. On the excess associated with those returned from India, see Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
  47. William Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 22 February 1813, GD1/1153/22/6, NAS.
  48. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1827, GD1/1153/38/14, NAS.
  49. *Ibid.*
  50. Thomas Gordon to Alexander Brunton, 22 April 1822, GD1/1153/34/20, NAS.
  51. Cited in Franklin B. Wickwire and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The Imperial Years* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 89.
  52. Thomas Gordon to Alexander Brunton, 29 June 1824, GD1/1153/36/9, NAS.

53. *Ibid.*, 18 August 1824, GD1/1153/36/5, NAS.
54. Copy of meeting with Thomas Gordon, at Senate Hall, 14 September 1828, GD1/1153/39/11, NAS.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Alexander Brunton to John Gibson, 10 March 1829, GD1/1153/39/3, NAS.
57. Alexander Brunton to A. Hill, 12 August 1829, GD1/1153/40/12, NAS.
58. See, for example, William Brunton to James Brunton, March 1810, GD214/689/8, NAS.
59. Thomas Bingley to Alexander Brunton, 10 October 1810, GD1/1153/10/4, NAS.
60. William Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 22 February 1813, GD1/1153/22/6, NAS.
61. See for example L. Bannerman to Alexander Brunton, 4 June 1811, GD1/1153/15/6, NAS; Edward Parry to Alexander Brunton, 6 July 1811, GD1/1153/15/18, NAS; Charles Grant to Alexander Brunton, 20 August 1811, GD1/1153/15/19, NAS.
62. James Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 6 August 1812, GD1/1153/20/1, NAS.
63. William Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 22 February 1813, GD1/1153/22/6, NAS.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. Will of James Brunton, 1814, L/AG/34/29/214, 20–21, British Library, India Office Records.
67. Charles Rundall to Alexander Brunton, 20 August 1813, GD1/1153/23/4, NAS.
68. *Ibid.*, 11 October 1811, GD1/1153/16/6, NAS.
69. Richard Brunton to Alexander Brunton, 23 August 1813, GD1/1153/23/8, NAS.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Will of James Brunton, 1817, L/AG/34/29/217, 91, British Library, India Office Records.
72. Charles Rundall to Alexander Brunton, 1 March 1819, GD1/1153/31/11, NAS.
73. Alexander Brunton to John Gibson, 23 September [c. 1830], GD1/1153/23/11, NAS.
74. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 52.

# 5

## 'Dear Mummy and Daddy': Reading Wartime Letters from British Children Evacuated to Canada During the Second World War

*Claire L. Halstead*

On 11 July 1940, Marie Williamson sat down in her Toronto home to write a letter which would forever change the lives of two families. Already raising two small children of her own, Marie wrote to Margaret Sharp, her cousin in England, with an offer to care for Margaret's three sons for the duration of the war. Her letter heralded the worsening circumstances of the conflict. The fall of France in the spring of 1940 had raised fears that an invasion of Britain could be imminent. Heightened anxiety was soon transposed onto Britain's children; it was they who were regarded as most at risk of both physical and psychological trauma, and in need of removal from harm's way. 'The more children we can have out of England the better we will be pleased', Marie Williamson wrote, illustrating her determination to offer practical assistance.<sup>1</sup> Like thousands of Canadians who put pen to paper to offer safe homes to British children, Marie promised that she, her family and her friends would 'clothe and look after the boys just as though they were [their] own.'<sup>2</sup>

Using children's wartime letters, this chapter uncovers the experiences of British children who were evacuated from the dangers of war to safe harbours in Canada. To date, scholarship on evacuation has centred primarily on evacuees relocated within Britain, making domestic evacuees the dominant representations of British children in the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> By focusing instead on children evacuated overseas and using the letters they wrote home, this chapter seeks to uncover alternative wartime experiences of British children, whilst also exposing the implications of a childhood migration from both family *and* country as a result of war. The role of Canadians as temporary foster-parents for evacuees is also considered in what follows. Evacuation was dependent upon Canadians dedicating themselves, their homes and their resources to care for children for an unknown duration,

making it especially surprising that their role in this migration story has been wholly overlooked. Canadians were prompted by various motivations to come forward, many viewing evacuation as a practical way to aid Britain's war effort and thereby help ensure the survival of the nation and the British Empire. Despite contemporary fears that Canada was drifting away from Britain towards the orbit of the United States, the reception of child migrants demonstrates that Canada was still very much linked by longstanding ties to the metropole. As such, it will be shown that rescue efforts were rooted in an imperial paradigm.

## Comings and goings

With offers of hospitality in hand, and as the Battle of Britain raged in the skies above, streams of children said farewell to their parents and set sail for Canada. After a number of safe passages, tragedy struck when the *SS City of Benares*, carrying 90 evacuee children, was torpedoed in September 1940. Over 70 children perished in what was cast as a national loss of innocent souls,<sup>4</sup> and overseas evacuation was indefinitely postponed. In total, however, 1,532 children were sent through a British government scheme known as the Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB) and an estimated 1,600 sent through private arrangements arrived in new homes in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

The historiography of evacuation began with studies by Richard Titmuss, John Manicol and Travis Crosby. They used domestic evacuation to examine wartime social unity and class conflicts.<sup>6</sup> The evacuees themselves, though, were entirely absent from these works. Under the influence of social and cultural historical approaches, by the mid-1980s the historiography of evacuation came belatedly to include the evacuees' experiences through recollections and the use of oral history, and for nearly a decade these accounts were accepted as definitive.<sup>7</sup> Yet since 1998, there has been a renewed historiographical interest in evacuation amongst an emerging public memory in Britain which framed evacuation as a traumatic experience. Former evacuees such as Ben Wicks and actor Michael Caine, for example, recorded stories of serious maltreatment.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the dominant image of evacuation began to shift from one of lucky youngsters sheltered from the Luftwaffe to helpless children abused as farm labourers in the British countryside. Furthermore, because wartime childhood was examined through the lens of evacuation, the evacuee experience became *the* dominant image of British children in the war.<sup>9</sup> One cannot underplay the traumatic experiences some evacuees faced; these cases were undoubtedly scarring. However, an emerging revisionist interpretation requires evacuation historians to re-examine the extent to which all evacuees endured traumatic experiences, and to identify preventative efforts to care for the children adequately.

By demonstrating the multiplicity of the evacuee experience, and by revealing the conscious efforts of Canadians to prevent trauma and abuse, this study of evacuees in Canada contributes to such revisionist scholarship. Currently, Geoffrey Bilson's *The Guest Children* (1988) is the sole book-length examination of evacuees in Canada, yet his reliance on a few individuals' accounts and his failure to engage with preceding evacuation literature or contextualize wartime migration limits the impact of his study.<sup>10</sup> Bilson's work begs additional questions, too – such as how this migration impacted wartime Canadian society and how evacuation represented imperial relationships – and these issues are compounded by his reliance on individuals' post-war recollections. Historians have tended to rely on memoirs and oral testimonies because children's infrequency of leaving documentary sources poses a methodological barrier to writing the history of childhood. Rather than accurately representing how children experienced events in the moment, sources created in adulthood are retrospective in nature and are therefore often more useful for reflecting memories of childhood.<sup>11</sup> To write about the evacuees' experiences, accessing the children's voices, remains crucial, however, and here scholars can turn to a cache of documents offering valuable insights into children's own perspectives. The lengthy separations faced by evacuees and their families prompted many children to write letters home to Britain, bequeathing to historians a trail of child-created sources surprisingly little used in the Canadian literature. Not only did these letters work to ameliorate the separation, but they also gave the evacuee a space to carve out their own narrative of evacuation, and an opportunity to reflect on new surroundings.

Rooted in imperial rhetoric, Canadians' dedication and desire to help protect Britain's youngest was strong even before the outbreak of war. An article in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* on 8 July 1939 was titled 'Our Duty to British Children' and reflected the public sense of Canada's imperial obligations. It advocated immediate assistance for all, from 'the little princesses in the palace to the babies of the slums.'<sup>12</sup> A subsequent *Globe* article went even further, stating that in harbouring British evacuees, Canada would 'show the unity of the British Empire.'<sup>13</sup> This sense of imperial duty inspired nationwide pledges. Specialists at the Toronto Hospital of Sick Children and at the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Toronto offered to supervise the health of evacuees, for instance, while Rotarians in Lindsay, Ontario, proclaimed their 'unanimous support' for sheltering British children.<sup>14</sup> The Canadian Corps even offered assistance from the veterans' organization in response to hospitality accorded them in the First World War, for 'every man who served in the Canadian army carries locked in the chambers of his memory very grateful thoughts of many kindnesses paid to him in private homes in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1914–1919.'<sup>15</sup>

Complex logistics and a desire not to appear incapable of protecting its own citizens entailed that Britain avoided widespread overseas evacuation

until the fall of France in 1940 reignited the proposal. By then, Canadian enthusiasm for the cause had not waned. This led the Dominion Immigration and Provincial Child Caring Authorities to host a conference in Ottawa on 3 and 4 June 1940 to discuss 'Possible Movement of Child Refugees and Evacuees to Canada.'<sup>16</sup> The 'refugees' so described would herald from Norway, France and the Low Countries, whilst the already distinct 'evacuees' (a less derogatory term) would be children from the United Kingdom. Yet thoughts of helping refugee children quickly fell by the wayside as calls to come to the rescue of British evacuees strengthened. Canadians wanted to shelter *British* children; not only were they ethnically and culturally 'suitable', but symbolically they represented the broader responsibility of ensuring Mother Britain's survival with Hitler's armies stationed across the Channel. Canadian authorities represented the evacuees as 'part of Britain's immortality, part of the greatness of her past, part of all the hope of her future that we take into our keeping.'<sup>17</sup>

A strict selection process and medical examination reflected these lofty ideals, ensuring that evacuees to Canada were not paupers, orphaned, 'defunct' or 'delinquent' children. Although drawn from all social classes, they were seen to be the best of British, to be hid in safe keeping only temporarily. As well as distancing the wartime evacuation from earlier migration schemes (discussed below), this imperial paradigm meant that Canadians' efforts were solely directed towards British children. Despite the plight of Jewish children or those trapped in the occupied countries on mainland Europe, Canadian citizens were enabled to only host British children.<sup>18</sup> As the Canadian Minister of Immigration explained in plain terms in the House of Commons, 'the most interest in Canada is the movement of British children.'<sup>19</sup> Other children may well have been even more endangered, but *British* children were to be saved. Sheltering evacuees would, it was argued, protect Britain's future, ensure the continuation of her youngest generation and strengthen the Empire as a whole.<sup>20</sup>

By June 1940, a survey conducted by the Voluntary Registration of Canadian Women revealed 10,000 homes ready to receive British children.<sup>21</sup> To demonstrate a nationwide dedication to the cause, the *Globe and Mail* printed a symbolic roll call: 'New Brunswick Ready, 100 offers in Alberta, Nova Scotia Willing, Welcome in Montreal, Prairies are Ready.'<sup>22</sup> As plans for mass evacuation through the CORB were made in June 1940, Canadians anxiously awaited the arrival of evacuees as offers from Ontario homeowners, clubs and lodges continued to run into the thousands.<sup>23</sup>

Travelling as unaccompanied migrants, each evacuee needed a temporary foster-home. Regardless of whether children had 'nominated' homes – usually those of distant relatives or family friends – or had instead to depend on the willingness of strangers, placements were closely monitored. Enthusiasm was merely regarded as a first step; if Canada was going to help the British children, formal childcare guidelines were deemed essential

to ensure that the evacuees were not to be protected from bombs only to be harmed by inappropriate foster placements. Canadian authorities, in collaboration with the CORB, required that foster-parents were not judged too old, would be able to feed, clothe and care for the children, and possessed good reputations.<sup>24</sup> Foster-parents' homes had to be located near to suitable schools in addition to being clean and big enough to accommodate an extra child or children without overcrowding. No child, the guidelines stated, should be expected to share a bed, and if possible the child should have his or her own room.<sup>25</sup> In addition, all evacuees, whether sent via the CORB or by private arrangement, were to be registered and regularly monitored by the local Children's Aid Society.<sup>26</sup> An effort to prevent maltreatment, these requirements also reflected contemporary Canadian child welfare standards.<sup>27</sup>

As a highly regulated and monitored system, wartime evacuation to Canada was from the start vastly different from previous child migration schemes. Commencing in the nineteenth century, British children (often orphans or paupers) were transported to Canada through organizations including Dr Barnardo's to work on farms and fill nationwide agricultural shortages.<sup>28</sup> This wave of child immigration was rooted in a broader child-saving movement in which Britons formed organizations and societies to physically and morally 'rescue' children by arranging their movement to new homes across the colonies.<sup>29</sup> The negative and even traumatic experiences of those who have subsequently become known in Canada as the 'British Home Children' have created a dark legacy surrounding child migration. Cultural memories attached to these children continue to weigh heavily where later passages by children across the Atlantic are concerned.<sup>30</sup>

It is pertinent to ask whether by the Second World War the Canadian government was aware of this earlier maltreatment of unaccompanied child migrants. If so, was evacuation perhaps even seen as an opportunity to correct the wrongdoings of the past? Tellingly, the primary sources pertaining to evacuation do not contain direct references to Barnardo's or other child migrant agencies. This suggests that either cases of abuse or hardship caused by those schemes had not yet filtered into common knowledge or that evacuation authorities did not wish to directly compare wartime evacuation with previous movements, yet nonetheless acknowledged the need to regulate care. However, pre-war child immigration – in addition to infant mortality, and destitution and poverty due to rising urbanization and industrialization – increasingly raised the plight of the child into Canadian national consciousness by the start of the conflict. A new perception that children needed to become mentally and physically strong citizens therefore determined how Canadian officials organized the care of evacuees once they arrived in Canada. Even Canadian childcare specialists such as Charlotte Whitton (founder of the Canadian Council of Child Welfare in 1920), and child psychologists like William Blatz (sent to Britain in

1942 to work with British children) were called in to assist with evacuees and evacuation plans.<sup>31</sup> Although groups of British children were sent to Canada for 'their own good', just like their predecessors 'rescued' from the slums, evacuee children were warmly welcomed and received vastly different treatment. Their temporary migration was rooted in wartime and imperial rhetoric, and this fundamentally affected their experiences.

Despite strict fostering regulations, Canadians drew on various motivations for becoming foster-parents. Some, like Marie Williamson, were inspired by personal or familial connections with British families, feelings reinforced by altruism and religious rhetoric. Others, like Alice Harper, who fostered six-year-old Julie Kemp, perceived in evacuation an opportunity to experience a parenthood denied by circumstance or medical condition.<sup>32</sup> Yet the most widely shared motivation was a determination to protect children of the 'mother country' from the horrors of war.<sup>33</sup> Taking an evacuee was cast as a contribution to the war effort. Without entering into factories, Canadian women could, by opening their homes, share a sense of kinship and collective endeavour.

Canadians became foster-parents through links to Britain that were not only personal but also professional, religious and cultural. As a case in point, in June 1940 the University of Toronto's Women's War Service Committee received 147 offers from university professors to house evacuees and 51 offers of financial support. In total, the Committee's efforts saw 150 British children of professors at Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester and Birmingham arrive safely and be placed in Toronto university homes.<sup>34</sup> The utilization of professional connections and a belief that the evacuees would acclimatize in homes with a common university lifestyle further inspired the Committee's efforts. Upon the evacuees' arrival, a university publication reaffirmed this suitability, stating that 'Campus homes are not usually homes of luxury. They do, however, offer those advantages and influences of university life to which these children have been accustomed and in which they are most likely to find happiness.'<sup>35</sup> Another publication recognized the moral fortitude of the evacuees: 'It was obvious from the first moment that here were no deserters fleeing from danger, but rather an advance guard of junior soldiers playing a hard part, marching into unknown lands with courage high and all flags flying.'<sup>36</sup> Not only were the evacuees regarded as equally worthy of wartime contributions as uniformed soldiers, but the children were seen to have brought their British spirit and courage with them.

The Anglican-based St George's Society of Toronto (founded in 1834 to assist English immigrants) also demonstrated dedication to the cause. In the name of England's patron saint, members of the Society perceived the war as an opportunity to continue its charitable work and exercise its British connections.<sup>37</sup> By appealing to its members, the Society received offers to care for 29 children and raised 3,500 Canadian dollars by September 1940.<sup>38</sup> These religious connections even produced accommodation enquiries from

the president of the Royal Society of St George in London.<sup>39</sup> The Toronto society was thereby recognized for its suitability in finding morally and spiritually appropriate homes for evacuees.

Many Canadian boarding schools contributed further by opening their doors to evacuees. Havergal College, the Toronto all-girls school, welcomed 110 children from Britain, prompting the school to purchase an additional building for extra accommodation.<sup>40</sup> Named after the English Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–79), the school's foundation as an Anglican school for girls, its British teachers and its dedication to maintaining British values made it feel like a small transplanted British community. For evacuees like Jean Aide Kemble, these connections helped to smooth their relocation. She recalled: 'I left the familiar for Canada. However, the first memory I have is of feeling completely at home and continuing in a school that followed the policy of my English school.'<sup>41</sup> As the evacuees' arrival necessitated a new school 'house', the Edith Nainby House was established and opened with similar imperial fanfare to that which had surrounded the children's arrival at Havergal. Remembered as a 'kind, motherly woman', Nainby – an English immigrant and former Havergal teacher – was a fitting figurehead. The red and white of the St George's cross became the new house colours and the imperial lion became its mascot, while the promoted house characteristic was loyalty. Its motto, mirroring the wartime alliance, became 'strength through friendship.' This, then, was the great imperial family – the symbolism further captured in the chosen house hymn, *I Vow to Thee, My Country*.<sup>42</sup> With this, the Havergal community welcomed its new scholars. According to the 1940 yearbook, one student noted that 'Our boarding school has been packed, but we have all had grand fun with 4 girls in rooms where formerly there were 3. The English girls have been a great help on Canada's own game lacrosse.'<sup>43</sup> For a school that today still promotes its dedication to philanthropy, duty and the service of the community, the Second World War was an opportunity to put its abstract values to the test.<sup>44</sup>

With deep convictions, Canadians at Havergal and elsewhere went to great lengths to help British children. Strict foster regulations meant that evacuees were placed in homes that wanted them. Being 'wanted', rather than being taken in as a form of labour, would, it was hoped, be the first step in giving evacuees a positive experience in Canada.

## Writing home

Reading letters that the British evacuees sent home during their stay in Canada demonstrates how the children perceived their experience of wartime migration and familial separation. As the main mode of communication, letters maintained a connection between the evacuees and their families in England. Although the war was 'the last golden age of letter

writing', historians of childhood have not yet taken advantage of this personal correspondence.<sup>45</sup> Between 1944 and 1945 alone, 374 million letters were posted overseas from Britain, a proportion of which were from parents in Britain to their children in Canada.<sup>46</sup> Letters back from those children contributed to a considerable reverse flow, and it is this correspondence that concerns me particularly here. Until recently, historians have shied away from primary sources created by children because the authority and authenticity of the sources have not been accepted as valid.<sup>47</sup> Yet evacuees' letters demonstrate capability on the part of children in forming their own understandings of experience. Using a selection of letters from collections in London and Canada affords us an opportunity to perceive how children understood the upheavals occasioned by war. Evacuees sent to Canada ranged in age from 5 to 15; the selection here of four case studies (Colin Cave, aged six upon arrival in Canada; Paddy Cave, aged eight; Tom Sharp, aged nine; William (Bill) Sharp, aged 13) reflects this. Although all four children were privately sponsored evacuees, fundamental elements of their experiences such as the transatlantic voyage, familial separation, homesickness, schooling and adjusting to Canadian culture bear similarities to those of the CORB evacuees.

In July 1940, six-year-old Colin Cave and his eight-year-old sister, Paddy, made the voyage to Toronto to stay with Marion and Robert Simpson, friends through their father. Like many evacuees, Colin wrote weekly letters to his parents over the following years. In August 1940, for instance, Colin saw it sufficient to inform his parents only that he was 'having a lovely time', closing with the letters 'T' and 'O' rather than 'X' and 'O'.<sup>48</sup> Colin's confusion in writing a 'T' for an 'X', a common mistake for children learning to write, represented his youthful inexperience. By May 1941, in contrast, Colin signed his letters 'with love', but refrained from including hugs and kisses – perhaps a sign of his deepening emotional distance or his desire to 'grow up'.<sup>49</sup> Although still quite concise and descriptive, by early 1941 Colin's letters gradually became longer, and reflected an understanding of his changed environment. Like many other evacuees, he increasingly played on tropes to depict Canada in terms of its seasons, landscape and activities. After all, as he put it, the evacuees were sent to Canada to 'see Mounties, Indians and snow!'<sup>50</sup> In March 1941, Colin drew again on such themes, writing 'Dear Mummy and Daddy, I was out on my toboggan today ... I am well. The snow will soon be gone. Then we will roller skate.'<sup>51</sup>

Even at the age of eight, Colin's sister Paddy was acutely aware of the physical distance between her and her family. This is evidenced in her written representations of her new home, and particularly through comparisons with England. From the farewell letter her father gave her to read on the boat, Paddy's parents clearly understood that evacuation equated to a prolonged separation. Paddy did not quite comprehend this initially, however, writing soon after arrival, 'I want you to come and see me.'<sup>52</sup> In an effort

to combat the sense of physical distance, Paddy soon calculated the time difference between Toronto and 'home', noting that 'it is five past four now [so] it will be five past eight with you.'<sup>53</sup> In the same vein, Paddy began a trend of recording cultural differences. She felt that she had to explain that 'There are different words here petrol is gasoline tram is streetcar and a lot of other things.'<sup>54</sup> In September 1940, Paddy noted that 'I have got a very small but very "cute" mouth organ, it has the scale only you have to blow in and then out and that gives you dow+ ray [sic]. I like it. Everything is "cute" in Canada.'<sup>55</sup> Paddy's use of quotation marks was a gentle way of mocking the constant use of the term 'cute' by Canadians to describe almost anything.<sup>56</sup> At times these differences became cast in critical tones, Paddy writing that:

There was arithmetic and geography. In Canada geography is called natural science. Funny name. In ENGLAND we have gears on the floor in the car but in Canada the most of them are attached to the steering wheel. I think it is very funny but the Canadians do not they say that England still keeps the old way. I think so to because of all the new things in Canada.<sup>57</sup>

Despite Paddy's young age, she not only identified differences between daily life in Canada and England, she also drew on cultural and national identities. She utilized the very prominent Second World War construction of 'Old England', the purity of England's green and pleasant lands that Britons were fighting to protect, and the new, 'adolescent' Canada seen to be forging its own way. Through her letters Paddy's perceptions of Canada are clear, but it is evident that her mind was frequently drawn back to England, a place she continuously conceptualized as home.

Yet as Paddy's letters continued to identify cultural differences, she also constructed some experiential elements of being an evacuee in Canada. For example, in 1940, Paddy felt the need to explain that on 'Tuesday we had corn on the cob, this is sweet maize, grown for eating.' But then she noted that 'There is something I call my spare tire. This is really extra weight around the tummy because of eating a lot.'<sup>58</sup> Three weeks later, Paddy claimed that she had 'gained 9 pounds in weight and half an inch in height.'<sup>59</sup> Many evacuees and foster-families noted proudly that their evacuees had been growing and gaining weight rapidly upon arrival as a consequence of the abundance of food in Canada. Such exclamations were based in reality, for many evacuees did experience growth spurts; yet in describing them they also drew on pre-war discourses of Canada as the land of plenty. Advertisements attracting new immigrants to Canada framed the land (particularly in Western Canada) as the 'New Eldorado'; the nation was cast as 'Fertile Canada' where not only crops would grow, but children and even industry too.<sup>60</sup> Parents therefore perhaps expected their children to not only be protected from bombs but to be nourished by fresh food and fresh

air in the Dominions. This was all very different to the experience of food rationing in Britain.

Although physically removed from the conflict, and despite her age, Paddy was nonetheless able to comprehend the war. In September 1940, she wrote: 'I'm afraid that London has been bombed a lot. I don't think I can say anything more about the war so I won't.'<sup>61</sup> Protected from the bombs, Paddy was not sheltered from hearing about the destruction they caused. Paddy understood that she 'should not' rather than 'could not' write about the war; this is suggestive of self-censorship. Paddy was hence also perceptive in other instances as well, as seen in her letters in February 1943 in which she pleaded for tickets home:

I do so much want to come home. There is no danger of invasion now and you say there are very few air raids and I want to come back. This is not just a homesick fit but it is real. Colin forgets all about England and you ... If you don't get the tickets I am sure I will swim home. I don't know about Colin but meet me in Bristol harbour when I get there. If you don't want me to swim please get the tickets.<sup>62</sup>

Despite her inclusion of a drawing of her swimming across the Atlantic, Paddy probably did not understand the logistics of transatlantic crossings unless, as a last resort, she was being melodramatic for effect. Her insistence on the authenticity of her homesickness may also have been a way to distinguish her feelings from a homesickness that was culturally perceived as a temporary spell of feeling familial separation, or even a 'fit' connoting an associated temper tantrum. After all, upon her departure from England, Paddy's father had told her that she must 'be brave.'<sup>63</sup> Regardless, Paddy wanted to go home and considered the risk of bombings – the ultimate reason for her evacuation – as no longer a reasonable rationale to prevent return. Playing an emotional trump card in telling her parents that their son did not remember them, Paddy attempted to appeal to or manipulate her parents' feelings. The letter must surely have been one of the hardest insights an evacuee parent could have received. Being told that their child did not remember them any more was an ultimate and permanent consequence of separation. If true, this case of Paddy's brother would hardly have been exceptional; some evacuees and parents did not recognize each other upon return to Britain and many evacuees struggled to readjust to post-war life in Britain (Figure 5.1).<sup>64</sup>

Nine-year-old Tom Sharp, who was taken in by Marie Williamson and travelled with his two brothers, Christopher and Bill, reflected upon his complex relationship with his mother and his own identity in his letters. Tom's frequent correspondence, sent between 1940 and 1944, shows that he was conscious of his position as the family's youngest child. As with Paddy and Colin, many of Tom's letters discuss the Canadian landscape, weather,



*Figure 5.1* Peter and Mary Williamson on either side of Bill, Christopher and Tom Sharp in cottage country north of Toronto soon after the boys' arrival in 1940  
Photograph courtesy Mary F. Williamson.

sports, schooling and holidays, yet he was also able to construct an identity for himself in composing his thoughts. Leaving England as a fragile, dependent boy, Tom re-shaped his identity into a young boy who could cope.<sup>65</sup> In the first letter his foster-mother sent to his mother upon the boys' arrival, 'Auntie Marie' described her first impression of Tom: 'Tom is such a sweet child everyone loves him at sight. He constantly amazes me with his wisdom and reasoning power, he is such a childish looking child.'<sup>66</sup> Although a nicely natured boy, Tom seemed dependent and often looked to his brother Bill for support. Yet by December 1943, Bill wrote to his mother and described just how much Tom had developed over the previous two years in Canada. With a proud tone, Bill noted that:

Tom seems to be growing up very rapidly. He has changed so much since he came out here that you will hardly recognize him. Largely due to the Williamson training and my absence, he has become immeasurably more self confident and is now perfectly capable of standing on his own feet rather than someone else's.<sup>67</sup>

Tom took pride in his improving grades at school, in reporting on his expeditions to local ravines, and on the progress of his budding garden. Marie described Tom as being 'so serious about his work', and his insistence in sending his school report cards around the family illustrates this growing self-confidence.<sup>68</sup> In 1944, he even ensured he displayed maturity in response to news that his father was getting remarried. Tom replied coolly

that 'I suppose the new Mrs. Sharp is my new step-mother not a wicked one like the ones you read about and her children (if she gets any) will be my half brothers or sisters.'<sup>69</sup>

Through Tom's letters describing many of the opportunities offered to him while in Canada, often arranged by his foster-mother (such as going to Pioneer camp in Northern Ontario for six weeks each summer), there is a sense of his personal development and gain in pride and self-confidence. While at camp, Tom found it very important to learn how to swim, something he at first found to be 'difficult.'<sup>70</sup> Over two summers, he proudly tracked his progress – 'I'm glad to say I can swim about 13 feet' – and set himself the goal of 'swim[ming] 25 feet by the end of the summer', which he did indeed achieve.<sup>71</sup> Tom also noted that at camp he was now deemed old enough to sleep in a tent (previously he slept in a cabin) and that when their leader had gone away, they were able to sleep in the tent alone.<sup>72</sup> Although he arrived from England as a shy, nervous child, within his letters Tom constructed a sense of boyhood in which he emphasized his maturity, responsibility and independence.

Letters from six-year-old Colin, eight-year-old sister Paddy and nine-year-old Tom show how the children's eloquence developed as they matured. Letters from Tom's 13-year-old brother, Bill, also illustrate this trend, with the author sharing perceptions of his new environment. Bill's first letter home records his initial observations of downtown Toronto:

it has many fine buildings, etc. is well laid out but it lacks something which English towns possess. It is difficult to describe what this something is; perhaps it is something to do with the lack of any definite plan. We talk of how badly designed our towns are but they are much better than this. True the place is all laid out on regular blocks but the buildings are all higgly-piggly.<sup>73</sup>

Bill's accompanying hand-drawn map illustrates his perceptions of a typical Toronto intersection and labels 'important' roads and 'unimportant' ones (despite never explaining his rationale in determining these).<sup>74</sup> Although both Bill and Tom describe their changing physical space, Bill claims authority to criticize and evaluate his new surroundings against what he has experienced before, much akin to the mode of a travel writer. In the letters ranging from six-year-old Colin's to those of 13-year-old Bill there is an increasingly deep level of description and conceptualization of the evacuee experience. Their constructions demonstrate a developing awareness of the cultural differences between life in Canada and life left behind in Britain. The thousands of evacuees' letters that survived the war – sampled here and more fully examined in a forthcoming study by the present author – demonstrate children's agency and more accurately illuminate how the evacuees themselves understood their separation.<sup>75</sup> In their letters, the evacuee children perceived



*Figure 5.2* Peter, Mary, Tom and Christopher at the ready for some Canadian winter skiing in 1942

Photograph courtesy Mary F. Williamson.

Canada as being within the British world whilst simultaneously representing Canada as being distinct from Britain (Figure 5.2).

## Conclusion

Distinct but still a member of the imperial family: this perception underpins an examination of overseas evacuation during the Second World War. In the spring of 1940, as British parents looked for ways to protect their children from the war, thousands of Canadians enthusiastically threw open their homes to welcome over 3,000 evacuees. Although personal motivations varied, Canadians most consistently desired to care for British children because they were the children of the mother country; it was for them a duty to the imperial family. Rooted in imperial rhetoric, the arrival of evacuees was also for the Canadian authorities an opportunity to test Canada's new standards of childcare. These factors meant that wartime evacuation would be fundamentally different from any preceding child migration scheme. Canadians went to great lengths to ensure evacuees did not suffer abuse or maltreatment.<sup>76</sup> Although these four evacuees' experiences cannot speak for all, their letters illuminate daily life for an evacuee child in wartime Canada. The letters show how children can exercise autonomy by creating their own narrative of the evacuee experience. More accurately capturing how the children perceived evacuation at the time, rather than through their post-war

memories, the voice of the child is finally heard. This analysis hence complicates the historiography of evacuation and debates over evacuee care, and – through a consideration of Canadians' roles in evacuation – also contributes to the burgeoning historiography of the Canadian home front.<sup>77</sup>

Canada's acceptance of evacuees in the war also illuminates Canada's place in the British world over the *longue durée*. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Canada was framed as a 'young nation', an infant country much in need of parental support from Mother Britain.<sup>78</sup> Historians have argued that this colonial role was disrupted in the First World War, that the Canadian war effort demonstrated national maturity and Canada became seen by Britain as 'fighting not for us but with us.'<sup>79</sup> Yet historians have also looked to the Second World War to argue that despite Canada's growing independence, during the war the nation was politically drifting closer to America.<sup>80</sup> This study of evacuation has suggested that Canada was instead tightly linked to Britain. The evacuation of British children to Canada depended heavily on existing imperial ties. Britain sought a way to protect and care for thousands of her children for an unknown length of time. Canada was perceived as an ideal minder for Britain's youngest generation, with Canada for once the symbolic *parent* rather than the child. Within the study of British child evacuees emerges the outline of a connected British world in which Britain and Canada were still tightly linked.

## Notes

I wish to acknowledge Simon Sleight, Shirleene Robinson and Jonathan F. Vance for their guidance. Special thanks are due to Mary F. Williamson and to Tom Sharp for permitting me to use such rich letters and photographs, as well as Havergal College for opening its archive to me.

1. 'Marie Williamson to Margaret Sharp', Letters of Marie Williamson and the Sharp Family, 58A.1.273.47, Canadian War Museum.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Martin Parsons and Penny Starns, 'Against Their Will', in James Marten (ed.), *Children and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 266–78; Sue Wheatcroft, 'Children's Experiences of War', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (2008), 480–501.
4. Children's Overseas Reception Board, 'SS City of Benares', DO131/20, National Archives; Ralph Barker, *Children of the Benares* (London: Methuen, 1987).
5. The present author has set out to compile a database to include all CORB evacuees (1,532) and private evacuees. The database records that just over 1,600 private evacuees arrived in Canada between June and December 1940. The total number of children who arrived privately between the start of the war and June 1940 therefore still needs to be included for the final number of evacuees to be determined.
6. Richard Titmus, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950); Travis Crosby, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation in the Second World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); John Macnicol, 'The Effect of Evacuation of

- Schoolchildren on Official Attitudes to State Intervention', in H. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 3–31.
7. Carlton Jackson, *Who Will Take Our Children?* (London: Methuen, 1985); Ruth Inglis, *The Children's War* (London: Harper Collins, 1989).
  8. While billeted in the countryside, Caine was locked in a cupboard for two days (*The Daily Telegraph*, 15 March 2013). Also see Ben Wicks, *No Time to Wave Good-bye* (London: Bloomsbury, 1988). John Abbot similarly recalls being beaten in Martin Parsons and Penny Starns, 'Against Their Will: The Use and Abuse of British Children During the Second World War', in Marten, *Children and War*, 266–78.
  9. Only recently have scholars begun to complicate this image – see Berry Mayall and Virginia Morrow, *You Can Help Your Country: English Children's Work During the Second World War* (London: Institute of Education, 2011).
  10. Geoffrey Bilson, *The Guest Children* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988). Ruth Inglis and Michael Fethney, *The Absurd and the Brave* (Sussex: Book Guild, 1990) briefly discuss the CORB evacuees in the Dominions.
  11. Hugh Cunningham, 'Introduction', in *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 1–17. Martha Saxton, 'Introduction', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008), 1–3.
  12. *Globe and Mail*, 8 July 1939.
  13. *Ibid.*, 10 July 1939.
  14. *Ibid.*, 18 July 1939.
  15. *Ibid.*, 21 July 1939.
  16. Charlotte Whitton Fonds, MG30 E 256, vol. 21, Library and Archives Canada.
  17. 'CORB Children to Canada, Reception Arrangements', Dominions Office, Do 131/45, National Archives.
  18. Canadian policy makers even tried to refuse Jewish children – see Abella and Troper's chapter, 'The Children Who Never Came', in I.M. Abella and H.M. Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1991), 101–25.
  19. Canada. House of Commons. 18th Parliament, 6th Session, Volume 2.
  20. *Ibid.* Orders of the Day. 18th Parliament, 5th Session, Volume 362.
  21. *Globe and Mail*, 22 June 1940.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. *Ibid.*, 27 June 1940.
  24. It was most likely that no age limit was formally defined so that CORB and Dominion welfare officials could retain final say in who could be foster-parents. 'History of the Children's Overseas Reception Board', Dominions Office, Do 131/43, National Archives.
  25. *Ibid.*
  26. Canadian Council on Social Development Funds, 'Child and Family Welfare Series', MG 28-I10, Library and Archives Canada.
  27. See Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006), and Veronica Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts its History of Childhood Disadvantage* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2006).
  28. Roy Parker in *Uprooted: The Shipment of Poor Children to Canada, 1867–1917* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004) estimates that 24,854 children were sent to Canada through Dr Barnardo's organization between 1882 and 1915.

29. Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).
30. June Rose, *For the Sake of the Children: Inside Dr. Barnardo's* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987).
31. Larry Prochner and Nina Howe, 'The Wartime Child Care Centres in Canada and Great Britain', *Canadian Children*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2001), 21–27; Canadian Museum of Immigration, British Evacuee Child Collection, '98.05.28 TF: Thelma Freedman'; Jocelyn Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1991).
32. Private Papers of Miss J.M. Kemp, Document 8139, Imperial War Museum.
33. Foster-mother Marion Simpson wrote to the Caves on 20 June 1940 that 'we are overjoyed to know that Paddy and Colin will soon be on the way and out of the terrifying experience that air raids must bring.' Private Papers of Mrs P. Cave, 10034.
34. University of Toronto, Women's War Service Committee, 'Minutes 1939–1946', B1968-0002/001 (07), University of Toronto Archive.
35. Ibid., B1972-0004/001 (07), University of Toronto Archive.
36. Ibid., B1968-0002/004 (13), University of Toronto Archive.
37. 'About Us, the St George's Society of Toronto', <http://stgeorgesto.com/about-us/about-the-st-georges-society/> (accessed 28 September 2014).
38. St George's Society Meeting Minutes, File 39, 'Minutes of Meetings of Sub-Committee on Evacuee Children', 1940–45, Fonds 1575, Series 10823, City of Toronto Archives.
39. Ibid.
40. *Ludemus*, 1944, Havergal College Archive.
41. Mary Byers, *Havergal: Celebrating a Century, 1894–1994* (Erin: Boston Mills Press, 1994), 110.
42. 'History and Tradition', Havergal College, <http://www.havergal.on.ca> (accessed 15 July, 2014).
43. Byers, *Havergal*, 109.
44. 'Mission & Values', Havergal College, <http://www.havergal.on.ca> (accessed 15 July 2014).
45. Jenny Hartley, "'Letters Are Everything These Days": Mothers and Letters in the Second World War', in Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600–1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 183.
46. Lee Cooper, 'From "Love Letters" to "Miss You"', *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1999), 193.
47. Helen Brown, 'Negotiating Space, Time, and Identity: The Hutton-Pellett Letters and a British Child's Wartime Evacuation to Canada', in Bruce Elliott, D. Gerber and S. Sinke (eds), *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
48. Private Papers of Mrs P. Cave, Document 10034, Imperial War Museum.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. 'Fertile Canada', poster, c. 1900, Library and Archives Canada; 'Western Canada: The New Eldorado', poster, c. 1908–18, Library and Archives Canada.
61. Private Papers of Mrs P. Cave, 10034, Imperial War Museum.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid. Evacuees were told to be brave and behave well.
64. In an interview with the author on 16 July 2011, Pamela Mace (nee Blunt) recalled her mother walking straight past her on the train platform after not recognizing a matured Pamela wearing lipstick and high heels. Thelma Freedman struggled upon returning to her family and Britain, both changed by war, and decided to return to Canada in 1953. (Canadian Museum of Immigration, British Evacuee Child Collection, 98.05.28 TF.)
65. Young Tom was depicted as such in Mary Williamson and Tom Sharp (eds), *Just A Larger Family: Letters of Marie Williamson from the Canadian Home front, 1940–1944* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011).
66. 'Marie Williamson to Margaret Sharp', *Letters of Marie Williamson and the Sharp Family*, 58A.1.273.47, Canadian War Museum.
67. 'Bill Sharp to Mother Margaret, 1943', 58A.1.273.24, Canadian War Museum.
68. 'Marie Williamson to Margaret Sharp', 58A.1.273.47.
69. 'Tom Sharp 1943', 58A.1.273.19.
70. 'Tom Sharp from Camp 1942', 58A.1.273.18.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. 'Bill Sharp to Mother Margaret, 1940', 58A.1.273.21.
74. Ibid.
75. Claire Halstead, 'From Lion to Leaf: The Experiences of British Children Evacuated to Canada in the Second World War' (PhD thesis, University of Western Ontario, forthcoming). Also see Claire Halstead, "'Dangers Behind, Pleasures Ahead": British-Canadian Identity and the Evacuation of British Children to Canada During the Second World War', *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2014), 163–79.
76. As it stands, no cases of abuse or maltreatment have been unearthed in the course of the author's research. Case files from CORB children, the frequency with which evacuees moved into different homes, and the rhetoric used to describe these changes, are aspects thoroughly investigated in the broader study.
77. Graham Broad, *A Small Price to Pay* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013); Jeffrey Keshen, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); Ian Mosby, *Food Will Win the War: The Politics, Culture, and Science of Food on Canada's Home Front* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).
78. Swain and Hillel in *Child, Nation, Race and Empire* argue that 'young Canada' was seen to be requiring care; the nation needed white children while there was a need to save the British race.
79. Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980).
80. Michael Bliss, *Right Honourable Men* (Toronto: Harper Perennial Canada, 2004). J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975).

# 6

## East African Students in a (Post-)Imperial World

*Timothy Nicholson*

In April 2012, staff at the British National Archives made headlines worldwide when they released part of the formerly secret cornucopia of files associated with the end of the colonial empire in Kenya. These files revealed British concern that Barack Obama, eponymous father of the American president, and other Kenyan students studying in the United States, might 'fall into the wrong hands' and associate with anti-colonial organizations (from the late 1950s and early 1960s).<sup>1</sup> Although it was the group studying in the United States that received the most attention at the time, East African students of the late colonial and early independence periods travelled to three continents in search of university education. With some assistance from family, friends and teachers, they worked to take advantage of newly available resources such as scholarships, travel assistance and educational opportunities made available by long-standing British connections in the region and rising Cold War competition. Focusing on students from Kenya and Tanzania,<sup>2</sup> this chapter highlights the life experiences of these students as they studied abroad in the English-speaking world.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, African youths transformed their world and the world of the British Empire. Occupying a relatively privileged position in their homeland but denied access to further education, students established their own transnational networks working to access educational opportunities in, among others, India, the United States and the United Kingdom. Their experiences allow for an important re-examination of the late colonial and early postcolonial period and suggest new ways of understanding the relationship between African youths and global paradigms of authority. British colonial and educational officials wanted to control the intake of students both in the region and abroad and, having failed to do so, could only monitor the fostering of connections between African students and other areas of the world. British officials often overlooked East African youths, treating them as an inconvenient, demanding and potentially radical group; however these students forged many transnational connections

by moving around the British world, engaging with education officials and raising awareness of new educational opportunities through Africa.

## Background

Historians have shown that the British world was a connected entity with networks binding together diverse areas and peoples. People, ideas, information, literature, humanitarian concerns, capital, controversies, technology and goods constantly circulated around this web in varied ways, often via the imperial centre but not uncommonly directly between the colonies themselves.<sup>3</sup> A range of historians have demonstrated this transnational history of the British world by linking events such as the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya and the US Civil Rights movement, or the experience of the oppressed in the American South and apartheid South Africa.<sup>4</sup> This chapter further complicates debates over the 'end of Empire' by highlighting how a sub-altern group exploited British concerns over their own legacies. By using records created outside official imperial archives to highlight the viewpoint of East African students, this chapter shows how the British retreat from empire was ambiguous (even from within the British state itself), uneven and closely intertwined with the larger British world. Imperial networks continued to exist and could be utilized by determined groups, only now these connections were coupled with the dynamics of the global Cold War.<sup>5</sup>

The effects of Empire within Britain have been thoroughly examined over the last 20 years by a range of scholars. Jordanna Bailkin's 2012 monograph, *The Afterlife of Empire*, ties together the rise of the welfare state in Britain with societal concerns over African immigrants and issues such as housing, adaption and mental disorders.<sup>6</sup> New scholarship uses a broad range of sources – including court cases, deportation papers and oral histories – to demonstrate the role of ordinary people, including children, in the overall context of the end of the British Empire and to provide an alternative means of approaching the subject. The British world had a number of transnational connections that were much more diverse than had previously been realized. East African students were able to take advantage of these in their search for an education.<sup>7</sup> By examining the experiences of the colonized, this chapter is able to expand further on the interconnected nature of the British world and to reveal the opportunities and constraints faced by these youthful students.

In contrast to the study of British imperialism, the historiography of childhood, especially in the African context, is a relatively new field. As pointed out by the editors of this collection in the Introduction, recent scholarship has demonstrated the ways in which children around the world have been important historical actors and provides a new perspective on the social history of the British world. Alcinda Honwana and Filip de Boeck demonstrate the agency and place of youth within the setting of postcolonial conflicts.<sup>8</sup> Andrew Burton and Helene Charton-Bigot's *Generations Past* examines the

historical experiences of young East Africans, revealing their constantly changing encounters with the outside world, the competing social constructions of youth they were forced to contend with and the extent of inter-generational discord. As the authors of this work point out, East African youths were associated by the authorities with nationalism, criminality and urbanization – all of which were contentious issues for colonial powers.<sup>9</sup> In particular, Charton-Bigot argues that schools were sites of modernity where students learned how to fight colonial limitations and achieve their own educational goals.<sup>10</sup>

In seeking to overcome the scarcity of sources, this chapter draws upon oral histories obtained from East African students. Although these interviews are coloured by the later experiences of these individuals, they do provide a method of examining and recovering the recent past. Over 30 interviews were conducted by the author in Nairobi, a location which reflects the now elite status of the once-poor students. Over the last 40 years, many of those who studied abroad in the late 1950s and 1960s have returned home and achieved success in their respective fields of study, are now closely linked with the government or elite educational institutions and live in the economic and political centre of the country. Interviews focused more on students who were successful in their course of study and in their professional lives. While somewhat self-selecting in that I interviewed successful students, their agency, determination to study abroad and life experiences are reflective of the several hundred students who received foreign scholarships during this period.

Recognizing potential limitations, recent African scholarship nonetheless assesses the benefits of these sources. Africanist Corrine Kratz writes: 'Life history conversations are not only memory in action but the configuring of perspective in action.'<sup>11</sup> Participants in oral histories are dealing with an outsider in the form of the interviewee and are also shaping their own personal legacy. Luise White expands on this notion, adding: 'Historical memory is valuable precisely because it is not necessarily accurate memory' but reveals 'a space of colonial and postcolonial conflict'.<sup>12</sup> While the oral histories used in this chapter are certainly performances (the memories of participants no doubt influenced by their youth and their future successes), their memories nevertheless yield insights into the processes of obtaining foreign scholarships and the experiences of study abroad. The perceptions of students are revealing because their particular recollections shaped their worldviews and, as eventual leaders, those of their countries.<sup>13</sup> These oral histories are complemented by documents from the British, American and East African national archives and are cross-referenced with textual sources in an attempt to blunt inherent biases. With this source material, the agency and histories of individual youths are revealed and the tangible effects of decolonization and the Cold War become evident on a much more personal level.

## The East African educational experience

The students who went on to study abroad later in life reflected the socio-economic background of late colonial East Africa, a relatively poor rural country. Despite their modest origins, however, they had parents who were slightly more prosperous than their neighbours, and were hence able to afford school fees. Still, the number of places in schools remained limited through the late colonial and early postcolonial periods and colonial regimes were reluctant to allocate additional resources to the education system. Only approximately 10 per cent of those entering school (mostly males) had any form of secondary education.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1950s, both Tanzania and Kenya experienced rapid growth in their education systems. The number of students in Tanzania increased by over 200,000 over two decades between the late 1930s and the late 1950s, with a total of 374,577 enrolled students in 1959.<sup>15</sup> Kenya's schools experienced the same dramatic increase and by 1958 hosted 530,335 students.<sup>16</sup> Over 3,000 Tanzanians and 4,000 Kenyans now attended secondary school, up from just 395 in Kenya in 1945 and even fewer in Tanzania. By 1959, Kenya saw almost 1,000 college students studying either at Makerere University in Uganda or abroad.<sup>17</sup> The growth was remarkable and would only accelerate in the following decade. Additionally, throughout this period, a middle school education qualified students to obtain an entry-level white-collar job as a clerk (although these requirements became stricter over the decade). Higher qualifications led more students to apply to and attend secondary school and also, increasingly, university. Upon completion, this guaranteed elite status to the graduate, especially in Tanzania, which could only boast 17 university graduates when it achieved independence in 1961. With a strong demand for education, the school system could never fulfil people's expectations and many began looking abroad for alternative options, especially at university level.

In their long quest for education, most students undertook a varied and highly mobile educational career, attending more than one secondary school and often stopping their studies for years at a time. East African learners differed from British and American conceptions of traditional university students. Pupils generally were the first generation of their family to attend school steadily for more than a few years, let alone go to university. Some attended school only when money was available for school fees, stopping for months or even years at a time. Nearly all of the students who studied abroad completed Form IV (Grade 10) while only a small minority completed Form VI (Grade 12). Student experiences were extremely diverse and did not follow a set pattern. In one instance, Rockefeller Foundation investigators interviewing students for potential fellowships at Makerere University met with a student whom they described as 'a Maasai, a very unusual boy who wandered around Africa for some years before getting to Dar, thirsting for education, against the will of his Maasai elders'.<sup>18</sup> Such generational

conflict is a common focus of researchers and also plays a role in the memoir of Maasai student Tepilit Ole Saitoti, who went against his father's wishes in his pursuit of education.<sup>19</sup> In another case, a future professor at the University of Dar es Salaam highlighted the varied educational experience as he 'only reached Std. 8 for formal education, then trained as a teacher (grade 2), taught for 4 years' before attending Pacific Lutheran University and continuing on to earn his doctorate in history.<sup>20</sup> The life experience of students often surprised researchers, scholarship committee members and other experts who remained focused on European, American or elite African educational experiences.<sup>21</sup> Students later recalled a highly competitive but optimistic and rewarding environment.

At the same time, students had familial and societal obligations, including the need to work. Africans were increasingly involved in the cash-based economy, paying taxes and purchasing goods in currency. Most of the young students worked while attending primary and secondary school to pay their school fees and other associated costs. Ways of raising these funds varied, but working for or with the family was common. One former student, Donald Kombo, recalled 'I could accompany my father as early as four in the morning fishing because this was our only source of income and by eight, though in most cases I was very tired, I could go to school'.<sup>22</sup> In Kombo's and other cases, helping to ensure the survival of the family continued to be the major responsibility of young people, and school was as a secondary priority. In another case, a female student managed to raise school fees with her own work. After her father lost his job, life became more difficult for Gabriel Misango Anabwani as she needed to raise her own school fees, not an uncommon problem for students in the region.<sup>23</sup> She recalls making art products for money, saying 'at some point I thought I would venture into fine art because I was making outstanding mosaics from dry banana leaves glued together by a paste from euphorbia plant. I sold a lot of these things'.<sup>24</sup> Although her mother later assisted more with her school fees, having any extra money was always a struggle. Many parents did not enjoy secure employment or, although they viewed education as an investment, did not want to support their children's education financially. In many cases, having several children meant parents could not afford all the school fees. Parental support was also extremely limited as students moved on to secondary and post-secondary education, with the ability to pay becoming even more constrained.

Furthermore, experiences shaped by gender complicated the lives of female students. In 1956 in Tanzania, for example, male primary school students constituted at least double the number of their female counterparts. This situation worsened to almost a 10:1 male-to-female ratio at government-sponsored secondary schools, a situation that remained stable through the early 1960s.<sup>25</sup> As few female students progressed beyond primary school, even fewer advanced past secondary level. Female students

needed to deal with additional, time-consuming domestic chores and limited support from their families. Faith Wandera recalls that 'I had to come home after school [to] help my mother fetch firewood and water before we had to prepare food for the family'.<sup>26</sup> The educational experience of Wandera shows that her parents were proud of each educational milestone, and she became one of the very few girls who had managed to go to secondary school in the entire community.<sup>27</sup> With three older brothers studying at university, Wandera's father heard about an opportunity for her to study abroad and encouraged her to apply, leading to a scholarship. Although some scholarships specifically targeted females, primary and especially secondary schools remained a patriarchal world. Both male and female students needed to undertake a lot of household duties, but for female students this burden was heavier and they enjoyed less access to schooling.

Overcoming gender-based societal biases, students who later studied abroad were high achievers who generally enjoyed parental support. Many parents viewed education as an investment to secure a better life for their children. Ruth Oniang'o, who later studied in the United States, recalled:

My father was a renowned sugarcane farmer who made sure that his kids both male and female, got some education. His dream was to enable us to be teachers in the society because that was the most prestigious job at the time and someday we could buy him a bicycle.<sup>28</sup>

Parental support sometimes went against social norms. After a stellar secondary school exam performance in 1959, Mary Osoro remembers 'my parents were very happy about my performance and they thought I should continue with education and not to marry me off... Many people had approached my father but he could not accept'.<sup>29</sup> Education delayed marriage and further complicated matters as females were not expected to have a higher level of education than their spouse. For families depending on bridewealth, education simply was not a viable option. Overall, students came from diverse backgrounds but needed some form of additional assistance to succeed.

For students wanting to attend university abroad, ties to the wider British world were crucial. Help frequently came in the form of teacher-missionaries who often went against colonial regulations and helped facilitate student travel abroad. Missionaries had long enjoyed a major presence in the region as they established and ran many schools. With strong ties to both the community and the metropole, they existed as the primary connection between Africans and the outside world. Other teachers also helped further ties between the British world at large and individual East African students, and disseminated information regarding new educational and scholarship opportunities. In her memoir *Unbowed*, Wangari Maathai writes that the Catholic bishop in Nairobi heard of scholarship opportunities in America, noting that 'he decided to have students from Catholic schools in his area

join in'.<sup>30</sup> Because she was about to graduate at the top of her class, Maathai was selected to study abroad. In another example from Kenya, missionaries with ties to Europe and America were important figures in helping students study abroad. Ruth Kwamboka recalled 'I inquired so much from the white nuns who were mostly the staff at school and mostly our principal who was very helpful. She connected with her family in the United States who were given the responsibility of taking me around or supporting me when I was there.'<sup>31</sup> While missionary involvement should not detract from the overall efforts of students, missionaries did help to alleviate concerns over students travelling abroad for additional educational opportunities and their connections to other missionaries and other church personnel across the wider British world became increasingly important.

Additional help came from local teachers and politicians. Teachers, who were held in high esteem, were often akin to local celebrities, and were among a minority of people with wide-reaching connections which they could call on to help students. One student recalled hearing about scholarship opportunities from her teacher, stating 'Our lecturers told us about the advert that was ran in all the papers and they told us that we were free to apply. That was very good because being students we rarely accessed the newspapers.'<sup>32</sup> Kenyan leaders such as Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga and later Jomo Kenyatta worked to expand their political base and demonstrate their international connections through the provision of international scholarships. In Tanzania, local politicians did broadly the same, although much more of their effort went to helping students reach secondary school. Assistance also came from new international non-governmental agencies, such as the African American Student Foundation, which also provided funds, scholarships and connections for students wanting to study abroad. In a similar manner to missionary support, some assistance was helpful in encouraging, assisting or contacting young, ambitious East Africans with opportunities not available to earlier generations.

Some students who had heard about scholarship opportunities but lacked connections or additional support applied for funding themselves. The process mostly involved writing to universities directly for assistance, contacting any organization that was thought to provide funds or contacting colleges directly. Tanzanian students, like East African students in general, had to take employment as evidence of their poverty in order to obtain scholarships from outside countries. One former student, M. Gaudency Pipi, worked as a veterinary assistant and wanted to continue his education. Pipi stated to the African American Student Foundation that 'I was born in a poor illiterate family, and it has many children to support and it cannot afford the expenses of sending me to a University college'.<sup>33</sup> These students often highlighted colonial stereotypes and wrote what they thought the reader expected to hear about the backward nature of the region. Pipi also included references the colonial government's lack of funds to send students to Makerere University or to overseas universities, further positioning himself as a deserving

case.<sup>34</sup> Finally, some letter writers aimed to increase their chances of receiving assistance by using anti-imperial rhetoric and appeals to the United Nations to bolster their argument. While this direct correspondence often failed, it still provided a way for students independently to establish much needed ties with the outside world. The very education provided by the colonial state had given these letter writers the ability to look beyond the British world for educational opportunities.

For the few students who managed to secure an opportunity to study abroad, departure remains an important memory. The process of leaving called for a celebration, showing the significance of the event for the entire family and the community in general. The students and their families wanted to share their experience with the community who energetically supported this venture. Going abroad was a transformative event that, like birth, marriage and death, needed to be properly acknowledged. Life events carried considerable importance in African society and communal celebrations involving food and drink were common.<sup>35</sup> Before leaving for America, Anabwani stated 'a bull was slaughtered and our relatives were invited because it was such a special day. A rumour was that "Dakitari anaenda Amerika," the doctor is going to America ... Young and old all came to bless me and give a word of encouragement'.<sup>36</sup> The excitement, importance and exotic nature of studying abroad and the prominence of America coalesced around the student. The student's family and village, who stood to benefit from this opportunity, all worked to help the student as best they could. In addition to moral support, friends and family offered small donations and expected the student to prosper while abroad. As she left for the United States, Edith Gitao said:

I was given a lot of gifts, money ranging from five cents to twenty cents. Everybody was happy for me and they gave me the little they could manage will all their hearts. I really appreciated this contribution because it was of great help to me abroad. The church and the village as a whole did not stop at that; they even escorted me to the airport to see me off.<sup>37</sup>

These celebrations connected the local community with the wider world and made it feel as though it was the whole family of the village leaving to study. The overwhelmingly positive response by the community also illustrates both the novelty and the importance attached to studying abroad during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

After successfully raising the funds to travel abroad, students found themselves in the centre of local, regional and global rivalries. Their ability to obtain scholarships, travel across the British world and demonstrate their own agency forced the British to rethink late colonial education policies and their own carefully defined presence and future in the region. The dominant presence the British envisioned for themselves in postcolonial Africa

came under pressure as other countries established a stronger presence in the region and closer ties with African students as well as with rising local politicians. The British quickly found themselves in competition with the United States, now driven by Cold War concerns, over which nation would have the most effective and enduring relationship with the region. New American programmes immediately upset the imperial hierarchy as the British struggled to redefine their role in East Africa with the independence movement gaining momentum in Tanzania. Additionally, the USSR, India, then later Scandinavian countries and China began taking more of an interest in the region. At the same time, Kenyan and Tanzanian politicians, especially Mboya, Odinga and Kenyatta in Kenya, competed with each other to offer scholarships to other countries. These multifaceted and multilevel rivalries show the importance of students to the wider world and how they could manipulate this competition to their own advantage.

### Life abroad

Countries hosted African students for a variety of reasons, not all of them purely altruistic, and this is a topic that has recently received a great deal of scholarly attention. It has been argued that the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries wanted not only to prove their credentials as modern and rapidly developing countries, but also to use students for propaganda purposes.<sup>38</sup> The government of the United Kingdom, by contrast, wanted to host students in order to foster a strong imperial legacy and because of its desire to combat the growing influence of other countries in the region. In turn, the United States hosted students as part of its Cold War agenda, attempting to improve relations with East African countries and work for stability in the region, while India attracted students searching for university education outside the Cold War world. Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders worked to provide an alternative host nation to the imperial metropole and assert their own credentials to decolonizing nations. Table 6.1, though incomplete, shows the number of East African students studying in the United Kingdom,

*Table 6.1* Select destinations of East African students (1959–68)<sup>39</sup>

Destination/ year of study	Arriving from Tanzania	Arriving from Kenya	Arriving from Uganda	Total African students
UK (1959)	260	725	569	8,000
UK (1968)	1,127	1,777	569	10,000
US (1961)	50	247	No data	21,000
US (1964)	305	774	223	39,963
India	0	0	0	No data
Eastern bloc (1964)	285	445	115	6,530

United States and India during the 1960s.<sup>40</sup> Particularly noteworthy are the large increase in numbers over time and the increasing diversity of options available to students.

East African students moved throughout the British world, including to India and Canada, and to almost any destination offering new opportunities. The United Kingdom experienced the most pronounced increase in the number of East African students. By 1946, 1,000 students from the Empire were studying in Great Britain, a figure that rose to 8,000 by 1955 and to over 10,000 by the end of the decade.<sup>41</sup> Although overshadowed by numbers of students from South Asia and the Caribbean, East African students, especially Kenyans, drastically increased in number and, upon their return home, played an important role in the late colonial and early postcolonial development of their homelands. Another few hundred students attended university in the United States with an additional several hundred moving to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Finally, a few hundred travelled within the global South, though not in the same numbers as other regions, securing scholarships to study in places such as India, Egypt and Ethiopia.<sup>42</sup>

A number of patterns emerge among students studying abroad. For both Kenya and Tanzania, the majority of students studied law, but the United States had double the number of students undertaking literature and humanities majors compared to Britain, where engineering was the second most popular degree.<sup>43</sup> The majority of students studying in America took a more indirect path to get to the United States, holding second- and third-class degrees before attending a teaching college and then teaching at upper primary or secondary school for two or three years.<sup>44</sup> African students in the United States and Soviet Union were generally older than their British counterparts. American researchers noticed 'the composite African student in the U.S. is a 26-year old single male from either Nigeria or Kenya, studying social science at the sophomore level',<sup>45</sup> while the majority of the students in the United Kingdom and India were closer to 21 years in age. Statistics compiled by United States researchers also found the majority of African students in the United States or the Soviet Union came from a farming backgrounds while those from Kenya had parents who were teachers or tribal chiefs.<sup>46</sup> The host country also varied according to the background of the student. Despite some demographic differences, East African students studying throughout the world experienced similar problems, with the inter-related issues of housing, money and racism dominating former students' recollections.

In Britain, securing housing posed a major hurdle for African students and provides insights into a number of larger issues. For the British, the ideal East African student (reflective of colonial students in general) was a single male who received official permission to study in the metropole and possessed a scholarship to support himself. Students arriving in the United

Kingdom were often met by members of the British Council and given a crash course in how to live in Britain. They lived in university-provided housing, although many stayed in private housing due to lack of provision. Official thinking, which reflected civilizing missions in Africa, was that experience in Britain allowed deserving African students an opportunity to 'see more of Western ways of life',<sup>47</sup> while increasing their own education and living in a 'modern' country. However, the education was to be time-limited and the student was expected to maintain strong ties with their homeland.<sup>48</sup> However, as Jordanna Bailkin points out, family members such as wives and children were not necessarily welcome as they were a possible distraction and more likely to need welfare and housing assistance. Students were expected to behave in an acceptable manner, including devoting proper amounts of time to studying, living in proper housing while doing so and then returning home upon the completion of their degree. For the British, the idea that students would learn 'British ways' from their time in the United Kingdom and then return to their homeland was central to the educational mission.

The issue of unsponsored students caused a great deal of trouble for officials as students circumvented the scholarship system and proper channels of approval and exacerbated housing shortages. Although officials strove to improve the situation, London did not have enough affordable housing for students, forcing them to work, to live far from their place of study or to live in questionable housing arrangements. More so than in other areas, students from East Africa arrived in London without having either a scholarship or a place to study, and were especially worrying for the British authorities. One report claimed that 'unsponsored students often have to find their own lodging and this is one of the most difficult problems of the whole situation'.<sup>49</sup> Due to their status and lack of formal approval, this group remained difficult for the government to trace, although repeated attempts were made to do so. Arrangements also seemed to have broken down with students who remained in London. For example, in the late 1950s, 12 Kenyan students came to the attention of British authorities:<sup>50</sup> they were all living in a single house and were thought to be intending to travel to Communist countries, or else to be spreading Communist propaganda. Local officials feared these students would quickly become destitute or that travelling abroad would make them potential Communist agents; they were, in short, thought to be at risk of becoming 'political and social misfits' and indigent.<sup>51</sup> Their case led to further concerns and restrictions on African student travel.

Adding to the anxieties of students throughout the world were concerns over money. Other students, like immigrants everywhere, maintained connections with their homeland and needed to send money home while living on limited funds themselves, in support of their studies. While in the United States, Kombo worked to support his family in Kenya and later recalled:

My father had passed on and I had to take care of my family back home. I did a number of jobs to raise money for my upkeep because no sooner had I been given the allowance by my sponsors than it was budgeted for by my family. I did a number of casual jobs from doing dishes, punching receipts in the cafeteria to lawn mowing in the school compounds.<sup>52</sup>

The perception generally was that once in America, students had more money and thus could assist financially at home, especially if younger children were involved. Schools sometimes helped their foreign students find employment, generally in low-paid jobs, ideally associated with the school but often illegally. Many creative students commoditized aspects of their culture – food, clothing or language – and used their background as a method of raising money. Researchers realized the difficult nature of working and studying and attempted to limit this, advising students that ‘part time employment is usually both difficult to perform and low in compensation’.<sup>53</sup> Money remained a preoccupation and any financial responsibilities or connections with home further exacerbated the poor financial situation of students who were barely surviving on their low stipends and scholarships.

The final major cultural issue dominating student recollections is racism. Students experienced racism on multiple levels in nearly every host nation as they were generally the first Africans to be encountered in these societies. They experienced it in every aspect of their lives, from being made to pay higher rent or being denied housing altogether, to being prohibited from certain jobs, experiencing rejection when seeking dates or coming up against discrimination through their studies.<sup>54</sup> As stereotypes regarding Africans in general existed throughout the world, East African students had to contend with a global colour line, with some individuals in host nations even thinking of African students as cannibals.<sup>55</sup>

In the United States, racial discrimination played a major role in students’ experiences. Despite the American government’s aim to limit interaction with the Civil Rights Movement in order to protect its image abroad, East African students involved themselves with civil rights issues.<sup>56</sup> United States State Department officials, along with their British counterparts, feared such experiences would undermine the country’s reputation abroad as participants recounted these experiences to others on their return home; however, students were still welcomed to these institutions and Tanzanians continued to apply for scholarships. Walter Bgoya, a young student who won a scholarship to study in the United States, recalls that while at the University of Kansas he became involved in the American Civil Rights movement. According to Bgoya, this experience:

Exposed me to unpleasant experiences with rightist groups, including the John Birch Society and the Ku Klux Klan, who burned a cross outside my

apartment. I was called all sorts of names in threatening letters and phone calls – I was a ‘communist’ and a ‘foreign agitator’ – and I was advised to take these threats seriously.<sup>57</sup>

While direct involvement in this campaign was generally limited, and most students already knew of the racial tensions all too manifest in America, these experiences shaped students’ experiences in America, and were memories that remained with them as they returned home.

Racial discrimination further highlighted divisions within what scholars now call ‘the global South’, as – against the wishes of Indian leaders – many Indians themselves did not welcome African students. A major divide existed within host societies as certain government offices and segments of the population wanted to encourage hosting while other elements of both the population and government campaigned against it. Although large numbers of African soldiers fought in India during the Second World War (with limited experiences of racism), one student experienced a similar level of racism to that prevalent in America or Britain. While working on his bachelor’s degree, future professor Moses Makori and a friend visited the Lucknow Zoo in Uttar Pradesh where he later recalled looking at the tigers. As Moses went to leave, he notes that:

I turned to my amazement I saw more than 12-odd families staring at us rather than the exhibits... I felt like an exotic African creature that was stirring fear [as for] my friend he decided to go out and wait. I tried to woo the public through simple smiles and greetings which were not reciprocated by all. Instead, all that I got was the look of wonder.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the shared colonial bond, students participating in recreational activities provoked a surprising reaction from the Indian population. While Makori may have been regarded merely as a curiosity, a number of other East African students recalled experiencing racism with regard to living conditions, eating and dating. While the Indian government was committed to recruit foreign students, racism remained a defining feature of students’ experiences here and throughout the world. If the experiences overall were positive, and students remained grateful for the opportunity to further their education, they still remembered issues surrounding housing, money and racism.

## **Return home**

Students returned transformed by their educational experience abroad. Arriving back in their homelands, these highly educated students were critical in meeting the staffing needs of expanding bureaucracies, teaching

at schools and replacing British officials. Nearly all these students were promoted from their old jobs, many such promotions having been promised before the candidate left the country. This allowed local politicians to highlight the Africanization of government positions, which was an expectation of the population, a preoccupation of the government and, with its success, a point of pride among elite politicians. The advanced education obtained abroad helped students' careers. For example, Wangari Maathai, a student mentioned earlier, wrote in her memoir:

In an effort to recruit personnel to take over positions being vacated by British civil servants, the Kenyan government sent officers to the United States to recruit young Kenyans about to graduate. As part of this process, I was interviewed by a group of people from the University College of Nairobi...<sup>59</sup>

The replacement process, well covered in the local press, allowed for positive coverage of the various regimes. Government officials reminded the population about the success of Africanization programmes with statements in various newspapers and the publication of annual statistics about how this process was faring. In one extreme case, graduates in Tanzania were required to work for the government for five years, which served to promote the process.<sup>60</sup> While East African officials still relied on expatriate civil servants, East Africans themselves, especially those with an overseas education, began dominating the bureaucracy.

However, students returning home from studying abroad never conformed perfectly to the expectations of those who had sent them abroad or of their new postcolonial governments. The hope of their leaders that these students would become productive bureaucrats was limited by the students' experiences abroad and a desire to continue with their studies. Aware of the students' advanced education, their superiors viewed these returnees, especially those from the United States and the Soviet Union, with scepticism and even hostility. Additionally, more radical politicians argued that time abroad had changed the students' values. They expressed fear over emigration and the corrupting nature of being abroad. Politicians also worried that students would not be familiar with new policies when they returned. For example, Walter Bgoya, with his American university degree, was expected to take a senior post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, an outspokenness fostered and engrained while at Kansas 'did not endear me to my superiors' or 'to the politicians who did not accept that their ideas could be challenged... Tanzania was hierarchical and authoritarian, and one was expected to conform and to do as one was told'.<sup>61</sup> In Kenya, returning students faced other challenges. Students who had studied in Eastern bloc countries and India, and who were thought likely to profess socialist

ideology or had been assisted by disgraced politician Oginga Odinga, found themselves out of favour with President Jomo Kenyatta's regime. They were eventually purged from the government as a result.<sup>62</sup> With their views altered by their time abroad, returning students found that they did not agree with the increasingly authoritarian governments and were thought to possess attitudes that differed from those expected by the institutions they represented or were expected to join.

Students returning home and applying for jobs also faced some scepticism concerning their newly acquired degrees. Demonstrating colonial-era stereotypes and biases towards the British system of education, Tanzanian Assistant Chief Education Officer, Julius Mganga, stated: 'I'd rather have a student with a British Higher School Certificate than one with an American bachelor's degree. The American-educated one has only a very wide education while the Higher School Certificate chap has concentrated on two or three courses.'<sup>63</sup> This bias, largely indicative of officials' own experiences and values, led several students (all of whom possessed ties to American education) to condemn the statement. Clear divides existed based on the students' country of study. Still, Mganga's statement demonstrates the obstacles students who studied in new places needed to overcome and the lasting legacy of the British education system.

By and large, African students who studied abroad became leaders in government, medicine and business, quickly moving into the elite of their respective countries and taking on important roles in developing their nation-states. At the same time, most students maintained their transnational ties, often travelling abroad over the course of their careers. Others used their connections to the British world and beyond to help their children obtain access to universities in Russia and increasingly China. Transnational travel for educational purposes thus continued for a new generation and built upon paths established during the 1950s and 1960s.

This chapter has sought to highlight the agency of East African students and the process by which they obtained opportunities to study beyond imperially defined places and circumvent colonial regulations. Even as the British sought to develop their colonial legacy in the region and maintain a lasting presence, students established new relationships with other – sometimes competing – countries and worked to counter the ambitions of colonial officials. Students took advantage of overlapping ties between the wider British and Cold War world to further their own education, a process that created new career prospects and unforeseen opportunities for many. Additionally, the movement and education of students demonstrate the transnational process of nation-building. Returning home with an overseas education allowed students to secure positions in the new institutions, develop the power of the national government, and play major roles in the postcolonial history of their respective countries. Thus, ties to the British world and the resulting

transnational connections became important in building the postcolonial African nation-state in the immediate postcolonial era.

## Notes

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2. To avoid confusion between Tanganyika and Tanzania, this chapter only uses the name Tanzania but acknowledges the fact that this change occurred in 1964.
3. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830–1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2012); Zoe Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815–1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).
4. For example: Gary Baines and Peter Vale (eds), *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflict* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008); Sue Onslow (ed.), *Cold War in Southern Africa: White Power, Black Liberation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War': The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2009); Gary Thomas Burgess, *Youth and the Revolution: Mobility and Discipline in Zanzibar, 1950–1980* (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2001).
5. Martin Lynn (ed.), *The British Empire World in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005).
6. Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
7. Burgess, 'Youth and the Revolution'.
8. Alcinda Honwana and Filip de Boeck (eds), *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005).
9. Helene Charton-Bigot, 'Colonial Youth at the Crossroads: Fifteen Alliance "Boys"', in Andrew Burton and Helene Charton-Bigot (eds), *Generations Past: Youth in East African History* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 84–107.
10. *Ibid.*, 105.
11. Corinne A. Kratz, 'Conversations and Lives', in Luise White, Stephan F. Miescher and David William Cohen, *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 142.
12. David William Cohen, Stephan F. Miescher and Luise White, 'Introduction', in White, Luise, Stephan F. Miescher and David William Cohen, *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 15–16.
13. *Ibid.*, 16.
14. Brian Cooksey, David Court and Ben Makau, 'Education for Self-Reliance and Marambee', in Joel D. Barkan (ed.), *Beyond Capitalism and Socialism* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 204.
15. Lene Buchert, *Education and the Development of Tanzania, 1919–1990* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), 64–65.
16. Kenyan Education Department, *Education Department Annual Report, Education Department Triennial Survey, 1958–1960* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1960).
17. Charton-Bigot, 'Colonial Youth', 104. Also see Kenyan Education Department, 'Annual Report', 15.

18. 'Special Lectureship Programme', 2 November 1965, R.F. 1.2-477-4-28, Rockefeller Foundation Archive [RFA], Sleepy Hollow, New York.
19. Tepilit Ole Saitoti, *The Worlds of a Massai Warrior: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1986).
20. 'Special Lectureship Programme', 2 December 1965, RFA, R.F. 1.2-477-3-20-476, Rockefeller Foundation Archive, Sleepy Hollow, New York.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Donald Kombo, interview by author, 19 July 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
23. Gabriel Misango Anabwani, interview by author, 23 August 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Buchert, *Education in the Development of Tanzania*, 64–65.
26. Faith Otwane Wandera, interview by author, 25 June 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Ruth Oniang'o, interview by author, 18 June 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
29. Mary Osoro, interview by author, 1 June 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
30. Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Anchor, 2007), 74.
31. Ruth Kwamboka, interview by author, 10 June 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
32. Robert Nyandusi, interview by author, 28 July 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
33. 'M. Gaudency Pipi to Board of Directors', 8 November 1960, Tanzania Correspondence File, African American Student Foundation Archive [AASFA], East Lansing, Michigan, 12.
34. *Ibid.*, 15.
35. Jacqueline C. Woodfork, *Culture and Customs of the Central African Republic* (New York: Greenwood Press, 2006), 141; Also see Laura Edmondson, *Performance and Politics in Tanzania: The Nation on Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).
36. Gabriel Misango Anabwani, interview by author, 23 August 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
37. Edith Gitao, interview by author, 8 July 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
38. Young-Sun Hong, "'The Benefits of Health Must Spread Among All': International Solidarity, Health, and Race in the East German Encounter with the Third World', in Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (eds), *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 183–210.
39. While students also travelled to the Eastern bloc, they fall outside the scope of this chapter.
40. These statistics are compiled from United States Information Agency, *African Students in the US: Basic Attitudes and Aspirations, and Reactions to US Experiences* (Washington, DC: Office of Research) and A.S. Livingstone, *Overseas Students in Britain* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1960), 58.
41. W.H. Billington, 'Government African Overseas Students', October 1959, FCO141/6702/24, British National Archives, Kew (TNA).
42. Livingstone, *Overseas Students in Britain*, 58.
43. Billington, 'Government African Overseas Students'.
44. Livingstone, *Overseas Students in Britain*, 58.
45. United States Information Agency, 'African Students in the U.S.', 51.
46. U.S. Information Agency, *African Students in the US: Sources of Information About America and Attitudes Towards the Mass Media* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1964), 26.
47. See for example correspondence regarding Linchwe Kgafela, 'A.R. Kelly to Miss A.D. Rutter', 7 December 1961, CO981/110/2 (TNA).

48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 5
50. 'T. Neil to W.G. Gregg', 26 April 1961, FCO 141/6072/36 (TNA).
51. Ibid.
52. Kombo, interview by author, 19 July 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
53. Phelps-Stoke Fund, *African Students in the United States: A Handbook of Information and Orientation* (New York: Phelps-Stoke Fund, 1957).
54. For a personal account on this issue see Barack Obama, *Dreams of My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004), 125; for British government views see, for example, J.C. Morgan, 'Sir Robert Armitage', 22 February 1957, Do35/5347/9, TNA.
55. Nico Slate, 'Introduction: The Borders of Race and Nation', in Philip E. Muehlenbeck (ed.), *Race, Ethnicity and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), ix.
56. For the new literature of this idea, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) and Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
57. Walter Bgoya, 'From Tanzania to Kansas and Back Again', in William Minter, Gail Harvey, and Charles Cobb Jr (eds), *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over a Half Century, 1950–2000* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008), 103.
58. Moses Makori, interview by author, 19 July 2012, Nairobi, Kenya.
59. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 85–94.
60. Cranford Pratt, *The Critical Phase in Tanzania, 1945–1968: Nyerere and the Emergence of a Socialist State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 128.
61. Bgoya, 'From Tanzania', 104.
62. Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Also see Oginga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru: The Autobiography of Oginga Odinga* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).
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## **Part III**

# **Indigenous Experiences**

# 7

## Resistance and Race: Aboriginal Child Workers in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Australia

*Shirleene Robinson*

In 1903, in Oxley, a suburb located on the outskirts of the Queensland capital of Brisbane, a 14-year-old Aboriginal girl named Mulla set fire to her employer's curtains.<sup>1</sup> At the time that this incident occurred, Mrs Sturmpels, Mulla's employer, did not suspect her of the act. Later though, Mulla informed police officers that she had indeed set fire to the curtains and that she had done so deliberately on account of the appalling abuse she had received from Sturmpels, who used to beat her with a stick.<sup>2</sup> Mulla was fortunate in receiving support from official quarters, a rarity for Aboriginal people who came before the legal system at this time.<sup>3</sup> She was removed from her employer, and Gus Forrest, the Sub-Inspector of Police for South Brisbane, told the Queensland Home Secretary that since the case had come before the Court, Mulla had 'behaved very well', performed 'her work in a very satisfactory manner', and 'with kind treatment would make a very good servant'.<sup>4</sup> Mulla's dramatic act of defiance provides an illustration of the inventive strategies of resistance Aboriginal children deployed against their masters in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia. Tactics included running away from employment, stealing, 'playing up' and destroying the property of employers. By investigating strategies of resistance and their impact, this chapter explores the complications and limitations of indigeneous childhood agency in a colonial British world setting where strict racial hierarchies operated.

Aboriginal workers were vital to the rapid economic development of Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The vast cattle stations operating across northern Australia in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia relied heavily on this low-cost labour.

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Thank you to Cheryl Ware who assisted with the sourcing of certain Protector Reports cited in this chapter.

While the Indigenous population was lower in the southern regions of Australia, Aboriginal labour was still utilized in a staggeringly diverse range of capacities. Patrick Wolfe has concluded that:

Settler-colonization relied upon Indigenous labour at every state and in every site of its development. Indigenous people guided, interpreted for and protected explorers. They cut bark, built fences, dug, planted, maintained, shepherded, stock-rode, mined, pearl-dived, sealed and performed every conceivable settler-colonial task except governance.<sup>5</sup>

There has been significant debate amongst historians over the degree of autonomy and agency that adult Aboriginal workers were able to experience in Australia's past. Earlier historians stressed the substantial power imbalance that existed under colonialism and compared Aboriginal labour to slavery.<sup>6</sup> Revisionist historians have since argued that labour relations were more complex and that some Indigenous people may have worked for white people in order to gain certain freedoms and benefits and maintain access to lands and culture.<sup>7</sup> The position of Aboriginal child workers, who were much more vulnerable than older workers and much less able to negotiate conditions, raises further questions about Aboriginal labour and agency.

Thousands of Aboriginal children were amongst those who provided essential labour for European settlers.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, labour represented one of the key ways that Aboriginal children and European adults interacted during this period. As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have argued, a transnational politics of white privilege dominated settler countries such as Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Policies of exclusion prevented Asian immigration and Indigenous people were excluded from developing forms of citizenship. Racial thought was a dominant part of political and public discourse, but it was also reinforced and reiterated in private spaces. Ann Laura Stoler has asserted that the intimate locations of Empire were places where 'racial classifications were defined and defied, where relations between colonizer and colonized could powerfully confound or confirm the strictures of governance and the categories of rule'.<sup>10</sup> Labour relations between young Aboriginal workers and their European employers were usually conducted in private homes or on stations, and although away from colonial administrators comprised intimate spaces where colonial relationships were developed and expressed (see Figure 7.1). Relationships between colonizer and young members of a colonized group hence formed a crucial part of the imperial British project. The use of young Aboriginal workers across Australia met economic needs, but was also presented as a means of reforming a population that was designated a 'problem' under colonialism. The philosophy, with an emphasis on the reformatory potential of labour, drew from 'child saving' ideas prevalent in nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>11</sup>

While colonists argued that the performance of labour would benefit Indigenous children, undertaking this labour could cause significant



*Figure 7.1* Young Aboriginal girl seated in a European dress next to a young Aboriginal boy standing and wearing a suit, Queensland (ca. 1880)  
Courtesy National Library of Australia.

psychological and physical harm. Indeed, a considerable proportion of the historical work that has been conducted on Aboriginal child workers has compared the exploitation of these children with slavery.<sup>12</sup> Although European employers controlled the power balance decisively, many Aboriginal children actively attempted to resist abusive employment situations. Orlando Patterson, who has written extensively on the institution of slavery, has demonstrated that even the most powerless of working individuals will express their resentment of their situation through the use of covert or overt mechanisms of resistance.<sup>13</sup> Patterson found that adult workers in slave-type situations resisted their situations either through passive or violent strategies. Passive strategies would include refusal to work, running away and

self-injury. Violent resistance would encompass individual and collective violence against employers.<sup>14</sup> James C. Scott, who has studied peasant resistance in Malaysia, argues that subtle and powerful forms of 'every day resistance' are much more common than larger-scale types of resistance, and that individual agents should be placed at the centre of the analysis.<sup>15</sup>

Historiography on child labour across the British world is still emerging and literature pertaining directly to the experiences of indigenous child workers is scant.<sup>16</sup> Beverley Grier's important studies of child labour in colonial Zimbabwe and Southern Rhodesia have demonstrated the way African children asserted agency within the limits of the colonial system and resisted exploitative labour conditions.<sup>17</sup> Catherine Koonar's work on Ghana, by contrast, has drawn attention to the formation of African childhood and the significance of labour to these children.<sup>18</sup> The Australian experience is more directly comparable to that of other white settler societies such as Canada and South Africa, where colonists emigrated with the intention of seeking new territory and forming new societies, rather than for the purpose of extracting labour and resources.<sup>19</sup> While the exploitation of capital was not the primary motivation for white settlement in Australia, colonists certainly utilized Indigenous labour due to its availability, proficiency and cost-effectiveness.<sup>20</sup>

Aboriginal children were subject to particular scrutiny from colonists, almost from the outset of British settlement in Australia. Violent frontier clashes saw Aboriginal children removed from their family groups, while fears over warfare and an Aboriginal presence on the edges of settlement exacerbated discussion over a perceived 'Aboriginal problem'.<sup>21</sup> While state regulations focusing on white children in colonial Australia tended to concentrate only on those who were deemed neglected or criminal, all Aboriginal children were classified as members of a 'problem population'.<sup>22</sup> Indigenous children were subjected to ongoing debates about their potential for reform and 'civilization' through separation from their families and indoctrination in menial labour.<sup>23</sup> Aboriginal children considered to have European heritage were particularly vulnerable to these interventions.<sup>24</sup> By the 1820s, this had become a prevailing element of colonial discourse, and missionaries, government agents and individual colonists alike were separating Aboriginal children from their kin with the expectation that these children would form a servile workforce. This ideology guided the removal of the 'stolen generations' of Aboriginal Australians from the 1860s to the 1970s.<sup>25</sup> While public sentiment began to shift against the use of white child labour from the 1870s onwards, the use of Aboriginal child labour was considered both acceptable and desirable well into the 1950s.<sup>26</sup>

Research conducted on the experiences of Aboriginal child workers in Western Australia and Queensland has shown that these children were frequently subjected to emotional, physical and sexual abuse and that mechanisms to protect them from such harm proved inadequate, or

non-existent.<sup>27</sup> In Western Australia, the Aborigines Protection Act, which was introduced into Parliament in 1886, ostensibly set the minimum age at which Aboriginal children could be indentured at 14. A closer reading of this legislation shows that much younger Aboriginal children could still be indentured, however. Under Part 4 of the Act, any Aboriginal child of 'a suitable age' could be bound by indenture to any master or mistress 'willing to receive such a child in any suitable trade, business or employment whatsoever' until they were 21 years of age.<sup>28</sup> Wages were not required and there was no compulsion for the provision of adequate food or education. In contrast, under the 1871 Elementary Education Act, primary school attendance was made compulsory for white children between six and 14, with exemption only possible on the grounds of distance or a 'reasonable excuse'.<sup>29</sup> Penelope Hetherington asserts that ultimately the Western Australian model 'was a system of slavery that removed parents' control over their children and placed it in the hands of pastoralists'.<sup>30</sup>

In Queensland, until Royal Assent for an Amendment Act controlling Aboriginal child labour in 1902, there was no legislation requiring employers of Aboriginal children to pay these workers. Furthermore, no minimum age was set for Aboriginal child workers until 1919.<sup>31</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the situation of European children in state care in Queensland, who were not sent out to service at younger than 12 years of age after 1884 and had their employment situations regularly monitored by Inspectors.<sup>32</sup> The Queensland government also set minimum rates of pay for European state children in 1880. Furthermore, before state children in Queensland started employment, their employers had to apply to the government for permission and for a check on their suitability.<sup>33</sup> While the permit system technically required employers of Aboriginal children to also apply for government permission, no suitability checks were required. A great number of employers did not apply for permits, a failing overlooked frequently – or even condoned – by regional Protectors of Aborigines.<sup>34</sup> Such differences in the treatment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous child workers are attributable to the prevailing racial attitudes of the time.

Although colonists wielded a great deal of control over their interactions with young Aboriginal workers, due both to their superior status as adults and position as colonists, relationships between children and adults could be complicated, with children showing agency and initiative within the circumstances in which they found themselves when possible. As Allison James and Alan Prout assert of children more broadly, they 'might employ a variety of models of agency within and between different social environments'.<sup>35</sup> While Aboriginal children responded to their employment in creative and adaptive ways, it is important not to overstate the degree of agency these children wielded. The most prevalent ways Aboriginal children resisted employment were through the adoption of passive strategies. It is apparent that the bulk of Indigenous child workers were simply not in positions where violent strategies of resistance were feasible.



*Figure 7.2* Bidy Brewon (possibly Brewan), nursemaid for Mr and Mrs J.S. Gordon of Brewon Station, Walgett, New South Wales (1887)  
Courtesy State Library of New South Wales, bcp\_03274.

The majority of Aboriginal girls who worked in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were described as domestic servants, though in reality the types of work they were expected to undertake could often stretch far beyond the realm of typical domestic work (see Figure 7.2).<sup>36</sup> There are accounts of young Aboriginal domestic servants working with livestock, digging post holes, and chopping and fetching firewood, alongside the more standard tasks of cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. Sexual pressures were also frequently placed on young girls.<sup>37</sup>

Given the exploitative nature of employment for many Aboriginal girls, it is not surprising that accounts of resistance are common. Such accounts

show the way even the most comparatively powerless of workers will attempt to manoeuvre within oppressive structures. The most frequent type of resistance deployed by female Aboriginal children was to abscond from their employers. Colonial observers were keenly aware of this. In the course of his Australian travels in the 1870s, the English writer Anthony Trollope observed that as soon as most young Aboriginal domestic servants were able to do so, they ran away.<sup>38</sup> Trollope commented that the success rate of this strategy was not high. To illustrate this point, he described the situation of one particular 14-year-old girl, who had 'made repeated attempts at escape' but was recovered by other Aboriginal trackers and 'taken back to her European employer'.<sup>39</sup>

While running away could sometimes serve as a means of escaping oppressive employment situations, it could also result in Aboriginal children being reunited with family groups. Therefore this type of escape could sometimes serve the dual purposes of resisting both unfavourable working situations and the colonial policies which separated young Aboriginal people from their kith and kin. In 1884, the *Queenslander* newspaper noted that young Aboriginal girls could be very good domestic servants, but that they would not abandon their own society and would return to it whenever the opportunity arose. The newspaper observed that these young servants could be '... taught many things and learn to keep themselves clean and neat, and frequently become really useful about a house but the one great obstacle to their becoming a complete success is their unconquerable attachment to the camp'.<sup>40</sup> In 1922, J.B. Steer, the Superintendent of Point McLeay Aboriginal Station in South Australia, also noted that young Aboriginal children preferred to be reunited with their family groups but described these reunions in negative terms. Steer asserted that:

The settlers would employ more of our native youths and girls on the farms, but they find that when spoken to, they want to go back again to the station to be kept in idleness by their fathers and mothers, and until we have some means of compelling them to stay in their employment they will always be a source of trouble to the station and to those who want to employ them.<sup>41</sup>

The great majority of employers did not accept their young Aboriginal domestic servants running away, instead going to considerable lengths to recapture them. Frequently, employers enlisted the local police to help find these children. In 1901, three Aboriginal girls were taken from Nocundra in Western Queensland to the Aboriginal Girls Home at West End to be trained as domestic servants. One of these children, Ruby, ran away from the Home and got as far as Chincilla – some 293 kilometres away – before the police captured her and took her back to the Home at West End.<sup>42</sup> In 1907, Richard Howard, then the Queensland Chief Protector of Aboriginals, became aware

of a situation where one 12-year-old Aboriginal girl had tried to run away from her employer several times and 'would have deserted altogether had it not been for the intervention of the police' who took her back to her employer.<sup>43</sup> The role colonial authority figures played in tempering Aboriginal child resistance made it particularly difficult for these children to maintain agency over their own working lives.

On some occasions, Aboriginal children who were able to run away were given the opportunity to discuss what had prompted their actions. Invariably, these workers mentioned that their actions were prompted by the desire to leave exploitative and abusive employment situations. In one case, which occurred in 1913, Lucy, a 14-year-old girl who had been employed as a domestic servant for two years in Atherton in Queensland, ran away from her employer.<sup>44</sup> Lucy was found subsequently in the nearby town of Nelson, arrested for absconding and brought before the Atherton Children's Court. Lucy told the Police Magistrate that she did not wish to return to her domestic service position because her female employer had not been kind to her, had overworked her and had beaten her. Evidence also suggests that Lucy suffered abuse at the hands of her employer's husband, whom she called 'a bad man'. The Inspector of Police at Cairns agreed that 'Mrs Young was not as kind to Lucy as she should have been, hence [causing] Lucy to run away'.<sup>45</sup>

The type of resistance most often practised by male Aboriginal children was also the act of running of away. The majority of male Aboriginal children who worked for colonists were employed in the pastoral industry where they mustered and drove cattle and other livestock, often under appalling conditions. Working closely with large animals carried the risk of injury, and broken arms and legs were common.<sup>46</sup> There is a considerable amount of evidence that significant numbers of children tried to escape from this type of employment. In 1901, the Western Australian Chief Protector of Aborigines described a case where a nine-year-old boy originally from Croydon Station in the Pilbara region had been placed under indenture to a drover named Platt. The drover complained that the child had left him and had run away back to Croydon Station.<sup>47</sup> Also in 1901, John Brockman, the Resident Magistrate in Greenough, 400 kilometres north of Perth in Western Australia, asserted that boys aged as young as 10 had little legal recourse if they were recaptured. Brockman asserted: 'It is argued that if a boy is arrested for running away, he can complain to the Court if he has been ill-treated, but this is absurd. When the boy is arrested and put in the dock, he stands there a poor, shrinking, frightened creature...'.<sup>48</sup> Brockman's statement captures the helplessness of these workers under the structures of colonialism.

The vulnerability of young Aboriginal pastoral workers also meant, in some instances, that they were employed for a considerable time before attempting to escape. One Queensland Aboriginal boy began work in 1901 when he was 13 years of age and did not run away until 1906, when he was 18.<sup>49</sup> It is likely that the child was unhappy for most of his employment but stayed until he either felt he was able to survive outside this employment or

felt that he would be able to run away without being recaptured. In 1936, a South Australian newspaper outlined the experiences of an Aboriginal boy, Charlie, who had been placed on a cattle station at the age of seven after his parents had died.<sup>50</sup> He was soon working on the station but as he grew older, his boss 'noticed the increasing surliness' of his expression. At 17, Charlie told his boss that he was 'going where I belong'. After undergoing initiation into a local Aboriginal group, Charlie moved back and forth between Aboriginal and white society, only returning permanently to the station when he was gravely ill. Rather than accepting Charlie's need to reconnect with his country and kin, the newspaper described his experience as a cautionary tale of the 'instincts of [Aboriginal] ancestors' asserting themselves in otherwise reliable workers.

On very rare occasions, white colonists expressed an appreciation of the reasons Aboriginal children might opt to run away from employment. In 1876, one such commentator, who called himself 'an Old Queenslander', wrote sympathetically about Aboriginal children employed as pastoral workers who were running away as soon as they were old enough to do so. This writer noted that 'on arriving at puberty under such circumstances, the boy generally abandons his servitude and rejoins his old companions of his own race and colour'.<sup>51</sup> This commentator believed that such actions were understandable but that most stations masters interpreted them as an insult and subsequently branded children who ran away 'monster[s] of idleness' and cited their actions as examples 'of the hopelessness of civilising blacks and their importable and savage nature[s]'.<sup>52</sup> While this commentator displayed some empathy and understanding regarding the motivations of the young boys who were running away, government officials did not share this level of perception. In 1908, the Queensland Chief Protector of Aboriginals expressed his bewilderment over the fact that a 14-year-old Aboriginal boy employed as a pastoral worker kept absconding. The child was described as a very efficient worker who had 'only one failing – he keeps running away'.<sup>53</sup>

Aside from running away from employers, Aboriginal children also used the alternative strategy of stealing from employers to demonstrate their discontent. This does not appear to have been a successful tactic of resistance because Europeans unleashed the legal system and often a considerable degree of violence against those children who took their property. In 1902, the Northern Protector of Aboriginals in Queensland, Walter Roth, reported a situation where Lena, a 'little' Aboriginal child employed as a domestic servant at Normanton, was removed to Mapoon Aboriginal mission after she stole 15 shillings from her employer and gave it to local Aboriginals.<sup>54</sup> It is likely that Lena's actions were a creative means of both showing her unhappiness with her employer and displaying her solidarity with other Aboriginal people.

Male children also practised stealing as a type of resistance. In one Queensland case in 1899, a 10-year-old child named Larry, who had been passed from one employer to another during the course of three years of

labour, was reported to the Cooktown police for theft. As a punishment, he received 'six strips of a birch rod and fourteen days imprisonment in a Cooktown gaol'.<sup>55</sup> In 1916, an Aboriginal boy who was employed as a 'house-boy' at Atherton in Queensland was removed to Yarrabah Aboriginal mission after he stole from his employer.<sup>56</sup> This strategy of resistance appears to have been quite successful because it resulted in the removal of its young practitioners from abusive situations. Perhaps young Aboriginal workers knew this was a likely outcome, and acted accordingly. It is very important to be aware, however, that employers almost certainly directed violence towards Aboriginal children who engaged in this practice.

'Playing up' constituted a further means by which Aboriginal children could express their dissatisfaction with employment as domestic servants. This mechanism of resistance could be quite successful as it resulted in many Aboriginal children being removed from their employment situations and being taken to missions. In 1900, Walter Roth described the case of one 17-year-old Aboriginal girl, who had been brought up from infancy by the owner of the Gregory Downs Hotel. The girl had been employed for a considerable time and had been considered a well-behaved employee. By 1900, however, the licensee of the hotel considered that the girl was deliberately misbehaving and informed Roth that she had lost all control over her and wanted to have her removed to an Aboriginal mission.<sup>57</sup>

In 1901, Walter Roth was able to describe several such cases. In one situation, an Aboriginal girl, Maria, aged about 13, 'knew a great deal of housework', but due to the fact that she was 'slipping out at night' and 'playing up' in other ways, her employer no longer wanted to keep her on. She was sent to Yarrabah Aboriginal mission.<sup>58</sup> In another case, Topsy, aged 15, had been employed as a domestic servant for a considerable time but had 'finally got beyond control' and was removed from her employer.<sup>59</sup> The following year, Roth reported yet another similar case. A seven-year-old Aboriginal girl, Flora, was sent to a mission from a northern property because her employers considered her to be 'unmanageable'.<sup>60</sup> Like stealing, this mechanism could be quite successful; however, Aboriginal children who incurred the wrath of European employers through 'playing up' were vulnerable to reprisal in the form of aggression and abuse.

There are also examples of male Aboriginal children misbehaving to express their unhappiness and perhaps avenge their exploitation and regain some power. Misbehaving as a mechanism of resistance appears to have been at least partially successful. An Aboriginal boy, Canado, who was aged about 12 years and had been employed by the manager of Glen Ormiston station near the Georgina River in northern Queensland, used this mechanism to positive effect. When his employer brought him down to Brisbane, he 'became incorrigible' and his employer handed him over to Archibald Meston, who in turn sent him to the Fraser Island mission.<sup>61</sup> On the surface, it appears that this was a positive resolution. The lived reality was probably

more complex. It is likely that Canado's 'misbehaviour' was at first met with physical punishment before his employer ultimately decided that he could no longer employ him.

The destruction of property also appears to have been a prevalent strategy of resistance as there are a number of cases of Aboriginal children damaging the possessions of those who employed them. The case of Mulla, who set fire to her employee's curtains in 1903, has already been outlined. In June and July of 1805, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* reported on an incident that had occurred in the Hawkesbury area and which bore close parallels to Mulla's case. Three houses in the area had been set on fire and it was revealed that the culprit was 'none other than a native girl, not exceeding thirteen years of age, reared from her infancy by Henry Lamb', who was a farmer and soldier in the New South Wales Corps.<sup>62</sup> The newspaper reported that the child could not speak the language of her kin and 'had never been observed to intermingle with the native tribes, nor to hold any intercourse among them...'.<sup>63</sup> Rather than considering issues of cultural dislocation and exploitation which could have motivated the child, the newspaper instead described the child as possessing 'unparalleled depravity, perfidy and ingratitude'.<sup>64</sup> The ultimate fate of this child remains unclear.

While extreme and very unusual, there are even accounts of Aboriginal children killing their employers in order to escape oppressive situations. This was a very gendered type of resistance and does not appear to have been practised by female children. It is likely that male Aboriginal children had a tendency to use more violent mechanisms of resistance because they were stronger and might have been more able to resist physically in this manner. Most of the children who resisted in such ways were aged over 12. Clearly, younger Aboriginal children would have felt that the size difference between them and their employers made physical resistance futile. In 1891, Joker, who was described by a newspaper as being no older than 12 years of age, used such a mechanism to resist the domination of his employer. Joker, who was employed at Cooktown, shot dead his employer, H.R. Jones, because he believed that Jones was going to kill him the next morning.<sup>65</sup> When Joker was tried in court for this murder, the judge instructed the jury to acquit the child because there was no evidence of malice. Despite Joker's actions being motivated by self-defence, some commentators argued that the child should have been jailed because he admitted to the murder.<sup>66</sup>

There are no accounts of Aboriginal children resisting employers in the pearling and *bêche-de-mer* industry. This is a curious anomaly and requires further scrutiny. Aboriginal children were particularly sought after as employees in marine industries and were employed in significant numbers in both Western Australia and Queensland. In 1875, a reporter for the Western Australian newspaper, the *Inquirer*, asserted that 'the more juvenile the native crew' the more successful the pearling craft.<sup>67</sup> In 1894, John Douglas, Government Resident and Magistrate on Thursday Island in the

Torres Strait, commented that 'boys and girls of tender years (from seven to eleven years old)' were regarded as even more valuable for the purposes of this industry because they are more tractable than adults'.<sup>68</sup> In 1901, Protector Bennett told Walter Roth, then Queensland's Northern Protector of Aboriginals, that 'with the growing scarcity of Aboriginal labour, the attempts to ship young boys...from ten or twelve to fourteen years are becoming frequent'.<sup>69</sup>

The lack of accounts of Aboriginal child resistance in marine industries most probably stems from the particularly isolated and oppressive nature of this type of employment. Even Aboriginal adults in this industry faced severe limitations relating to the types of resistance that they could successfully deploy. The pearling and *bêche-de-mer* industries did not function in a way that allowed Aboriginal workers to run away from abusive employers. Aboriginal workers who had been removed a considerable distance from their traditional localities would frequently have to seize or steal boats to return to their initial location. While Aboriginal adults may have found resistance extremely difficult in such circumstances, Aboriginal children would have found it almost impossible.

Generations of Aboriginal children provided settlers across Australia with valuable labour in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As children, they were physically smaller than adults and still growing in maturity. Furthermore, as members of a colonized group, they were vulnerable to the whims of settlers who wielded significant power under the colonial system. Although this suggests challenging abusive employment situations would have carried great risk, large numbers of Aboriginal children did use strategies to resist exploitation. The use of tactics such as running away from employment, stealing, 'playing up' and destroying the property of their employers were all deployed by Indigenous children. The continued use of such strategies across Australia reinforces the impression that the broader dynamics of colonization were in a constant state of flux and were expressed in the everyday relationships between Aboriginal child workers and white adult employers. Such strategies also reveal that while Aboriginal children were limited in the degree of agency they experienced, they still used creative and adaptive methods to challenge a highly oppressive system.

## Notes

1. Gus Forrest, Sub-Inspector of Police, South Brisbane, 3 July 1903, in-letter no. 12665 of 1903, A/58929, Queensland State Archives. For much of the period considered in this chapter, a number of Aboriginal children had both Indigenous and European names. Where possible, Indigenous names have been used in what follows.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Mark Finnane and John McGuire, 'The Use of Punishment and Exile: Aborigines in Colonial Australia', *Punishment and Society*, vol. 3, no. 2 (April 2001), 279–98.

4. Gus Forrest, Sub-Inspector of Police, South Brisbane, 3 July 1903, in-letter no. 12665 of 1903, A/58929, Queensland State Archives.
5. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999), 29.
6. See particularly Raymond Evans, ‘“Kings” in Brass Crescents: Defining Aboriginal Labour Patterns in Colonial Queensland’, in Kay Saunders (ed.), *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834–1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 183–212.
7. See particularly Ann McGrath, *‘Born in the Cattle’: Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987) and Marie Fels, *Good Men and True: The Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1837–53* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988).
8. Penelope Hetherington, *Settlers, Servants and Slaves: Aboriginal and European Children in Nineteenth-Century Western Australia* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 2002) and Shirleene Robinson, *Something like Slavery? Aboriginal Child Labour in Queensland, 1842–1945* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008).
9. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008).
10. Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies’, *Journal of American History*, vol. 83, no. 3 (December 2001), 830.
11. Shirleene Robinson, ‘Race and Reformation: Treatment of Children in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Australia’, in Robyn Lincoln and Shirleene Robinson (eds), *Crime Over Time: Temporal Perspectives on Crime and Punishment in Australia* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 61–82.
12. See particularly Robinson, *Something like Slavery?*
13. Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1969), 260.
14. Ibid.
15. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
16. For work on non-Indigenous child labour, see Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History* (St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1997); Simon Sleight, *Young People and the Shaping of Public Space in Melbourne, 1870–1914* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 87–130.
17. Beverley Grier, *Invisible Hands: Child Labor and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890–1865* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005) and Beverley Carolease Grier, ‘Struggles over African Childhood: Child and Adolescent Labor, 1890–1920s’ in Heidi Morrison (ed.), *The Global History of Childhood Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 197–222.
18. Catherine Koonar, ‘“Christianity, Commerce and Civilization”: Child Labor and the Basel Mission in Colonial Ghana, 1855–1914’, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 86 (2014), 72–88.
19. Lynette Russell, *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 2.
20. Ann McGrath, ‘A National Story’, in Ann McGrath (ed.), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown* (St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 21–26.

21. See particularly Peter Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898–1954* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1973) and Andrew Markus, *Governing Savages* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000).
22. See Shurlee Swain, 'The State and the Child', *Australian Journal of Legal History*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1998), 64–77 and Shurlee Swain, 'Development of Child Welfare Policy in Australia', in Hugh D. Hindman (ed.), *The World of Child Labor: An Historical and Regional Survey* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 949–52.
23. Robert van Kriekan, *Children and the State: Social Control and the Formation of Australian Child Welfare* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).
24. Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), 7.
25. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).
26. Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood*; Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present Day* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
27. Hetherington, *Settlers, Servants and Slaves*, 147, and Robinson, *Something like Slavery?* 141.
28. *Ibid.*, 147.
29. *Ibid.*, 55.
30. *Ibid.*, 155.
31. Shirleene Robinson, 'The Unregulated Employment of Aboriginal Child Labour in Queensland, 1842–1902', *Labour History*, no. 81 (May 2001), 1–16.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. Robinson, *Something like Slavery?* 62–63.
35. Allison James and Allan Prout, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: Falmer Press, 1990), 78.
36. Shirleene Robinson, "'Always a Good Demand": Aboriginal Child Domestic Service in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Australia', in Victoria K. Haskins and Claire Lowrie (eds), *Colonization and Domestic Service: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).
37. Robinson, *Something like Slavery?* 138.
38. Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 1, *Australia* (Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1873), 72.
39. *Ibid.*, 73.
40. *Queenslander*, 23 February 1884, 292.
41. *Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the Year Ended June 30th 1922* (Adelaide: R.E.E. Rodgers, Government Printer, 1922), 12.
42. Archibald Meston to the Under Secretary, Home Office, 14 February 1901, in-letter no. 02644 of 1901, COL/145, Queensland State Archives.
43. Denis Keane, Police Station, Bowen, Kennedy District, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Brisbane, 28 April 1907, in-letter no. 859 of 1907, A/58751, Queensland State Archives.
44. Inspector of Police, Cairns, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 19 September 1913, in-letter no. 382 of 1913, POL/J38, Queensland State Archives.
45. *Ibid.*

46. Robinson, *Something like Slavery?* 180.
47. 'Aborigines Department Report for Financial Year Ending 30th June 1901', 35.
48. Hetherington, *Settlers, Servants and Slaves*, 152.
49. Police Inspector, Mt Garnet Police Station, to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, in-letter no. 852 of 1906, A/58679, Queensland State Archives.
50. *Chronicle* (Adelaide), 26 March 1936, 16.
51. *Queenslander*, 7 October 1876, 12.
52. Ibid.
53. John Bleakley, Chief Protector of Aborigines to W. O'Brien, Moggill, 12 November 1908, in-letter no. 2771 of 1908, A/69418, Queensland State Archives.
54. 'Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1902', *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 2 (1903), 462.
55. Sub-Inspector of Police, Cooktown, to Walter Roth, 25 May 1899, in-letter no. 11348 of 1899, COL/143, Queensland State Archives.
56. 8 July 1916 [in-letter not provided], Police Station, Atherton, Watchhouse Charge Books, QS629/1/1 (1), Queensland State Archives.
57. Walter Roth to the Home Secretary, 26 June 1900, in-letter no. 10526 of 1900, A/58752, Queensland State Archives.
58. 'Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1901', *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 1 (1902), 1138.
59. Ibid., 462.
60. Ibid., 461.
61. Archibald Meston to W. H. Ryder, Principal Under Secretary, 12 August 1897, in-letter no. 10739 of 1897, COL/483, Queensland State Archives.
62. *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 7 July 1805, 1.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. *Queenslander*, 2 May 1891, 864.
66. Ibid.
67. *Inquirer*, 18 April 1875, 3.
68. 'Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1892-3', *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol. 2 (1894), 914.
69. 'Annual Report of the Northern Protector of Aborigines for 1901', *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 1 (1902), 1132.

# 8

## Health, Race and Family in Colonial Bengal

*Satadru Sen*

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the norms of Indian childhood were substantially reinvented and disseminated by new forms of children's literature and adult autobiography.<sup>1</sup> Drawn into the nursery of Indian nationalism, children were imagined as an alternative nation that could be either better or worse than the colonized reality inhabited by parents, teachers and writers. Simultaneously, in India as in western Europe, remembering childhood as a life apart and intervening in shaping its contours and content became central to adulthood and freedom.<sup>2</sup> While these shifts were consistent with the novelty of Victorian childhoods, in India the changes were fundamentally schizophrenic, framed as they were by expectations of continuity – articulated as tradition and culture – even as tradition and culture were redefined.<sup>3</sup> Child-rearing became a complex response to colonial rule, which itself became not so much an act of education, punishment and government, as an act *mandating* the education, punishment and government by natives of their own offspring. Indeed, child-rearing came to encompass the rethinking and supervision of a broad range of relationships within the family, since wives and even husbands would often themselves be children. Conjugal and childhood cannot be separated in histories of the Indian family.

The wider context of family history is crucial to understanding these changes. The scholarly, artistic and popular imaginaries of late nineteenth-century India, and Bengal in particular, are inseparable from the emergence of a new model of the 'respectable' family. Indeed, that fascination and the awareness of a problem – the conviction that respectability and novelty are both conjoined and in conflict within the family – have been markers of Indian modernity. Satyajit Ray's cinema and the literature on which it is based are only the best-known signs of this cultivated identity: immersion in the problem itself constitutes an ideologically desirable subjectivity. That discourse, in which recognizably modern women and men walk out of the 'old' family and into new, less stifling arrangements, is however also a *resolution*

of the problem of Indian domesticity. It gives us *bhadralok* ('respectable' Bengali) families of quite diverse economic circumstances in which the patriarch is weak, the extended clan is threadbare, religious and caste restrictions are absent or obsolete, and men as well as women possess an undeniable individuality.<sup>4</sup>

That essentially liberal resolution is misleading, however, since a 'universal' Indianness, which underlies the appeal of Ray and even Rabindranath Tagore beyond India, was not hegemonic at any point in the history of modern India. Dipesh Chakrabarty has rightly argued that the modernity that emerged in nineteenth-century Bengal was different in its emphases from bourgeois society in contemporary Europe. Indian modernity, Chakrabarty pointed out, retained the patriarchal family at its centre; the European insistence on the autonomous individual was anomalous in the *bhadralok* world. The impressive historiography of the defence of Hindu patriarchy in the nineteenth century broadly agrees that as *bhadralok* men sought to assert their masculine credentials and adult agency in the emasculating and infantilizing political environment of colonialism, they marked the domestic domain as an inviolable site of their authority, firmly subordinating women, children, servants and other dependents.<sup>5</sup>

While this project is generally understood as reactionary, I want to suggest that it was a more complicated attempt to engineer, within the domestic nation, families and children that were also recognizably modern, and in which the authority of the patriarch was both reinforced and destabilized. The apparently anti-reformist, anti-individualist nationhood that reached a climax of sorts during the age of consent debates of the early 1890s (when conservative men insisted on their sovereign right to have sex with 10-year-old wives even if it killed the latter) secreted restlessness, reform and individualism.<sup>6</sup> The 'joint family' of conservative Indian nationalism was not an unreformed patriarchy: shaken by the economic, professional and political circumstances of colonialism, it was a house in disarray.<sup>7</sup> For patriarchal authority to remain hegemonic within that disarray, it needed to adapt and improvise. The patriarch therefore need not be imagined as an atavist bludgeoning every challenge to his authority; nor is it necessary to imagine him as a decadent relic sliding uneasily into obsolescence. Attempts to articulate a vital new familiarity – including a new ideological niche for childhood – could come from the patriarch himself.

This chapter examines one such attempt: that of the conservative essayist Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay. Connecting the crisis of the family to the colonized condition of the *jati* or race (by which he usually meant Bengali Hindus, but sometimes broadly Indians), Bhudeb diagnosed a sickness that threatened the very existence of the *jati*: Indians were malnourished, disease prone, short-lived and demoralized. Improvising a didacticism that borrowed eclectically from indigenous, colonial and metropolitan notions of domesticity and parenting, he sought to reorient the family to incubate and teach a new

idiom of health, in which to be healthy was to manage, rather than deny, individual claims on wholeness, dignity and happiness. Widely read and admired in the crucial decades between the 1860s and 1890s, especially by the less Anglicized lower middle class, Bhudeb was both a barometer and a source of pressure: his explicit allegiance to 'tradition' made him a safer polemicist than the biting witty (and differently conservative) Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.<sup>8</sup> He was, moreover, well-connected to the Anglo-Indian and official worlds of colonial Calcutta, and as such, able to function as an authoritative cultural intermediary.

Bhudeb matters not because he illuminates the self-defeating contradictions of anticolonial reaction, but because he reflects the viability and flexibility of an Indian conservatism, which – as much as the efforts of Brahmos and other liberals – supported the emergence of self-consciously modern Indians. He was not an apologist for the status quo, open to change only in 'practical matters', as Tapan Raychaudhuri has suggested.<sup>9</sup> Not only did the 'practical changes' he desired rest on other desired transformations, the desire itself indicates that those transformations were already at an advanced stage. For Bhudeb, fairness, regularity and the potential for improvement mattered more than any rigid adherence to hierarchies of age or status when it came to the exercise of authority in the family.<sup>10</sup> For those enjoined to submit to authority, he differentiated between good and bad subordination; whereas bad subordination was associated with colonial relations of power, the good variety was identified as self-discipline *and* racial discipline.<sup>11</sup>

Bhudeb was an educator – a teacher, and subsequently an inspector of schools – in a colony of teachers and students. The centrality of the schoolteacher in Indian nationalism can hardly be overstated. The nineteenth-century British-Indian school had been a highly-charged venue of rebellion, reaction and conflict (interracial, intergenerational, inter-caste and interclass) since the time of Henry Derozio and the Young Bengal 'movement'.<sup>12</sup> Those tensions escalated in the decades after 1857 for multiple, intertwined reasons: the centrality of the government-accredited schools to the ability of the middle class to access a modicum of prosperity and authority; the place of the teaching profession in middle-class respectability; the insecurity of poorly paid teachers within the sentimental cult of the *master-moshai* (devoted and revered teacher); an ever-growing pool of disgruntled young graduates; British disdain for *baboos* (English-educated natives) and 'crammers'; and finally the virtual identification of education with 'sedition'.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising that Bhudeb posited the educator as the national saviour, imbued with knowledge and adult responsibility. The work of the educator in the present time, he intoned conventionally, is the teaching of selflessness in moral action, or prioritizing the salvation of society over personal salvation.<sup>14</sup> Yet not long afterwards, he grumbled that those who teach for wages deserve no moral credit.<sup>15</sup> Bhudeb himself was one of the

highest-paid Indians in the employ of the colonial educational apparatus, but he was destabilizing the colonial *mastermohai*, reaching back to a higher, more moral, and more nationally authentic pedagogy.

It was a strategic nostalgia, not to be taken literally. It foreshadowed the conservatism of *Swadeshi*-era critics of colonial schools, who sometimes invoked a past in which white professors and Indian students supposedly bonded without officiousness or hypocrisy.<sup>16</sup> Bhudeb did not advocate the dismantling of the schools. To an Englishman who expressed his doubts about the efficacy of T.B. Macaulay's curriculum and ventured that there were too many schools in British India, Bhudeb replied that he wanted more, not fewer, such schools.<sup>17</sup> The modern curriculum was essential to national recovery. In one essay on education, he observed that where basic literacy and restrictions on permissible behaviour had once satisfied Indian parents' sense of their responsibility, contemporary parents avoided arbitrary restrictions and sought to make all experience educational.<sup>18</sup> He was not being entirely disapproving: education, he felt, must impart a discipline that made the teacher redundant, but the student must nevertheless respect external authority.<sup>19</sup> He sought, thus, to recuperate a restrictive didacticism within experiential pedagogy, and to attach the panoptic principle of continuous self-governance to the teaching of a moral discipline that contained national identity.<sup>20</sup>

### The family and the school

As an Indian nationalist, Bhudeb believed the Indian nation was real, readily perceptible, lamentably colonized, comprehensively degraded and in need of restoration. He did not care much for an independent Indian state; his national restoration was mainly a cultural project that could proceed within the political framework of colonialism.<sup>21</sup> He described himself as a conservative – literally, *rakshansheel*.<sup>22</sup> As the term suggests in the colonial-Indian context, he was hostile to meddling whites, and even more so to Indians who criticized Hindu society from positions associated with the Enlightenment and seemed to invite British intervention in 'social' matters. He insisted that the traditional Hindu family – in which there were clear caste rules, hierarchies of age and gender, norms of selflessness and deference, and generally anti-reformist attitudes towards conjugality, sex and celibacy – was the key to national identity itself. At the same time, he was drawn irresistibly to discourses of efficiency, science and quantification, and sought to incorporate them into his conservative family. Much like Bankim, he was fascinated by Comte and positivism, although his hesitations were more pronounced.<sup>23</sup> He was drawn into the critical duality that Daniel Pick has identified in Comte's interventions in the nineteenth-century European discourses of degeneracy and progress.<sup>24</sup> On the one hand, the idea that families and childhoods were implicated in a hidden degeneration reflected

a vertiginous, panicky response to a visibly triumphant modernity. On the other, Bhudeb shared Comte's faith that problems of nature in society could and should be managed by scientists.

The family that Bhudeb had in mind was what is commonly understood as 'joint' (as opposed to 'nuclear'). In theory, there would be a patriarch, presiding over sons of various ages, their wives and children, widowed aunts, unmarried daughters, unemployed cousins, overstaying in-laws and servants. The joint family was not a primordial or stable institution in nineteenth-century Bengal; it was itself shaped by changes in landholding, migration from rural areas to cities, and the emergence of new patterns of bureaucratized education and respectable occupation that generated unprecedented constraints and opportunities.<sup>25</sup> Under the circumstances, although it was important for a conservative nationalist to point to the joint family as a locus of stable essence, it was patently a dynamic arrangement, renewed constantly and normatively. That dynamism mattered to Bhudeb, who saw the joint family as a technology of civilization: it provided insurance against unemployment, illness and death, that is, not only the dangers of man's animal nature, but also the unpredictability generated by changing circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

Bhudeb's family was overtly a pedagogical institution. It taught its members subordination and the pooling of individually earned resources.<sup>27</sup> Without that didactic and disciplining work, there could be no community. Affect, Bhudeb argued, did not grow on trees; it had to be produced, nurtured and shaped.<sup>28</sup> The joint family taught, moreover, the basics of administration. Within the joint household could be found taxes and budgets, and also problems of social responsibility versus individual rights: both had to be taken seriously, although the former had to be prioritized. It was, finally, a mirror of the crisis of a colonized people whose peoplehood was constituted as much by decay as by resilience. Bhudeb admired, for instance, the self-discipline of the Marwaris of Calcutta, whose families were apparently more robust than those of Bengalis, but he noted that laziness and self-indulgence were proliferating among their children too.<sup>29</sup> The young, as usual, were both the national weakness and the opportunity. The family therefore had to be the object of management and continuous experimentation. Bhudeb put forward formulae for living in the modern world as a *grihastha*: the propertied householder who was not a bourgeois European, and who, while not an ascetic, was nevertheless restrained by self and society.

Female relatives of all ages were central to this vision of the restrained and restraining household. Remaining comfortably within the bounds of mainstream Victorian discourse, Bhudeb declared that whereas animal nature was a powerful determinant of manhood, women were relatively divine (*daivya*).<sup>30</sup> What set humans apart from animals was their capacity for shame, and shame was the basis of civilization; since women felt shame more readily than men, women were an essential civilizing force.<sup>31</sup> While

this is easily recognizable as a version of the confining English narrative of the 'angel of the home', it could recuperate other, arguably more egregious, confinements of female agency. In the wake of Vidyasagar's activism in favour of widow remarriage, Bhudeb remained opposed to such violations of the permanence of the marital bond, even for very young (virgin) widows.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, while Vidyasagar had won the legislative battle, Bhudeb was on the winning side in the war.<sup>33</sup> A young widow in the family should be kept under the personal supervision of the patriarch, he wrote, and if childless, should share her bed with any children the family could spare. While the arrangement was explicitly intended to compensate the maternal instincts of the childless female, it is difficult to miss the implication that the loaned children would serve a policing function in her bedroom, preventing sexual mischief. Children functioned simultaneously as suspects, guards and texts of acceptable desire.

In a similar vein, Bhudeb waded into the politics of child marriage, the legal age of consent and inheritance. This time accusing reformers of being shallow mimics of European habits, he insisted that child marriage was essential to the development of a resilient conjugal bond. Societies with higher ages of marriage also showed high rates of failed marriages and divorce, he argued, providing statistics in support.<sup>34</sup> Bhudeb's support for child marriage was phrased in terms that are no different from the discourse of companionate marriage.<sup>35</sup> Marriages must be happy, he wrote; unhappy marriages made for unhealthy individuals. Happiness in marriage was possible only if husband and wife were linked by the deepest ties of affection and mutual understanding; such ties could develop only in childhood, among spouses who would literally grow and learn together. Adults were too hardened for it. Daughters should not directly inherit parental property; that would only create disharmony within the family. Daughters, in fact, represent a marked tension within the new affect that Bhudeb was engaged in imagining. They undoubtedly had some claim upon their fathers' wealth and affections, and Bhudeb cited Comte on the universal relevance of inter-generational bonds and responsibilities.<sup>36</sup> But he felt compelled to qualify Comte: girl children, who rightfully belonged to their husbands' families, already represented the past, to be looked upon with affection but also detachment (*bairagya*). Only boys carried the future in which one might invest emotionally and financially.

Bhudeb's conservative didacticism was clearly a reaction to the tensions he perceived in the society around him: specifically, various kinds of mobility (economic, geographic, professional and ritual) that had exacerbated conspicuous expenditure and, concomitantly, anxieties about social status.<sup>37</sup> He was, for instance, 'for' dowry – already a contentious issue in colonial marriage-politics and the policing of infanticide because of the burden it placed upon girls' fathers<sup>38</sup> – as a customary right of Indian parents, but it was a half-hearted endorsement. He called for restraint in demands and

payments, noting wryly that colonial education and professions had turned dowry into a new field of social competition, threatening the status of families that were respectable but not rich: the core constituency of modern conservatism.<sup>39</sup> In this new context, the autonomy-seeking individual – with his lightened sense of responsibility but insistent demands – was a manifest threat to the beleaguered edifice of kinship. The conservative family, with reordered priorities for its children, might contain such dangers and also function as a refuge from them.

Bhudeb was far from being an absolutist against the transformations he observed. Persuaded that nationhood required significant revisions within native subjectivity, he was more dedicated to artifice than to nature: not only had the artifices of colonialism already warped the nature of the native, the *positive* revision of nature was possible only through the deployment of artificial regimes of education. The outlook would eventually find wide acceptance among nationalist pedagogues.<sup>40</sup> Familiality was an antidote to nature, teaching modes of living that were resisted by the undisciplined instincts of the young.<sup>41</sup> Marriage and the parent–child relationship enabled the containment of the instincts, and the moulding of new social individuals. Bhudeb was particularly alert to the emergence of new norms of kinship, and to the need to improvise new norms for socializing with strangers as well as relatives, who were not always fully distinct.<sup>42</sup>

Wives (who, it should be remembered, were often children) were the most ubiquitous of such stranger-relatives. If we look below the surface of Bhudeb's 'confining' vision of women in the family, it becomes clear that he was engaged in imagining confinement and liberation simultaneously. His analysis of the notoriously contentious relationship between the young wife, her husband and her mother-in-law should be seen in the context of a changing family in which there were unmistakable new expectations of individuality in women *and* men, 12-year-olds as well as 40-year-olds.<sup>43</sup> Wives of all ages had needs that went beyond received conventions, he acknowledged, and even widows – icons of tragic childhood in contemporary reformist discourse – were granted a certain wholeness. Bhudeb urged that they be treated by in-laws with affection and kindness, protected from abuse and despondency, kept fully involved in household activities, encouraged to cultivate their domestic skills, and taught Sanskrit.<sup>44</sup> While the last was intended as a means of shastric (religious-textual) indoctrination, it also exposed widowed girls to a substantially new educational possibility.

The template of conjugality that Bhudeb put forward was, of course, far from radical; it was not premised on gender equality.<sup>45</sup> Within its constraints, however, it was a vision of partnership. Bhudeb described it as *dampatya*, which is a recognizably modern concept of being a 'couple'.<sup>46</sup> There was considerable reciprocity. Bhudeb's opposition to widow remarriage was balanced by his opposition to polygamy and the remarriage of widowers: those, too, were violations of *dampatya*.<sup>47</sup> And while his

advocacy of celibate widowerhood sought its justifications in indigenous discourses of *sannyas* and *vanaprastha* (ascetic, post-domestic stages of life), the wife for whom he advocated was not simply her husband's shadow. She possessed a unique personhood that could not be replaced. That stance sat awkwardly with his conservatism, but it was consistent with his articulation of marriage as a permanent and exclusive emotional bond for both spouses.

It was consistent also with Bhudeb's promotion of a wider set of roles for women in the household. Wives should not only learn to manage household finances, but also influence and advise their husbands when it came to earning, spending and saving money. Bhudeb thus played a part in the development of a vital icon of 'respectable' Bengali femininity and social well-being: the housewife with the keys to the storeroom knotted to her *anchal*. He arguably exceeded that, because by encouraging women to regard their husbands' wealth as their own and to actively manage and increase that wealth, he insinuated a notion of conjugal property that was ahead of the law.<sup>48</sup> What he called the *grihakartri* – effectively, co-master – owed more to the late Victorian discourse of the mistress of the house than to passive angels and goddesses.<sup>49</sup> From her location within the patriarchal family, the wife became, in a sense, a home-owner and a semi-autonomous agent: an assistant manager, to extend a metaphor. Modern motherhood and childhood were vital parts of that expanded role. 'New' wives were expected to manage not just the family treasury, but the nursery as well, supervising new, scientific regimes of discipline, health and education.<sup>50</sup>

Children, for Bhudeb, represented the pristine and not especially desirable nature of the human animal; they were, he wrote, repositories of infinite selfishness.<sup>51</sup> For such animals, Bhudeb reserved neither the sentimentality of mid-nineteenth-century Victorians, nor the indulgence of Indian worshippers of the child-God.<sup>52</sup> He was distinctly current and 'global' in his insistence upon the plasticity of the child, which qualified his 'old-fashioned' adherence to a Hobbes-inflected vision of juvenile wickedness.<sup>53</sup> For Bhudeb, there was no stable child to conserve. The task, as with their mothers, was to assert agency and ownership over unstoppable and not altogether unappealing changes. Education, as a defined and distinct priority, was central to these transformations of Bengali childhood: not only did it teach a redefined culture, Tithi Bhattacharya has shown that it increasingly became synonymous with culture.<sup>54</sup> (Rabindranath Tagore, as a writer, educator, autobiographical child and cultural icon, remains the most impressive symbol of this convergence of concepts.<sup>55</sup>) For Bhudeb, children's education was both all-encompassing and precisely targeted: it was diffused through the life of the child, and intended to produce better Indians.

For the colonized subject, the diffusion of colonial culture is necessarily a process of compartmentalization. Even as Rabindranath experienced the Macaulayan curriculum as a torment that had invaded his domestic sanctuary, Bhudeb tried to build a wall between the native home and the

colonial school. The wall was full of holes, and by design. Bhudeb's 'Indian' pedagogy was undergirded by a distinctly Utilitarian relationship of need between society and its traditions. Education must make the same student into two people, he wrote: one a policeman, the other policed, operating seamlessly and unobtrusively.<sup>56</sup> Bentham would have approved. At the same time, Bhudeb showed little interest in the formation of universal subjects. His pedagogy was explicitly racialized and anti-humanist, corresponding to colonial discourses of sahibs and natives: it accounted for the effects of climate upon bodies and habits, the 'great powers of memory and imagination' of the native child, and 'national' tendencies towards physical weakness and cowardice. A racially sensitive Indian education must produce good Indians, just as English education produces good Englishmen.<sup>57</sup> In other words, the police and the policed must both be Indian, and not just in a crude ethnic sense. He was in the vanguard of a political project that would, in various permutations, surface repeatedly in nationalist schooling in India, extending through National Education and the Anushilan Samiti to the Ramakrishna Mission and the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh).<sup>58</sup> The re-imagined conservative-*bhadralok* family was the most basic such project.

### **Family health and national recuperation**

The children Bhudeb imagined were instruments of national progress, embedded within a vision of self-improvement that would have been quite foreign to a more traditional 'traditionalist'.<sup>59</sup> His desire for 'more accomplished' children (who surpassed their parents' achievements) reflected not only the priorities of competition in colonial society, but also the seepage of Darwinian discourse into homely advice.<sup>60</sup> Progress and positive evolution could not be taken for granted. Bhudeb harboured a sharp fear of a general decline in native society brought about by an all-too-evident mismatch of power and circumstance: the subjugation of Indians to a foreign people at their historical zenith.<sup>61</sup> Indian institutions would atrophy out of obsolescence and irrelevance, and English power would rub off on their subjects, degrading them racially even when degradation was not the intent. Particular aspects of colonial life – such as new mealtimes required by office and school routines – were especially degenerative, having disrupted the natural patterns of native bodies and families.<sup>62</sup> Even as Bhudeb agreed with the premise of racial progress, he voiced his alarm about the 'quality' of contemporary youth, who, he wrote, were inferior to their predecessors in almost every way.<sup>63</sup>

That anxiety about content and its value was part and parcel of the youth-worship that would become central to Indian nationalism a generation later, when the Swadeshi agitation planted rebellion firmly in the schools and colleges of colonial Bengal.<sup>64</sup> But the conflicting discourses of a resurgent 'Young Bengal' and the effeminate Bengali male were already established

in the 1880s, and for nationalist adults, youth – the national Self, the national disappointment and a challenge to their authority to boot – were almost definitively *déclassé*.<sup>65</sup> For Bhudeb, the educational remedy could not be limited to textbooks; it had to encompass a wider lesson about health in a colonized society. Healthy child-rearing, reproductive health and shastric exhortations became connected in his prescription for Indian reeducation, with *shastra* functioning more as a source of justification than actual guidance. Guidance came from medical science. Thus, even when Bhudeb conservatively ‘taught’ child marriage and early childbearing, he articulated what was clearly a science of prenatal precautions, including instructions on the ideal spacing of pregnancies (four to five years).<sup>66</sup> Correct spacing would produce healthier children, healthier mothers and a healthy nation.

Unlike later nationalists who saw a growing population as a sign of national health, Bhudeb recommended fewer children.<sup>67</sup> A Malthusian understanding of population is evident here, although it is better understood as a colonial-Indian adaptation of Malthus.<sup>68</sup> While Bhudeb was aware of the extreme poverty of the nation (*desh*) and its connection to the crisis of national health, he was not pointing directly to starvation in the family or even the outstripping of food resources by a fast-growing population. He was, rather, outlining a notion of sufficiency: relatively few children were *enough*, just as the disciplined *grihastha*'s habits of consumption could express a sense of what was enough. Fewer children undergirded a new familiarity that was consistent with both health and happiness. Within the avowedly joint family, thus, we see the emergence of quasi-nuclear tendencies, with children again functioning as carriers of a national-moral education.

The modern family thus became the nursery of the healthy nation Bhudeb imagined. Health was a sign of triumph over nature; it was, as such, a measure of civilization. He therefore emphasized the medicalization of everyday habits and predicaments. Fasting and caste-based restrictions on promiscuous touching and eating, for instance, were now rendered not as superstitions but healthy precautions against disease.<sup>69</sup> Eugenic advantages justified the consideration of caste in marriage.<sup>70</sup> The statistics of mortality were deployed to defend the preferential treatment of sons at home: girl children were hardier than boys, Bhudeb claimed, providing a biological argument in support of conservatives who held that Indian womanhood was defined by its heroic tolerance of pain.<sup>71</sup> But at a time when *bhadralok* families were forcing their sons to take wrestling lessons, Bhudeb emphasized physical exercise for both girls and boys, although he also warned that exercise should not be such that it hardened female bodies or endangered childbearing.<sup>72</sup> (Exercise for girls could take the form of domestic chores like sweeping and husking, he added helpfully.)

Three linked projects are evident in this health-conscious family. One was articulating a national population. Health could not be a ‘private’ concern

in a time of growing public alarm over malaria in Bengal, where, after the 1860s, railroad construction had destroyed natural patterns of drainage and produced a plague of fever and mortality.<sup>73</sup> Bhudeb's polemic shows a keen awareness of the devastation wreaked on the race by endemic disease, and of the wider contests over public health and sanitation in British India.<sup>74</sup> Forms of power were needed that compensated for the dangers faced by a population constituted by unhealthiness itself. Bhudeb advanced, here, an alternative morality of procreation and celibacy. In spite of his acceptance of a link between enhanced health and fewer children, having children remained a moral imperative, and refusing to marry and procreate (like some Englishmen) carried the taint of selfishness and indiscipline.<sup>75</sup> Celibacy – for a few – was a source of moral power, in a clear nod to the indigenous discourse of *brahmacharya*. That power was available vicariously to *grihastha* society, but householders – in the process of reifying their nationhood – nevertheless had to regroup as a population salvageable through statistics and healthy new habits.<sup>76</sup>

These habits could not be readily reconciled with conservative familiarity. Bhudeb's defence of child marriage, for instance, was complicated by his enthusiasm for a science of family health. He acknowledged that 'limited' changes were needed in Indian marital customs; child marriage and early pregnancy damaged babies and mothers.<sup>77</sup> Reform took the form of caveats: the norms of child marriage could be adjusted, as long as the adjustments came from within Indian society, had some shastric support, and emphasized the prevention of pregnancy.<sup>78</sup> Those who intended to pursue education (especially science) and administrative work (*rajkarja*) must delay marriage, he declared, insisting that Indian society was capable of such self-discipline.<sup>79</sup> Clearly, his recommendations for adjustments in the family were not very limited at all: he 'limited' reform to the entire national vanguard. Child marriage for men was effectively banished from the nation, its health referenced through the notion of *brahmacharya*.

Citing European and American statistics, Bhudeb reversed the causality between life expectancy and the age of childbearing: denying that early procreation contributed to shorter lifespans, he argued that societies in which people died young compensated by marrying and reproducing earlier.<sup>80</sup> This was a reaction against Anglo-Indian and reformist discourse late in the century, when Indian marital and reproductive customs were widely judged to be unscientific and unhealthy.<sup>81</sup> Bhudeb did not fully reject the accusation. He noted, rather, that sex within marriage was actually society's attempt to evolve a solution to the problem of excess population, since the children of very young parents rarely survived.<sup>82</sup>

The startling suggestion that marriage is a form of contraception facilitated an oblique critique of what he refused to condemn as 'custom': a system that resulted in high infant mortality could hardly be desirable or healthy. If a man under 25 impregnated a girl who was not yet 16, then that

pregnancy would most likely abort itself, he wrote. Even if the child was born, it would be short-lived or weak.<sup>83</sup> The polemic against early pregnancy and childbirth was thus located within a science of prenatal and neonatal care, and an apparently conservative position in favour of early marriage could be qualified by the epistemological and political atmosphere of the moment, anticipating the more overtly eugenic concerns of a later generation of Indian nationalists.<sup>84</sup> Sexual happiness in marriage for both partners, fewer children and delayed pregnancy became connected in a narrative of racial peril, healthy mothers and viable babies that was simultaneously scientific and moral.

The second function of family health was political competition with the white power, which in the later nineteenth century was itself tied up with the authority of an increasingly disciplined allopathic medicine.<sup>85</sup> Indians of Bhudeb's class now commonly brought white doctors into their homes to treat sick relatives. They understood, however, that this not only violated a sanctuary of their sovereignty, it also amounted to an admission of defeat in the politics of knowledge in the colony. Accordingly, the third part of Bhudeb's project was the establishment of the Indian family as a scientific institution. He urged detailed record-keeping in household expenses by husbands as well as wives, and gave financial advice with easily recognizable Victorian middle-class overtones, emphasizing self-reliance, responsibility and delayed gratification.<sup>86</sup> Marriage and parenting were sciences, he insisted.<sup>87</sup> He valued science as a method, an idiom and an iconography: references to Darwin and Newton pepper his writing.<sup>88</sup> He also came out provocatively in favour of sex education for children. The content of this education emphasized restraint, but was framed almost completely in terms of health, scientific validity and the importance of accurate information.<sup>89</sup> Vyasa and Darwin were both referenced for support. Bhudeb was quite aware that he was proposing something novel, a transformation that went beyond knowledge of birds and bees. Health – being a function of civilization – now required both the acknowledgment and the control of natural desires. He understood also that sex education (which his wife apparently encouraged him to give their children) involved a re-imagined, more intimate, less formal parent-child relationship, as well as a modern conjugal partnership.<sup>90</sup>

Families in which husbands, wives and children talked frankly and scientifically about sex could thus function as sites where the connections between education, civilization and the racial predicament could be exposed and revised, producing the discipline that reinforced healthy individuals and a healthy population. When such adjustments were rejected, children had to discover the facts of reproductive biology for themselves, and such fumbling around contributed to the crisis of health and poverty in the land.<sup>91</sup> Separating civilized parenting from savage familiarity, Bhudeb wrote that paying close attention to the health of one's children was as important as

the provision of food and shelter: only if parents approached child-rearing as a discipline that supported custom, could they raise long-lived, disease-free children and ensure the survival of the race.<sup>92</sup> At a moment when Europeans were fascinated and frightened by the apparent extinction of 'savages' around the world, this was not so much a defence of custom as a prescription against disaster.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

In India in the late nineteenth century, the patriarchal home at the heart of the nation was transformed by 'conservative' experiments in child-rearing, education and health. For conservative as for liberal Indian nationalists, the defining plasticity of childhood was not only a cause for anxiety, it also held the solution to the degraded nature of the colonized. As family life became a curriculum, it also became a communally shared experiment: snippets of Bhudeb's own domestic arrangements and experiences kept finding their way into the public domain through his essays.<sup>94</sup> He was, in that sense, living didactically and theatrically. The family became simultaneously private and public; it became, also, a site where tradition could be reconciled with the imperatives of science, race and history. Within it, procreation and childcare were re-imagined as artifices that set the civilized and self-liberated Indian apart from animals, savages and Europeans. Bhudeb suggested that while all civilization was founded on the production of artifice, tradition was the production, teaching and practice of specific artifices that supported the health of a nationally identified people.<sup>95</sup> The racial and moral predicament of the colonized Indian was reflected in the image of the sick body that must be nursed, recuperated and immunized. As the nursery and clinic of tradition, the conservative family had to be a dynamic and teachable institution, not least because the society in which it was embedded was not standing still. Much of Bhudeb's polemic is about confronting the effects on society of norms and subjectivities that had been transformed irrevocably by colonial rule.<sup>96</sup> Conservatism therefore began with self-awareness: the recognition that one had already been altered. The self-aware Indian could then adapt intelligently.

Bhudeb believed such self-conscious adaptation was possible. He admired Jews as a race that had tied self-awareness to the *maintenance* – not ossification – of tradition, and thus conserved themselves even without a country of their own.<sup>97</sup> It was not a coincidence to him that Jews were 'clean' and 'hygienic'.<sup>98</sup> Colonial subordination was self-reinforcing: it derived from disempowerment itself. The weakened native had to compensate institutionally, morally and physically by acknowledging the calamity of his corrupted essence, and by utilizing the corrupting circumstances to reinvent the traditions of family life, especially those involving the production, education and care of children.<sup>99</sup> Recast as tradition, health management represented

a human defiance of fate: the modern man taking charge of his biology even as he acknowledged that he would never have complete control. This heroic-scientific attitude to health – and its signs, especially longevity – was the basis of civilization itself.

There is considerable overlap between that vision and the medical-colonial discourse of Victorian civilization, but Bhudeb's position is less triumphalist. He was, after all, writing from a position of weakness in nearly all domains: political, physical, epistemological. His awareness of catastrophic decline – extant sickness and impending racial death – coexisted with the awareness of undeniable civilizational benefits made visible and even accessible through colonial rule. Unlike Gandhi, who also fretted about degeneracy as a modern predicament, he was unwilling to eschew the latter.<sup>100</sup> The challenge was to establish a relationship between the two that would make it possible for society as a whole to have the benefits – understood as healthy children – without the disease. In this context, health and mastery over animal nature came together in the re-educated family, which could produce disciplined wills and bodies capable of resisting the colonial onslaught.

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# 9

## Race, Indigeneity and the Baden-Powell Girl Guides: Age, Gender and the British World, 1908–1920

*Mary Clare Martin*

This chapter considers the interactions between settlers, visitors and indigenous Girl Guides in Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand and Asia during a high period of imperial dominance.<sup>1</sup> Official sources for Guides dating between 1908 and 1919 are used to focus specifically, where possible, on the involvement of indigenous girls. The analysis first demonstrates the role of the young in establishing and governing Guiding within diverse colonial contexts, then addresses the varying levels of indigenous inclusion that occurred across these locations. The final section shows how Guiding enabled both indigenous and settler girls to engage in outdoor activities, support the war effort, harness a public profile and – to varying degrees – find acceptance as citizens. A greater focus than hitherto accorded to *age* as a category of analysis allows attention to be directed towards the experience of Guides themselves.

The topic raises a number of important questions. To what extent did indigenous youth participate in Guiding? Were Scouting and Guiding ‘imperial’ projects, intended to confirm notions of white superiority and ‘docile’ female bodies?<sup>2</sup> Was Guiding (as Jay Mechling has argued) ‘syncretic’, a ‘site for the emergence of a dynamic border culture where adults and children meet’, a venue where young people appropriated Guiding for their own purposes?<sup>3</sup> Did divisions of race and class persist, despite the rhetoric of equality?<sup>4</sup> And did colonial girls and young women have more freedom, and demonstrate more capability, in colonial settings than in the metropole?<sup>5</sup> Despite their limitations, the official sources highlight the involvement of indigenous girls from the very beginning of the movement, in person and not only in rhetoric. We shall also see how many Guide activities, for settler and indigenous girls alike, promoted female independence and initiative.

In 1908, Robert Baden-Powell, hero of the South African wars, published *Scouting for Boys* following a successful camp at Brownsea Island and the earlier popular impact of *Aids to Scouting* (1899).<sup>6</sup> According to Tammy Proctor, 'Groups of Girl Scouts and Girl Guides sprang on to the scene particularly early in the British Empire'.<sup>7</sup> However, the historiography on this foundational period is surprisingly limited. Proctor mentions only a few developments, while Kristine Alexander's work on India focuses mainly on the period after 1919.<sup>8</sup> Sally Stanhope's wide-ranging study of India, Nigeria, Malaya and Australia from 1909 to 1960 characterizes Guiding by its 'maternalism', examining in particular the role of adults who believed they were bringing Western culture to less 'advanced' civilizations.<sup>9</sup> The present study of Guiding between 1908 and 1919 extends and recasts the findings of this earlier scholarship by identifying the opportunities for the young – whether indigenous, settlers or visitors – to act independently, to enjoy greater freedom and to garner greater recognition.

Originating in the colonial context that Baden-Powell believed could reinvent weary town-dwellers, Scouting spread relatively quickly. Elleke Boehmer has characterized Baden-Powell's thinking as 'hyper-colonial', noting that 'primitive cultures were to revivify advanced societies'.<sup>10</sup> Michelle Smith and Jeff Bowersox have argued that British and German youth organizations for females were empowering in encouraging adventure and combating national degeneration, but reinforced racial hierarchies by asserting white superiority.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Kristine Alexander and Sally Stanhope have highlighted the flaws in practice of the ideology of imperial internationalism in the interwar years,<sup>12</sup> Padma Anagol has posited that the imperial context might have allowed more freedom for indigenous women than was offered within Hindu culture.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in many countries, multiple layers of racial segregation and discrimination – including among whites – complicated the identification of indigeneity.<sup>14</sup>

Recent literature highlights the difficulties of recovering the voices of indigenous and settler Guides.<sup>15</sup> While there are no manuscript logbooks in the British archives of the Girl Guides covering overseas companies before 1919, printed annual reports and magazines do document Guide numbers and experiences from the organization's perspective. Cross-referencing of sources is essential – even the dates that key companies were founded are hard to establish from the tangle of documentary evidence. Olave Baden-Powell (who produced typescript accounts between 1925 and 1928, and whose history files from the 1920s contain useful ephemera such as school leaflets) claimed that when she took charge of the Overseas Department in 1917–18, there were no records of the movement at all.<sup>16</sup> While the Chief Guide's records omit references to earlier publications, such as *Home Notes* (1910–13), or the *Girl Guides Gazette* (1914–24),<sup>17</sup> such magazines claimed they included letters from ordinary Guides, albeit with their captains' approval. The 'voice of the Guide' is to some extent recaptured in these

sources; photographs can also reveal events for which no written record survives, though many are undated.<sup>18</sup> Early published Guide histories rely frequently on the memories of former Guiders, but also offer a window on the past. Weaving together this diverse and disparate set of evidence, this chapter attempts to recover the *experiences* of Girl Guides in settings across the British world, rather than to supplement the focus on rhetoric and representation offered by previous studies.

## Numbers and background

After a group of Girl Scouts arrived at the Crystal Palace Scout rally in 1909, the Girl Guide Association was founded in 1910. It was led by Agnes Baden-Powell, sister of the Chief Scout. In 1919, the British Overseas Dominions (Imperial) and International Council were established in the movement and were later amalgamated as the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.<sup>19</sup> Similar overseas organizations developed rapidly, from 1909 in New Zealand, 1910 in South Africa and 1911 in India.<sup>20</sup> By 1919, Guiding existed in many African countries, parts of South America, the West Indies, Asia and Malta.<sup>21</sup> Total Guide numbers also rose dramatically in this period, from 64,988 in 1917 to 321,533 in 1920.<sup>22</sup> In 1919, the total number of 102,650 Guides in foreign companies exceeded the 93,872 in the British Isles,<sup>23</sup> but this pattern had been reversed by 1920, with 183,533 Guides recorded in Great Britain and 148,000 elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

## Age, agency and governance

The Guide movement provided scope for children and young people to self-organize and lead initiatives, complemented and strengthened by a national or international infrastructure at the 'highest' levels of society. The patrol system, consisting of a group of eight girls aged 12 to 16 with a leader,<sup>25</sup> enabled new units to start in sparsely populated areas, or those where Guiding was unknown. Some companies, such as the one in Calcutta, began through the agency and expertise of young people who had learnt about Scouting at school in England.<sup>26</sup> Patrols were founded independently, for example, in 1909 in Hobart, Tasmania,<sup>27</sup> and in 1915 in Tangier.<sup>28</sup> The organization's hierarchy actively encouraged such Guide-led patrols.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, by 1917, girls were upbraided for their reluctance to take responsibility compared to boys 'as this is a great handicap to them in making a career later in life'.<sup>30</sup>

Teachers or mothers might also lead companies in areas isolated from other Guides. Examples included a mother in Victoria, Australia, in 1910,<sup>31</sup> and a teacher in Queensland at her pupils' request in 1919.<sup>32</sup> Guiding overseas, as in Britain, built on the institutional infrastructures of existing organizations. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) provided

support in South Africa, in India from 1911 and Malaya from 1916.<sup>33</sup> Guiding developed in Egypt in 1913 from a branch of the Girls' Friendly Society founded by the Archdeacon's wife.<sup>34</sup>

With a tradition of charitable work, governors' and bishops' wives could play a crucial role in developing the wider infrastructure, especially in these foundational years.<sup>35</sup> Lady Mildred Buxton, for instance, wife of the Governor-General of South Africa (1915–20), organized the South African association from 1916.<sup>36</sup> In Queensland, in about 1918, 'there was violent opposition from the Scouts... "Scouting was not for girls" until Lady Gould-Adams took matters firmly into her own hands and the necessary badges were either made by the Guides themselves or obtained in South Africa'.<sup>37</sup> Such travel from colony to metropole facilitated communication, as when Miss Dorothy Rogers from Johannesburg visited London in 1911.<sup>38</sup> However, imperial structures could create instability, since governors would move on after their term of office expired: Mildred Buxton of South Africa and Lady Gould-Adams of South Australia both returned to England in 1920.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the organization both grew at grass-roots level, through the initiatives of the young, and unlike youth-led organizations elsewhere (such as the *Wandervogel* in Germany<sup>40</sup>), achieved a permanent existence through the creation of an overarching international infrastructure. Leading the organization were the Baden-Powells, a celebrity couple who made 'royal visits' around the globe, as did senior advisers.<sup>41</sup> Such visits enabled the Baden-Powells to make contact with previously 'invisible' or dispersed Guides, who emerged to meet the 'Chiefs' in 1912 in South Africa,<sup>42</sup> in Victoria on horseback in the same year,<sup>43</sup> and in 1913 in New Zealand.<sup>44</sup>

While Stanhope characterized white Guiders, whether missionaries or British wives, as 'maternal imperialists',<sup>45</sup> many of the earliest Guiders located here were young single women, even teenagers.<sup>46</sup> Governors' daughters frequently became involved, sometimes invoking the language of age rather than class. Hence in 1910, 'the governor's daughter... has called a meeting of about twenty of the daughters of the leading people of Brisbane, as she said it is girls' work and young girls know the feelings of girls and can influence them best'.<sup>47</sup> Here paternalism (or rather, maternalism,<sup>48</sup> the desire to do good) was the over-riding objective.<sup>49</sup> However, this tone – reminiscent of older philanthropic traditions – soon disappeared. Other participants included the daughters of Governor Allardyce in Trinidad and Tobago (from 1914),<sup>50</sup> of Governor Pinkerton in Singapore (from 1916),<sup>51</sup> and of Governor O'Brien in Barbados (from 1918).<sup>52</sup> Miss Smollett-Campbell, the Commissioner's daughter, organized a company of Anglo-Portuguese girls at Macao.<sup>53</sup> Some governors' daughters also became Commissioners themselves in their teens.<sup>54</sup> Other enthusiastic young women included Miss Franks, Captain in Johannesburg,<sup>55</sup> and Miss Maisie Stanley in India.<sup>56</sup>

Self-starting Guide companies were also founded through schools.<sup>57</sup> In India they existed by 1913 in the hill stations of Simla, including at Bishop

Cotton's school. Although founded for Europeans, these companies catered for poorer whites, rather than the offspring of the elite. Companies were also founded at Sanawar, Mount Abu, and Oatamund,<sup>58</sup> in Mission Schools in Madras, Simla, Bombay and Bangalore, and by many Convent schools.<sup>59</sup> An 'extremely good' company in Ajmere had an enclosed Benedictine nun as Captain.<sup>60</sup> In Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, Nigeria and Uganda, the first companies to be founded were all attached to schools and backed by organizations including the YWCA, the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Girls' High School.<sup>61</sup> In South Africa, companies were founded at Ladismith Public School by 1914, and at Wynberg High School in 1915.<sup>62</sup> Churches were other obvious sites: the first Girl Guide company in Kenya was founded at All Saints' Church in Nairobi in 1920, but this catered only for European girls until 1935.<sup>63</sup> Missionaries also introduced the movement, as in Saint Vincent in 1914.<sup>64</sup>

### **Race, ethnicity, nation**

The Guide Law stated that 'A Guide is a sister to Every Other Guide no matter to what Social Class the Other Belongs', and the rhetoric of the Scout and Guide Associations matched this inclusive and universalist emphasis.<sup>65</sup> While Alexander has argued that many exclusionary strategies were employed in practice,<sup>66</sup> Timothy Parsons explained that 'the character and influence of the Scout movement in a given colony was determined by the political economy of the territory and the strength of the colour bar', and that the acceptance of indigenous peoples by the Scout Association presented an ideal of equality which colonial rulers found challenging.<sup>67</sup> Conversely, colonial officials, and even Baden-Powell himself, might be nonplussed when informed about local 'colour bars'.<sup>68</sup> In South Africa, for example, where there were three white ethnic groupings – British, Dutch and German – the Archbishop of Cape Town warned that when the Boys' Brigade and Church Lads' Brigade attempted to become multi-racial all the white parents removed their children.<sup>69</sup> Although inclusion of 'native' girls in the South Africa Girl Guides' Association was discussed in 1921, a completely separate organization – the Girl Wayfarers – was founded instead in 1925, and black Africans were not admitted to the Guide Association until 1936.<sup>70</sup> While this was profoundly exclusionary, in Kenya there was no provision at all for black African Guides until the mid-1930s.<sup>71</sup>

In India, from 1911, according to Kerr, all the early companies were for 'Anglo-Indian' girls ('mixed European and Indian blood'),<sup>72</sup> but not necessarily wealthy ones. Thus, several girls of the Jubbulpore company (35 in number) on the isolated Mofussil station left to take up employment and become financially independent, but nearly all maintained links with the Guide company.<sup>73</sup> The organization could provide a new form of 'community' for colonial children who were perpetually on the move, accompanying

parents from posting to posting. Thus, Barbara Donaldson (her married name) joined the Bluebirds (under-11s) at each successive station in India. This made moving around easier 'because each place we landed in was "home" and made familiar even if it was a tent'.<sup>74</sup>

In 1916, the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, Mr Hornell, nominated a small committee of 'experienced ladies', both Hindu and Muslim, 'to confer with our Commissioner on how the scheme could be adapted for Indian girls'.<sup>75</sup> That same year, Mrs Bear obtained authorization from Baden-Powell to include Indian girls at her own discretion.<sup>76</sup> Originally, companies were segregated. The 2nd Poona, the first Indian company, led by Miss Dorothy Sawyer, whose 'perseverance, keenness and thoroughness' were highly commended, was founded in 1915.<sup>77</sup> Groups of Indian Boy Scouts (and Sister Scouts) were founded in 1917 by Annie Besant, who favoured Indian nationalism, and by the Seva Samiti in 1918.<sup>78</sup> During the First World War, by contrast, Mrs George Carsie ran a mixed English and Indian Guide company.<sup>79</sup> Indian girls were also permitted to be officers and could achieve honours in 'official' Scout companies. In Ceylon, Soma Seneveratue was patrol leader of the Hibiscus patrol, 1st Kandy Company (founded in 1918).<sup>80</sup> In 1918, Aileem Hayeem, 'now a Lieutenant attached to the 1st YWCA company' was noted as 'the first Guide to hold a Silver Fish in India'.<sup>81</sup> Conversely, a Cingalese Lone Guide whose father ran a business was reported to have given orders to workers of a different Indian ethnicity when doing Good Turns, reflecting how racial hierarchies were not only implemented by white people.<sup>82</sup> By 1921, it was explained in the *Girl Guides Gazette* that there was a separate Commissioner and constitution for India, and that 'very naturally' the proficiency badges had been adapted ('Gymnasts' not being 'in favour'). Western-style music was also altered, and comments made that 'the dishes in the cooking tests have very odd-sounding names to many ignorant ears'. Whereas the original Guiders were all English speakers, by 1921, training was offered in the vernacular language of the province.<sup>83</sup> This explanation suggests a wish of respecting and incorporating local differences, but also the challenges of doing so, since such adaptations led to more segregation.<sup>84</sup>

Segregated companies might be described very positively. The caption to a 1915 picture of an all-black company from the Cape Coast, West Africa read, 'these coloured girls are just as keen and proficient as their white sisters'.<sup>85</sup> In Trinidad and Tobago, where white officers insisted on segregation, there were four new companies by 1915, the 4th (described as 'excellently organized'), being composed of 'native' Guides and 'native' officers.<sup>86</sup> In the Bahamas, attitudes and practices apparently became more exclusionary over time. In 1919, there were three companies of Guides, 'all more or less coloured, but are all splendid members of the sisterhood'.<sup>87</sup> A photograph of the 2nd Bahamas taken on Guides' Peace Day in 1919 showed one black girl,<sup>88</sup> however, Proctor states that when Olave Baden-Powell visited the



Figure 9.1 The Snowdrop Patrol, Kirkee, India (1914). From *Girl Guides' Gazette*, October 1914, 9. Used by permission of Girl Guiding UK

Bahamas in 1926, Guiding was only for white girls, and there were not even segregated companies.<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere, Stanhope found no evidence of Aboriginal girl guides in Australia before 1930.<sup>90</sup>

'Othering' was not only related to ethnicity. In 1914, a photograph of the Snowdrop Patrol of the Kirkee (India) Girl Guides (Figure 9.1), presented them as exotic, although their fathers were all British soldiers. 'At Christmas, they camp out in the mountains, where hyenas and jackals abound. As the sun is so hot in the daytime, the girls parade in the evening. Strangely enough, they have never seen a snowdrop, the name of their patrol flower.'<sup>91</sup> The exotic associations of living overseas recur in descriptions of white girls in the Bahamas, who held a tropical camp in 1915.<sup>92</sup> Such descriptions as (for the Lagos High School Company) 'they are wearing a khaki uniform – being more suitable to the dark complexions of the girls' should not be read as simply racist,<sup>93</sup> but as part of finding a new language to describe a multi-racial movement. Indeed, since the khaki uniforms would be worn by white Guider leaders, this decision could be perceived as symptomatic of a willingness to adapt to local differences.

Retrospectively, ethnic mixing was applauded and celebrated as pioneering in sometimes nostalgic reflections on Guiding's foundational years. It was later claimed that companies set up in Alexandria in Egypt in 1913, and in Cairo in 1916 (a Jewish company) 'included girls of many races with different religions and languages'.<sup>94</sup> Janice Brownfoot has noted how the unusually racially diverse character of Malaysian society was also reflected in the composition of Guide companies, which she perceives as liberating.<sup>95</sup> By 1919 in Singapore and Penang, 'there are now several flourishing companies, composed of English, Eurasians and natives, raised by the English

schools and by the Wesleyans', with 34 Guides, two companies and one pack.<sup>96</sup>

As Alexander and Smith have argued, Guide rhetoric can be read as intended to discipline indigenous girls.<sup>97</sup> In 1916, 'The Secretary (in India) writes that it is impossible to exaggerate the effects of such a movement on Eurasian girls. It is so exactly what they need'.<sup>98</sup> The *Annual Report of 1918–19* stated that 'in the Girls School at Toro (Uganda), out of 600 natives, 22 are Guides' and 'their influence is doing much to eradicate bad traits in the characters of native girls'.<sup>99</sup> Conversely, in South Africa in 1917, the Minister of Education's comments about the importance of discipline and character development were made at a Guide rally for white girls alone.<sup>100</sup>

Some accounts show an explicit commitment to racial equality. The first report of the Far Eastern Guide Association stated that Malaysians found the expression 'natives' very offensive and that 'permanent population is the correct term'.<sup>101</sup> Rose Kerr claimed in 1936 that 'there never has been, and there never will, be a colour-bar in New Zealand'.<sup>102</sup> In her view, the Maori girls joined in with enthusiasm but were not quite sure what the movement was all about. 'They have the power, not often found in native races, of mingling with the white man in terms of perfect equality.'<sup>103</sup> While many would disagree that there had never been a 'colour bar' in New Zealand,<sup>104</sup> such statements should also be read in the context of a world where Guides were attempting to break rigidly segregationist views.

Baden-Powell avowed a commitment through his movement to tolerance of all religions, and, as with Roman Catholic Scout troops (some of which were noted in South Africa in 1917), Jewish companies gave Guides the opportunity to practise their religion.<sup>105</sup> Such companies were formed by 1916 in Calcutta, Cape Town and Cairo,<sup>106</sup> and in Haifa, Syria, by 1918.<sup>107</sup> In Cape Town, Synagogue Parades were held on the first Saturday of each month.<sup>108</sup> However, in 1918, the absence from a rally of the 3rd Cape Town (Jewish) Guides, owing to its being held on their Sabbath, was regretted.<sup>109</sup>

Even under the sternest tests of wartime antagonism, the Guide Law's stipulation that 'A Guide is a sister to every other Guide' could and did override nationalist sentiment. At the outbreak of the First World War, regret was expressed at separation from 'our German sisters', who had just visited England.<sup>110</sup> However, anti-German sentiment was expressed as the war progressed. In a newspaper article it was reported that at a rally in 1917 in South Africa, Governor Buxton stated that 'the best compliment which had been paid to the Girl Guide Movement was that it was frightening the German Emperor'. He 'felt that every one of those trained as Guides would have an influence on the future life of South Africa, and he hoped that each one would help to make that influence a good one'.<sup>111</sup> This speech indicates the importance attached to the Girl Guide movement by prominent males and females, and explains why, even in a markedly segregated society such as South Africa, some arrangements were made for indigenous girls and young

women to participate. This contrasts with the absence of provision until the 1930s either in Kenya, or for Aboriginal girls in Australia. In other countries, such as India, continuing efforts were made to build a multi-racial Guide community, which respected local *mores*, while in Malaysia, companies were mixed from the outset. To argue that the movement was exclusionary in practice ignores important factors beyond the Guide leaders' control. One factor, as illustrated above, was the objection of powerful local white elites (as in South Africa). The second was the practical problems of engaging local girls from some of the world's poorest communities, a theme which will be explored further below.

### Activities in war and peace

Did Guiding constitute a form of social discipline? Michelle Smith has noted that although Baden-Powell had very different visions for different sexes, he promoted physical activity for girls, and believed in character building in the context of outdoor recreation. This was linked to the intention to produce 'docile' bodies, strong yet obedient.<sup>112</sup> This section surveys the engagement of indigenous and settler young people, and compares the experiences of Guide activities for young people in the British world. Although the movement was favoured for promoting 'voluntary self-discipline', a high degree of personal initiative was expected. The term 'docile bodies' therefore seems inappropriate. Guiding provided new opportunities for engagement with exercise and the war effort, and increased the visibility of girls within civil society, which included approving their heroism and commitment. At least some of the companies identified below included indigenous girls, and their experiences, where documented, cast further light on the complex nature of race relations within the movement.

Many historians have concurred that the First World War was crucial in fostering acceptance of the Guide movement, despite Baden-Powell's anxieties.<sup>113</sup> By 1915, Guides in Britain were working for the secret service, MI5, the Scouts having been considered too unreliable.<sup>114</sup> However, 'Guiders and the elder girls were greatly needed for VAD [Voluntary Aid Detachment] and other work' and in 1914, the company of Guides founded in Alexandria, Egypt, disbanded for war work.<sup>115</sup> In Victoria, the 1st Hawthorn (founded in 1910) became a nursing Troop.<sup>116</sup> By contrast, in Adelaide, the war had given 'great impetus to the movement', and in Clare, South Australia, they 'wouldn't dream of disbanding'.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, Proctor attributes the founding of six companies in Jamaica in 1915–16 to enthusiasm for war work.<sup>118</sup>

While participation in the war effort was not specific to Scouts and Guides,<sup>119</sup> social service was integral to the movement, and Guides were supposed to do one Good Turn every day.<sup>120</sup> Heroic actions were used to publicize the movement. Thus, in 1910, a Medal of Merit was awarded to one Guide for stopping a runaway horse.<sup>121</sup> Newspapers in Johannesburg

(in 1910) and Shanghai (in 1918) described how Guides helped to look after children at great celebrations.<sup>122</sup> War provided endless opportunities for Good Turns. In 1915, in Trinidad and Tobago (which included one black company) Guides wrapped and packed oranges for wounded soldiers, decorated churches at Christmas, helped and waited on the aged and crippled, and at Christmas dinner for the poor.<sup>123</sup>

Guides across the British world held sessions of organized sports which also brought girls into public view, even before the First World War.<sup>124</sup> Thus in 1913, Guides in Simla were holding a sports day, with long jump and Khud race for Scouts over the age of 16. The Bishop Cotton school assisted by hosting a handicap race and tug-of-war between the 1st and 2nd Simla, finishing with a rally round Her Excellency Lady Harding, the local Commissioner.<sup>125</sup> Guiding provided new opportunities for exercise, even though parents might be suspicious, as when the Kalk Bay company from South Africa departed on an expedition to the summit of Table Mountain.<sup>126</sup> Likewise in Malaya, early Guides at the multi-racial Kuala Lumpur High School could take a swimming badge, but their parents were allegedly worried that devils would seize them under water.<sup>127</sup> Black children also enjoyed improved opportunities through such activity. In 1917, the Trinidad and Tobago companies, which included the 'native' 4th, with 14 Guides and seven Brownies, were taught swimming in the Government House swimming bath.<sup>128</sup> Australian Guides created their own 'unofficial' exercise, for example, walking up and down the High Street with their broomsticks in 1910, or raiding Boy Scout camps in 1910–11.<sup>129</sup>

Camping has been considered as the apogee of the Guide experience, giving girls a taste of the outdoor life, while improving self-discipline and outdoor skills. Although Alexander noted that only a minority could participate,<sup>130</sup> there were apparent efforts to involve all Guides, and Stanhope has shown how missionaries made adaptations to accommodate camps for differing faiths and cultures.<sup>131</sup> From 1910, the 1st Hawthorn went camping, as did the Johannesburg Guides.<sup>132</sup> In the face of 'a storm of criticism', the first camp in India took place at the United Missionary College Hostel.<sup>133</sup> Despite a rainstorm washing the campers out of their beds, the Rangers (mostly typists or shop-girls), 'were tremendously keen and tackled unaccustomed tasks (cooking) with zest'.<sup>134</sup> Camping also provided an opportunity to publicize Guiding. In 1915, in Adelaide, 'the Press sent representatives to the first tent camp held in the State, and photographs which were taken appeared in all the chief papers'.<sup>135</sup> Camping was not only perceived as a way to teach domestic skills to indigenous girls, and to 'liberate' South Asian girls,<sup>136</sup> but also as beneficial to the idle upper-middle or upper classes. Thus, all Janice Aldis's (Anglo-Indian) Guides went on a trip to the mountains, but she claimed they needed training for the domestic service badge as they were very unaccustomed to the tasks involved.<sup>137</sup>

Rallies, which included marches and displays of Guide activities, brought Guides into the public arena, though in 1936 some families in India did not want their girls to participate.<sup>138</sup> Stanhope describes such rallies as 'performative' of the British Empire;<sup>139</sup> however, this did not preclude enjoyment.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, the impact of girls marching in public should not be underestimated: in France, the mass public displays by youth club gymnasts of the national *Fédération Gymnastique Sportive des Patronages de France* (founded in 1898) in 1923 were all-male affairs.<sup>141</sup> Guide rallies positioned the adult females who carried out inspections as key figures.<sup>142</sup> Critical comments about appearance made by the judge at the first Guide rally in Johannesburg in 1910 (regarding missing safety pins and stained uniforms) could be viewed as evidence of wishing to 'discipline the body', or conversely – and perhaps more plausibly – of the carefree attitudes of many Guides.<sup>143</sup>

The numbers attending rallies could also be impressive, again placing girls centre stage. In November 1915, the Governor of Trinidad and Tobago inspected the four companies (one of which was 'composed of native Guides and native officers'), presented badges, and witnessed the Guides giving a varied display of their activities.<sup>144</sup> In South Africa, a rally held in 1918 at Government House, Cape Town attracted 400 Guides (compared to 150 the year before), as did another in Government House, Barbados in 1919.<sup>145</sup> Also in 1919, Indian Guides formed a guard of honour for 'Her Excellency' at a field day in India, evidence of the increasing visibility of indigenous young women.<sup>146</sup>

Guides also participated in the annual Empire Day celebrations on 24 May. Again, these occasions can be interpreted as promoting the imperial project.<sup>147</sup> Yet arguably they fostered a more inclusive view of Empire, an empire shown to include indigenous girls and young women as constituent groupings.<sup>148</sup> From London, Baden-Powell urged Guides to use the day as an opportunity to forge international friendships,<sup>149</sup> an aim already met in 1915 by the 1st Tangier Company, who 'helped in a gymkhana in aid of the British and Russian Red Cross Fund and raised [funds] by selling flags of the Allies, which they had made themselves'.<sup>150</sup> Even if adults organized such events, they provided opportunities for Guides to exercise initiative and inventiveness, building on previous traditions of fund-raising.<sup>151</sup>

Girls were involved in more militaristic activities, too, some of which were reported in the press. Indeed, girls had been encouraged to prepare to be useful in wartime or to prepare for enemy attack, both in rallies and in the Guide magazines.<sup>152</sup> Tasmanian Guides acquired rifle practice by shooting rabbits, cooking the fruits of their labours over campfires and fashioning rabbit-skin jackets for soldiers. Guides in Western Australia collected used baler twine from farmers and made fly-veils for the Light Horse Brigade in Egypt.<sup>153</sup> Even before the war, Guides might play games such as 'despatch running', 'Flag Raiding' or 'Siege Mission'.<sup>154</sup> Whereas in 1911, Guides did

not have rifle or carpentry badges like the Scouts, by 1914, the rifle shot, telegraphist, signaller, flyer and pioneer badges existed.<sup>155</sup> In 1918, the *Boy Scouts' Gazette of India* described an imitation bombing display by Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in which Guides rescued Scouts.<sup>156</sup>

Indeed, the links between Guide games and wartime contributions were made explicit even in 1911 and 1912. In Johannesburg, Colonel Smyth of the Carabineers inspected the Guides, 'giving instances of the value women's help can be in time of war'.<sup>157</sup> Agnes Baden-Powell advised all Guides, how 'in a world wide empire such as ours' knowledge of the Morse code could be invaluable, and 'when the enemy are close upon you, and great secrecy is required, they might be able to convey a message to your friend by blinking your eyelids in the Morse Code'.<sup>158</sup> In wartime Jamaica, Guides drilled, and learnt Morse and semaphore.<sup>159</sup> War could be uncomfortably close to home. In Natal in 1915, Guides' chief task was to visit homes of mothers left with children, as 'our fathers and brothers have gone to fight to protect the Union of South Africa against invasion from the people of German South-West Africa'.<sup>160</sup> On their first public appearance in Barbados in April 1919, Guides helped wait on a group of convalescent soldiers brought in a hospital ship from France.<sup>161</sup>

Entertainments for fund-raising purposes, many with patriotic or English folkloric themes contributed to Guide visibility, as in Trinidad in 1918 and 1916 in Adelaide.<sup>162</sup> Such events could include indigenous Guides. In 1916, the first Poona (Anglo-Indian) and the 2nd Poona (the first Indian company) gave a concert at Napier cinema in aid of the War Fund, raising 100 rupees. The Rosebuds (in nighties) sang 'Goodnight Mr Moon' and were encored, before Miss Sawyer (Captain of the 2nd Poona) posed as Britannia in the concluding patriotic pageant.<sup>163</sup> In April 1916, the 'native' 4th Trinidad and Tobago company gave a concert which contributed to Red Cross funds.<sup>164</sup> In 1920, the Old Church company in Calcutta gave an entertainment to the Indian Ladies' Pardah Club, who entertained them in return, indicating that Guiding was being accepted by Indian elites.<sup>165</sup>

As in Britain and North America, Guides made a significant contribution to wartime fund-raising.<sup>166</sup> The Young Men's Christian Association and YWCA set up huts for recreation on the Western Front,<sup>167</sup> and in 1914 an international appeal by the Girl Guide Association raised sufficient funds not only for a hut but also a motor ambulance.<sup>168</sup> In similar vein, in Adelaide the Great Murray Reef Company raised £13, which contributed to a recreation room and equipment for the soldiers.<sup>169</sup> In India, 'Guides from 20 companies raised a cheque for 2,243 rupees (£159 3s 7d) for the Girl Guides' prisoner of war fund for POWs in Germany'.<sup>170</sup> In Natal, Guides raised nearly £150 for 'distress purposes'.<sup>171</sup>

Indisputably, war work included more traditionally feminine pursuits such as sewing and knitting, although these only comprised a part of Guide activities. In 1915, 'the 1st and 2nd Poona' (the first company for Indian girls)

'regularly attend sewing meetings, in order to make a large number of garments for the soldiers'.<sup>172</sup> In South Australia, Guides forwarded 450 cases of clothing for children.<sup>173</sup> In Trinidad and Tobago, 'there are a great number of Brownies, very keen and very happy small girls, busy making treasure bags and towels to send to the wounded soldiers'.<sup>174</sup>

Smith has argued that the Guide movement prioritized self-sacrifice and heroism, exemplified through nursing.<sup>175</sup> However, boys also performed first aid, while nursing and ambulance work in many countries and continents provided opportunities to acquire new skills and qualifications as well as public acknowledgement.<sup>176</sup> Thus in 1913 the Jubbulpore company held a Social Field Day, inspected by the Senior Medical Officer.<sup>177</sup> Home nursing was so popular with the Jewish 8th Calcutta that, according to Kerr, all 40 girls chose to be examined, although the training was designed principally for Patrol Leaders.<sup>178</sup> In Tasmania, first-aid classes were taken for Guides by one of the 'leading medical men', and for younger girls, by a doctor's wife.<sup>179</sup> During the influenza pandemic of 1918, which killed more people worldwide than the First World War,<sup>180</sup> such skills were particularly appreciated. In Cape Town Guides acted as chemists' assistants and nurses. Several earned war badges and were publicly thanked for their work.<sup>181</sup> In Graaf Reinet, they received a presentation from the town.<sup>182</sup>

Moreover, Guides did not simply rely on publicity from others; they promoted themselves through their own newspapers and magazines. In Sussex, *The Guide Post* was begun in 1916, and Guides in Gloucester started a similar publication in 1918.<sup>183</sup> By 1919, there was a 'Girl Guides Indian News Sheet',<sup>184</sup> and in Cape Province in 1919 a *Guides' Gazette* sold some 13,000 copies.<sup>185</sup> Again this illustrates the proactive approach of the Guides towards fund-raising for events, and the encouragement of entrepreneurship, as well as self-promotion. The recurrent theme of how to raise funds with meagre resources, for example by collecting and selling old bottles, was far more prominent than consumerism.<sup>186</sup>

## Conclusions

Close attention to the early magazines of the Guide movement indicates that although international Guiding undoubtedly occurred within an imperial context, girls were encouraged to exercise agency within these colonial structures, while Guides' public presence fostered new meanings of citizenship. At grass-roots level, the patrol system of small units led by young people proved particularly suitable for many remote areas. In elite society, the patronage of governors' wives consolidated, publicized, and gave further impetus to the movement, while governors' daughters and other enthusiastic young women, neither missionaries nor administrators' wives, led new companies. This chapter has outlined complex practices in relation to race and segregation, dependent on location. Aboriginal girls in Australia were

simply absent from the movement, while restrictive practices operated in Kenya and South Africa. In Malaya, by contrast, there were mixed companies from the outset.

Guiding across the British world provided new opportunities for exercise and display among settler and indigenous girls, and apparent commitment to including as many Guides as possible in camping. The roles of Guides in the war effort as well as in military games included both gendered and non-gendered activities, contrasting with Carey Watt's analysis of public displays in India as late as 1921. Guides were immensely proactive in raising money, often in an entertainment context, but also in war-related tasks such as nursing and ambulance work. Guide magazines show how in India, Trinidad and Tobago, indigenous as well as settler girls were involved in fund-raising, rallies and sewing for the troops. Close reading of the texts facilitates recovery of the experience of indigenous as well as settler and visitor Guides. While the absence of indigenous Guides has frequently been noted,<sup>187</sup> their presence in many locations in fact signifies the incipient development of an enduring multi-racial commonwealth.<sup>188</sup>

## Notes

1. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23. Canada, which had Dominion status since 1867, has not been included in this discussion.
2. Michelle Smith, *Empire Girls in Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 151–57.
3. Jay Mechling, 'Children in Scouting and Other Organisations', in Paula Fass (ed.), *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London: Routledge, 2013), 419–33.
4. Kristine Alexander, 'The Girl Guide Movement and Imperial Internationalism during the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2009), 37–63.
5. As argued in Smith, *Empire Girls*, 143–45. Also see Kristine Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 194–96; 202–04.
6. Rose Kerr, *The Story of the Girl Guides* (London: Girl Guide Association, 1932), 21; Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, *Lessons from the Varsity of Life* (London: C.A. Pearson, 1933), 303.
7. Tammy Proctor, *Scouting for Girls: A Century of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 10.
8. *Ibid.*, 10–11; Kristine Alexander, 'Similarity and Difference at Girl Guide Camps in England, Canada and India', in Nelson Block and Tammy Proctor (eds), *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement's First Century* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 106–20.
9. Sally K. Stanhope, "'White, Black and Dusky": Girl Guiding in Malaya, Nigeria, India, and Australia from 1909–60' (MA dissertation, Georgia State University, 2012), 6–12, 32–47.
10. Elleke Boehmer, 'Introduction', in Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xxxvii, xxv, xxvi; Smith, *Empire Girls*, 151–57.

11. Smith, *Empire Girls*, 141–46; Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire: Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 187–88.
12. Alexander, 'Girl Guide Movement', 48–57; Stanhope, White, Black and Dusky, 42–61.
13. Padma Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850–1920* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 219–26.
14. Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 72–109.
15. Kristine Alexander, 'Can the Girl Guide Speak?: The Perils and Pleasures of Looking for Children's Voices in Archival Research', *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, 4, no. 1 (2012), 134–42. <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jeunesse/toc/jeu.4.1.html>. 15 March 2015.
16. 'History' by Olave Baden-Powell, Australia file, Girl Guiding UK (hereafter GGUK).
17. *Home Notes*, founded in 1894, was a weekly women's magazine which allocated one or two pages to Guide news from August 1910 to August 1911. Another magazine, *The Golden Rule*, later allocated two pages. The *Girl Guides Gazette* (hereafter GGG) was a monthly publication for Guides, founded in 1914.
18. See also Kristine Alexander, 'Picturing Girlhood and Empire: The Girl Guide Movement and Photography', in Kristine Moruzi and Michelle Smith (eds), *Colonial Girlhood in Literature, Culture and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 197–213.
19. *The Girl Guides Association Annual Report* (hereafter AR), 1919, 21; Proctor, *Scouting for Girls*, 43; Alexander, 'Can the Girl Guide Speak?', 45–48.
20. Proctor, *Scouting for Girls*, 10, 11; Kerr, *The Story of a Million Girls: Guiding and Girl Scouting Round the World* (London: Girl Guides Association, 1936), 217, 238; Stanhope, White, Black and Dusky, 125–27; AR, 1919, 88; GGG, March 1917, 42; GGG, February 1917, 42.
21. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 232, 249, 271, 320; GGG, March 1916, 48.
22. AR, 1919, 20–21; The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (hereafter WAGGGS), *First Biennial Report, 1928–30*, 38.
23. AR, 1919, 6.
24. WAGGGS, *First Biennial Report, 1928–30*, 38; AR, 1920, 6, 8; GGG, March 1916, 48.
25. *Home Notes: The Official Organ of the Baden-Powell Girl Guides* (hereafter HN), 25 August 1910, 406.
26. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 217; AR, 1919, 85.
27. GGG, September 1915, 15.
28. *Ibid.*, May 1915, 11.
29. HN, 27 April 1911, 214.
30. GGG, January 1917, 11.
31. Australia file, GGUK.
32. 'When Guiding Started', Australia file, GGUK.
33. HN, 3 August 1911, 215; Kerr, *Million Girls*, 58–61, 217; Brownfoot, 'Sisters Under the Skin', 57; 'History of the Guide Movement in Malaya' (typescript), Malaysia history file, GGUK; AR, 1919, 90. GGG, January 1919, 2.
34. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 57, 217, 330.
35. Anita Selzer, *Governors' Wives in Colonial Australia* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002), 127–39, 89–107; G.W.E. Russell, *Lady Victoria Buxton* (London:

- Longmans, Green & Co., 1919), 172; 'History of Guiding in the Transvaal', South Africa History file, GGUK, 2.
36. GGG, September 1915, 15.
  37. 'Brief History of Guiding in Queensland', Australia file, GGUK.
  38. *HN*, 25 August 1910, 407; *HN*, 23 February 1911, 406; Kerr, *Million Girls*, 79.
  39. GGG, July 1920, 128; Kerr, *Million Girls*, 128.
  40. John Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 150–55.
  41. WAGGGS, *First Biennial Report*, 28–29; GGG, January 1921, 2.
  42. 'History' by Olave Baden-Powell, South Africa History file, GGUK.
  43. 'History' by Olave Baden-Powell, Australia file, GGUK.
  44. WAGGGS, *First Biennial Report*, 28.
  45. Stanhope, White, Black and Dusky, 81–83.
  46. *HN*, 24 November 1910, 438; 8 June 1911, 503.
  47. *HN*, 18 August 1910, 359; 13 October 1910, 132.
  48. See Stanhope, White, Black and Dusky, 32–42.
  49. *HN*, 18 August 1910, 359; 13 October 1910, 132.
  50. GGG, April 1917, 60.
  51. *Ibid.*, June 1916, 92.
  52. *AR*, 1919, 90–91.
  53. GGG, July 1916, 108.
  54. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 219; GGG, October 1919, 123; GGG, August 1917, 13.
  55. *HN*, 3 August 1911, 214. Miss Franks' father was Sir E. Franks. *HN*, 8 June 1911, 5.
  56. GGG, June 1916, 92.
  57. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 281.
  58. Alexander, 'Girl Guide Movement', 43.
  59. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 219. For these schools, see Vyvyan Brendon, *Children of the Raj* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2005), 124–55.
  60. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 136, 219.
  61. Malaya History, 1949, GGUK; Stanhope, White, Black and Dusky, 74–75; Maloney, *Something For the Girls*, 107; *AR*, 1919, 84–85.
  62. GGG, January 1917, 10; GGG, July 1914; GGG, May 1919, 55.
  63. Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 120, 143–45.
  64. WAGGGS, *Trefoil Round the World*, 13th edition (London: WAGGGS, 2003), 271.
  65. *HN*, 1910, 359.
  66. Alexander, 'Can the Girl Guide Speak?', 132–45.
  67. Parsons, *Race*, 31.
  68. Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell: Founder of the Boy Scouts* (New Haven and London: Yale Nota Bene, 2001), 492–95; Margaret Cropper and William Barnes, *Mildred Buxton: A Memoir Based Upon Her Letters* (Orpington: Orpington Press, 1966), 70–71.
  69. Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 2001, 492; Kerr, *Million Girls*, 70.
  70. 'History' by Olave Baden-Powell, South Africa file, GGUK.
  71. Parsons, *Race*, 120.
  72. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 220.
  73. GGG, April 1914, 6.
  74. Cited in Brendon, *Children of the Raj*, 178.
  75. GGG, June 1917, 92.
  76. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 221.

77. GGG, August 1915, 15.
78. Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 496; Stanhope, 'White, Black and Dusky', 127–29.
79. Maloney, *Something for the Girls*, 107.
80. GGG, June 1918, 89.
81. *Ibid.*, January 1918, 11.
82. *Ibid.*
83. India file, GGUK; GGG, January 1921, 7; Kerr, *Million Girls*, 224.
84. By 1920 in Burma, Guides were still only from the Anglo-Indian community. GGG, May 1920, 82.
85. GGG, November 1915, 13.
86. Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 492; GGG, February 1915, 14.
87. *AR*, 1918–19, 90.
88. GGG, September 1919.
89. Proctor, *Something for the Girls*, 67.
90. Stanhope, White, Black and Dusky, 78–91, 112, note 225.
91. GGG, October 1914, 9.
92. *Ibid.*, September 1916, 135.
93. *AR*, 1919, 85.
94. WAGGGS, Trefoil Round the World (London: WAGGGS, 1958), 76; WAGGGS, First Biennial Report, 28; Kerr, *Million Girls*, 246, 330.
95. Brownfoot, 'Sisters Under the Skin', 57.
96. *AR*, 1918–19, 90, 92.
97. Alexander, 'Similarity and Difference', 114–16.
98. GGG, July 1916, 108.
99. *AR*, 1918–19, 85.
100. GGG, May 1917, 81.
101. '1st meeting Far Eastern Guide Association', typescript, 10 December 1920, Malaysia file, GGUK.
102. Kerr, *Million Girls*, 264.
103. *Ibid.*
104. Alan Lester, 'Humanitarians and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century', in Norman Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64–85.
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## **Part IV**

# **Literary Childhoods**

# 10

## Transforming Narratives of Colonial Danger: Imagining the Environments of New Zealand and Australia in Children's Literature, 1862–1899

*Michelle J. Smith*

Children have long been seen as intimately connected with the natural world. From the eighteenth century, however, the British environment witnessed radical transformation through the effects of the Industrial Revolution and child labour practices that compromised Romantic ideals of childhood.<sup>1</sup> In response, Maude Hines argues that 'connections between human beings and the rest of the natural world proliferate in nineteenth-century children's literature'.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in the age of empire, children's literature set in British colonial locations instead emphasized the threats and dangers posed by nature, rather than its confluence with childhood. In emigrant and adventure fiction about the white settler colonies of New Zealand and Australia, narratives repeatedly focus on family groups who must overcome an often hostile natural environment filled with unfamiliar plants, animals, landscapes and climatic dangers.

British children's novels that depict life in the antipodes fixate on the risks of bushfires, floods and harsh terrain, while also incorporating Indigenous people into the dangers posed by colonial environments. These novels, which usually rely on the transformation of land for agriculture, ultimately depict successful settlement. This chapter will examine four such British children's novels, Mrs J.E. Aylmer's *Distant Homes; or, The Graham Family in New Zealand* (1862), Mrs George Cupples' *The Redfords: An Emigrant Story* (1886, also set in New Zealand), W.H. Timperley's *Bush Luck: An Australian Story* (1892), and Molly E. Jamieson's *Ruby: A Story of the Australian Bush* (1898), observing the ways in which they manifest elements of 'ecological imperialism' and 'environmental racism' (terms interrogated below). It will compare these novels with two fantasy fictions by New Zealand and Australian children's authors that constitute more complicated attempts both to understand and co-exist with the natural environment, but which

nevertheless retain central elements of ecological imperialism. The bush fantasy *Dot and the Kangaroo* (1899) by Ethel Pedley, for example, is a lost-child narrative that continues to ascribe threatening connotations to Indigenous Australians, yet also serves as an early environmentalist text that condemns white settlers' abuse of the land and its animals. By contrast, Kate McCosh Clark's *A Southern Cross Fairytale* (1891) depicts two children, recently emigrated to New Zealand, who are taken on a scenic and magical tour of its unique landscapes.

Recent literary scholarship, notably that of Helen Tiffin and Graham Huggan, has begun to draw together postcolonial and ecocritical methodologies. Postcolonial studies now incorporate the understanding that environmental issues are 'inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism' on which 'projects of European conquest and global domination' historically depended.<sup>3</sup> John Miller notes, however, that the majority of scholarship concentrates on contemporary literature, ignoring the potential for application of postcolonial ecocriticism to historical fiction, especially that of the nineteenth century, a period of British imperial expansion.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, ecocritical examinations of children's literature have also largely focused on contemporary texts, meaning that there are few studies of the environment in historical children's literature, and perhaps a total absence with respect to colonial children's texts. The nineteenth-century children's fiction considered in this chapter nevertheless reveals much about how colonial settlement was framed with respect to the environment for child readers, and shows us how children's relationship with the natural world in colonial locations was imagined. In particular, these stories register shifting anxieties about the dangers of colonial life for children. As this chapter suggests, by the early twentieth century these anxieties dissipated in popular Australasian novels in which child protagonists were able to interpret and control nature in ways that earlier British protagonists were not.

### **White settlement and environmental transformation in New Zealand and Australia**

'Ecological imperialism', as conceptualized in Alfred Crosby's influential book of the same title, describes the ways in which the movement of the human population from Europe to various colonies was entwined with, and relied upon, what he terms 'biological expansion'. This concept encompasses mass emigration, the appropriation of indigenous land and transmission of diseases, as well as the introduction of new methods of agriculture and non-native animals into colonial locations. Crosby points out that one-fifth of Europe's population, or more than 50 million people, relocated to the 'neo-Europes' of North America, Australia and New Zealand between 1820 and 1930.<sup>5</sup> The children's literature considered in this chapter falls squarely within this period of increasing white settlement in New Zealand

and Australia in which the introduction of agriculture, especially the farming of sheep, as I explain below, saw the widespread clearing of native vegetation that transformed the landscape.

From the beginning of white settlement in Australia, the natural environment was viewed as an obstacle to be overcome, controlled, and transformed.<sup>6</sup> Settlers imagined themselves locked in a battle '*against nature*', adopting a hierarchical view of life forms that, Huggan and Tiffin argue, 'has been and remains complicit in colonialist and racist exploitation from the time of imperial conquest to the present day'.<sup>7</sup> The very first European settlement at Port Jackson in 1788 was threatened by crop failures and minimal provisions.<sup>8</sup> This struggle was typical of early settler experience in coastal areas. As a result, inland sheep farming grew rapidly. Yet, as William Lines suggests, it had a dramatic effect on both the land and Indigenous people:

It subverted the environment, destroyed the material basis of aboriginal culture inextricably bound to topography, flora, and fauna, and delivered the land into the hands of the pastoral pioneer. The squatters and their flocks drove away the game, and the sheep ate the plants and killed the roots upon which the Aborigines lived.<sup>9</sup>

The changes were dramatic and quickly achieved. By 1890, there were over 100 million sheep and 8 million cattle in Australia and several million hectares of land were cleared to accommodate them.<sup>10</sup> In New Zealand, plants, weeds and pigs were introduced by explorers and settlers from the eighteenth century, with new crops (including different varieties of sweet potato and the white potato) being adopted by Maori.<sup>11</sup> The significantly smaller land-mass of New Zealand supported a population of 9 million sheep and 400,000 cattle by 1870 and their introduction had a deleterious impact upon native flora.<sup>12</sup>

John McKenzie explains that the lack of fauna in Australasia – especially compared with Africa – encouraged British colonists to introduce a plethora of new species.<sup>13</sup> These included animals that were commonly farmed, but also exotic plants and animals, a process that was encouraged by 'acclimatisation societies' that sought to remedy the 'incomplete' supply of plants and animals for settler needs and pleasure. The aims of the Victorian Acclimatisation Society, published in 1861, included 'the introduction, acclimatisation, and domestication of all innocuous animals, birds, fishes, insects, and vegetables, whether useful or ornamental; – the perfection, propagation, and hybridisation of races newly introduced or already domesticated', the spread of indigenous animals to 'other localities where they are not known', and 'the procuring... of animals, &c., from Great Britain, the British colonies, and foreign countries'.<sup>14</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century, the societies introduced numerous varieties of birds, fish, donkeys, alpacas, goats, llamas, ostriches and camels into Australia, as well as the environmentally disastrous

blackberry and prickly pear.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in order to increase food sources available in the wild in New Zealand, a range of animals including over a hundred species of birds, deer, wallabies, possums, rabbits, zebras, gnus and wild goats were released, and national parks were created to encourage their spread, rather than to protect native fauna.<sup>16</sup> The wholesale introduction of these foreign species rested on the notion that the environments of Australia and New Zealand were lacking and upon desires to recreate comforting and familiar aspects of the British environment in the Southern Hemisphere.

### **The challenges of nature and Indigeneity in British children's fictions of New Zealand and Australia**

British children's novels about colonial emigration address a British reader and do not presume a co-existing Australasian readership. Addresses to the reader often mark out differences in landscape and climate, as in the opening lines of Jamieson's *Ruby*, a short, religiously influenced novel published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The protagonists – Ruby, her father and step-mother – have left the 'heather-hilled land' of Scotland for a bush station:

CHRISTMAS DAY in the Australian bush! Not the sort of Christmas Day we dwellers in bonnie Scotland or merry England are accustomed to. The sun is blazing down in remorseless strength upon the parched ground, where the few trees about the station cast so slight a shadow. Past the foot of the straggling garden the little creek dances and ripples on its way to the river, half a mile away, and, as far as eye [sic] can reach, stretch the blue distances of bush in long, monotonous undulation.<sup>17</sup>

The sense of human struggle against the environment is repeated through references to the harshness of the sun, the difficulty of establishing an ordered and cultivated garden, and the endless expanse of bush that is isolating and affords little visual beauty. Christmas Day, as in Aylmer's *Distant Homes*, set in New Zealand, heightens the sense of difference, as British festive traditions, especially relating to food, become difficult to maintain in hot weather. In *Ruby*, the greatest struggle for the Australian settler within the natural environment is posed by bushfires that threaten to consume homes. Ruby spots a fire on the horizon 'shooting up tongues of flame into the still sunlight, brightening the river into a very sea of blood'.<sup>18</sup> The blood metaphor is rendered literal when the fire destroys the home of an elderly neighbour, Davis, crushing him to death, and then threatens Ruby's home and the life of her father who joins local men to fight the fire. Ruby, however, is kept safe and never confronts the dangers of the natural environment herself. The novel concludes on a snowy Christmas Day in Scotland as Ruby visits her family, serving to right the unnatural Christmas Day with which

the novel began and temporarily displace any threat posed to the girl protagonist within Australia. In this respect, *Ruby* is unusual in comparison with the three other novels of Australasian settlement analysed in this chapter, in which the conclusion aims to show the successful integration of British children into colonial environments, despite their dangers.

'Environmental racism' is a specific form of ecological imperialism, which Deane Curtin defines as 'the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other'.<sup>19</sup> Huggan and Tiffin similarly argue that 'speciesism underpins racism' and that racism 'cannot be addressed without reference to the former'.<sup>20</sup> Timperley's *Bush Luck*, as well as the two British novels set in New Zealand that I shall discuss, exemplifies the inter-relationship of the oppression of the environment and indigenous peoples in white settler societies through the attribution of danger and Otherness to both. Moreover, as Val Plumwood suggests, the human/nature dualism 'promote[s] human distance from, control of and ruthlessness towards the sphere of nature as the Other, while minimising non-human claims to the earth and to elements of mind, reason and ethical consideration'.<sup>21</sup> *Bush Luck* constructs both native Australian fauna and Indigenous people as dangerously Other, in order to justify their extermination and lesser claims to the land than those of white settlers.

Timperley's novel situates an English boy, Hugh Thornley, on an out-back sheep station in Western Australia. Prior to his shipboard journey from England, he listens to his uncle recount a story about conquering a rogue kangaroo. Extended passages of high drama describe the uncle's violent struggle with the macropod, which digs its claws into his flesh, until finally he 'had the satisfaction of strangling him'.<sup>22</sup> The gigantic scar upon the back of Hugh's uncle is a living embodiment of his claim that human life is constantly in danger in the Australian bush, with 'fire and water . . . savages and snakes and thirst and plenty of other risks to run'.<sup>23</sup> As in the conflict with the kangaroo, the murder of Indigenous Australians is depicted as justified because of the threats they pose to the Tarwonga homestead, where Hugh is staying, and its sheep. The homestead looks 'as completely English as though it had been transplanted from the old country and dropped down in the Australian forest',<sup>24</sup> signalling the imposition of British architecture and gardens on the bush landscape. Its boundaries mark the borders of civility. Mrs Munro, for instance, recalls a period during her 20-year residence in which 'the natives were numerous and so hostile that it was unsafe to go half a mile from the place without a gun'.<sup>25</sup>

While the stationhands Tommy and Jack Crow, who assist when Hugh is lost in the bush, are evidence for the novel's stated assessment that 'most' Aborigines are friendly, the lazy 'Peadongs' tribe, who mount an attack on the homestead in which Tommy eventually shoots and kills two of the intruders, are a continual threat.<sup>26</sup> Hugh is informed that if they are caught

killing and eating sheep, thus jeopardizing the system of agriculture that sustains white settlement, then members of this tribe must be chained up and marched into town to be tried for their crimes. Killing should only be reserved for self-defence, as they are also 'British subjects under the protection of British law; and although we have taken their country, we are not allowed, except in self-defence, to take their lives'.<sup>27</sup> Sheep theft soon provokes another armed confrontation and because 'they're savages, and have each got a fistful of spears',<sup>28</sup> killing is represented as justified. This was a reflection of colonial Australian attitudes, with the second and final execution of Europeans for the murder of Indigenous people occurring in 1838 after the Myall Creek massacre of approximately 30 Aboriginal people.<sup>29</sup> Hugh is horrified to have killed a 'savage', suggesting he would not have wanted this to happen 'for all the sheep in the colony'.<sup>30</sup> Yet, despite his remorse, the repeated killings, as in the instance of his uncle's strangulation of the kangaroo, fall within the accepted and mythologized dangerous and difficult tasks required for the male colonial settler – and white settlement itself – to survive, especially within the boys' adventure genre. As Ymitri Mathison observes, adventure fiction like *Bush Luck* 'prepared young male readers for participation in the appropriation of overseas territories and the subjugation of their native inhabitants'.<sup>31</sup>

The novel, like the two British novels about New Zealand, is firmly about the importance of transforming the land for the growth of white settler colonies. Huggan and Tiffin suggest that when '[s]ettlers arrived with crops, flocks and herds, and cleared land, exterminating local ecosystems', they were regarded as 'necessary and "natural" impositions on, or substitutes for, the local bush or wilderness'.<sup>32</sup> In *Bush Luck*'s conclusion, Hugh encourages potential settlers to try their 'bush luck' in order 'to turn the wilderness into pleasant pasture-lands, and to reclaim the waste places of the earth in the interests of civilisation and the increasing prosperity of their land of adoption'.<sup>33</sup> This statement embodies the human/nature dualism, privileging human need over that of animals or the ecosystem, and is grounded in both ideas of cultural achievement viewed as lacking in Indigenous society ('civilization') as well as the economic benefit to be derived from working the land.

Both Aylmer's *Distant Homes* and Cupples' *The Redfords* focus on English families forced by financial straits to emigrate to New Zealand's South Island and establish farms. The country is understood as closely resembling Britain, and, as such, as less dangerous than Australia. The Redfords travel to Dunedin, in Otago, 'the most recently colonized portion of the country',<sup>34</sup> whose natural features are compared with Scottish 'Highland lochs' and 'heath-clad hills'.<sup>35</sup> Mr Redford buys a country selection at Poatia Hook, at which the dwelling is 'little more than a hut'.<sup>36</sup> In addition to improving the comfort of the home, the first tasks the family perform are preparing the ground for sowing seed and purchasing livestock, including cows, goats,

pigs, sheep and chickens. The growing population of Otago settlers drives demand for the Redfords' produce, including butter, corn and other crops. The combination of successful agriculture, 'delightful' weather, 'pure' atmosphere, as well as beautiful wild flowers and birds, initially presents the environment of New Zealand as one with little risk to settlers.<sup>37</sup>

Regardless of New Zealand's superficial resemblance to Scotland, nature soon threatens the Redfords' lives, as do local Maori. In the novel, a fire catches the nearby bush and forces the family to evacuate with their valuables across the bay. Many nearby settlers also leave their homes 'prey to the devouring element' and struggle to save their cattle.<sup>38</sup> The labour of the men in putting wet blankets over the buildings saves the Redfords' property, but other settlers lose stock and their homes and, in the woods, trees 'stood all charred and blackened beyond the power of spring to restore them'.<sup>39</sup> Yet Maori are a far greater preoccupation in both novels in spite of the historical realities on the ground. New Zealand's South Island hosted a much smaller Maori population than the North Island, where the majority of conflicts that have been named the New Zealand Wars took place between 1845 and 1872.<sup>40</sup> On their arrival at their land, the Redfords work cooperatively with Maori to gather ferns and wire-grass to make beds for the men in the family and follow a recommendation to initially construct 'fern-tree warries',<sup>41</sup> or huts, drawing on Indigenous knowledge of living in concert with nature. Yet the initially peaceable relations depicted between white settlers and Maori are tempered by stories of an old chief named Tyro 'who has eaten white people long ago; and he says he won't die happy till he eats another white man'.<sup>42</sup> A distinction is made between 'wild natives' such as Tyro, and those who are 'quite harmless' like William, who works for the Redfords.

The dichotomy between good and bad Maori collapses when stereotypes of Maori susceptibility to alcohol are enacted. After drinking, William takes the family out in a boat during poor weather; he fails to keep hold of a crucial rope and the boat capsizes. One of the children, Lily, falls into the water, and though William dives in to save her, Mrs Redford believes that he should be fired. Mr Redford gives William another chance, yet his trust proves misplaced when William continues 'to be sullen and moody' as if he was still under the influence of alcohol provided by 'idle native[s]' and his conduct becomes 'mad-like'.<sup>43</sup> In addition to concerns about their employee, a group of Maori establish a pa, or settlement, on the Redfords' section of land because they wish for their children to be educated. William is soon found drunk at the camp, 'dancing a sort of war-dance round the fire, and yelling, while he flourished a large stick over his head'.<sup>44</sup> The family is then chased by a group of hostile Maori, until William is bound by brothers George and Dick, who then engage 'in a hand-to-hand fight with two natives'.<sup>45</sup> William later synthesizes the often conflated threats of nature and indigeneity when he attempts to set fire to wood at the end of the Redfords' house.<sup>46</sup> He is

soon conquered by the Redfords, but the narrative is tellingly vague about whether he has been shot and killed, though he never returns to threaten the family again.

While New Zealand poses some danger to white settlers like the Redfords, these are represented as conquerable. Overall, Otago is depicted as having a positive and healthful effect on the English family, especially Mr Redford, who 'never looks worn-out and tired as he did in Liverpool'.<sup>47</sup> In a twist of fate, a new will is found that remedies the financial troubles that drove the family to New Zealand in the first place, enabling them to return to Britain permanently if they wish. Yet the family decides to stay and Mr Redford praises Dunedin as having been 'good to us'.<sup>48</sup> Their farm 'with its various surroundings and stock, makes progress, and prospers' and daughter Maud is to marry local resident Mr Harkom, hence completing the successful narrative of settlement with the promise of the first generation of native-born white New Zealanders.<sup>49</sup>

Aylmer's *Distant Homes* is one of many British texts for young people published in the second half of the nineteenth century that promoted emigration to the colonies.<sup>50</sup> In its early pages, the narrator interrupts the story of the Graham family to convey factual details about the New Zealand environment and Maori, including quotations from non-fiction books. These facts initially compete with the fantasies the child protagonists have of life in the British Empire, which have been derived from boys' adventure fiction. One of the three sons, George,<sup>51</sup> imagines that he will 'hunt Caffirs and elephants, like Gordon Cumming',<sup>52</sup> while Tom asks his father if there will be 'wild horses and buffaloes . . . [l]ions . . . or tigers?'.<sup>53</sup> The narrator's description reinforces the benefits of New Zealand's favourable weather and lack of reptiles and 'larger wild animals, such as lions or tigers'.<sup>54</sup> When the family's ship arrives in port, the beautiful natural appearance of New Zealand, which resembles 'home', is disappointing to young people in search of adventure of the kind found in novels set in other part of the empire in which white settlement was uncommon.

As in *The Redfords*, Captain Graham and his son Tom take an overland journey ahead of the family's women, Mrs Graham and daughters Lucy and Beatrice, to build a cottage on their block of land 30 miles from Christchurch. The cottage is built in 'a pretty valley, watered by a broad silvery river, and bounded by a magnificent forest, extending to the beautiful mountain-range now very near, they all exclaimed they had never seen anything so lovely'.<sup>55</sup> Establishing fencing for livestock and sowing a garden are both immediate priorities. The Grahams' first Christmas in New Zealand brings home-grown produce including corn and potatoes, and they soon raise sheep, pigeons, chickens, geese, a cow and bull, pigs and deer without difficulty. In addition to the easy introduction and reproduction of livestock on to the Graham's property, the success of British biological expansion is tellingly shown in the escape of the family's 'tame rabbits',

which subsequently 'run wild over the hill, where they might be seen in the evening hopping about in great numbers'.<sup>56</sup>

To an even greater extent than in *The Redfords*, the narrative of land transformation through agricultural production is punctuated with episodes in which nature threatens settler children. There are brief encounters initially with a volcano and an earthquake. On two occasions, children almost drown, most notably four-year-old Arthur, who though he 'had learnt to be very manly and independent' living in New Zealand, becomes lost and almost drowns in a stream.<sup>57</sup> These incidents prefigure the major threat posed to settlements by flooding. Yet while readers are warned that 'floods are more sudden and destructive than people living in England can possibly imagine',<sup>58</sup> the threat is again displaced on to neighbours' homes, signalling potential risk, but ultimately leaving the pro-emigration message and environmental transformation embedded within the narrative uncompromised. The family brings the 'pretty little farm homestead with its garden and fields...out of the wilderness', and its flower garden, complete with '[e]very English flower' meets with the imperial centre's standards of natural beauty.<sup>59</sup>

There is nevertheless a problematic ambiguity in the novel's representation of Maori. With permission, friendly local Maori, who had previously been hospitable to Captain Graham, locate their pa, without the traditional fortifications, on the Grahams' land, only a mile from their home. The Maori cultivate kumara and 'English vegetables',<sup>60</sup> which they trade with white settlers. The Grahams have missionary aspirations to educate Maori – both daughters become teachers for this purpose – and to introduce them to Christianity (they construct both a school and a church on their land). Again there is a dichotomy constructed between local Maori who are peaceful, have converted to Christianity, are eager 'to be like' the English,<sup>61</sup> and who work to protect the family, and those, primarily from the North Island, who are in dispute over land and pose a threat to white settlers, especially women and children.<sup>62</sup> The blame for the disputes over land is attributed to Maori and the novel draws on historical events surrounding the Taranaki conflicts in 1860.<sup>63</sup> While the Grahams experience a generous feast with the tribe that shares their land, participate in games, listen to stories and watch a dance, at the same time 'war was raging in Taranaki' between Maori and English troops.<sup>64</sup> The Grahams find a peaceful coexistence with Maori that helps to provide the foundation for another successful story of emigration. However, troubling aspects to white settlement remain, as the novel concludes with a description of the New Zealand Wars and the process of volunteers enrolling in all districts to fight Maori. The Grahams' older son Tom is stationed on an English navy ship near Taranaki, contributing to the ongoing battle against Indigenous people.

Though child protagonists are subject to danger in colonial environments, these four novels are typical of British children's literature that concludes

with successful settlement in New Zealand and Australia. Rehearsing imperial confidence, the British family eventually overcomes the challenges posed by natural threats and 'native' people. While anxieties are never truly extinguished, confidence in the future growth of these white settler colonies does not wane. However, from the 1890s, Australasian children's authors begin to overturn the conventions typical of British emigration fiction by situating their child protagonists in natural settings that are depicted as beautiful, comparatively safe, and worthy of preservation.

### Early environmentalism in colonial children's literature

White settlement caused significant and rapid environmental degradation in New Zealand and Australia. Thomas R. Dunlap suggests that in the late nineteenth century, 'the limits of conquest became clear' as dreams of remaking the country 'by killing the wildlife, destroying the forest, plowing up the ground, and bringing in familiar plants and animals' were fading.<sup>65</sup> Dunlap argues that a 'turn toward native nature marked a new phase in the settlers' search for a place in the land'.<sup>66</sup> In this period, some of the earliest Australasian authors of children's fantasy, most of whom had emigrated from England, began to infuse their works with admiration for colonial natural environments and call for their preservation. These fictions, which often drew on the fairytale genre<sup>67</sup> in various ways, radically departed from British children's novels of conflict and survival in settler colonies. Two illustrated books published in the 1890s, Kate McCosh Clark's *A Southern Cross Fairytale*, published in London,<sup>68</sup> and Ethel Pedley's *Dot and the Kangaroo*, published in Australia, imbue children with special abilities to understand nature. Both stories maintain problematic ideas about Indigenous people, but nevertheless acknowledge the lesser harm Indigenous Australians posed to the Australian environment and indicate that Maori do not constitute an actual threat to white children.

In the preface to her antipodean fairytale, Clark indicates that she intends for her book to please children 'with English hearts' who are 'growing up under the Southern Cross' and those in the 'older land'.<sup>69</sup> The appeal to a dual audience is evident in the descriptions of nature, which are contrasted with those of England, and in the use of English mythical creatures, specifically fairies and gnomes, to guide the child protagonists through the New Zealand landscape. Betty Gilderdale describes the use of 'northern images of witches, wizards, wolves, and hobgoblins, creatures bred from mists and winter snows' as constituting a 'problem' inherent in New Zealand fantasy writing for young readers in this period.<sup>70</sup> Yet, as in the early twentieth-century Australian illustrated fairy books of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, the situation of English mythical beings within a local landscape constituted an attempt to render Southern landscapes and fauna familiar, friendly and aesthetically appealing, in contrast with realist depictions of their dangers.

A *Southern Cross Fairytale* takes place on Christmas Eve, as two children, Hal and Cis, who have been resident in New Zealand for one year, are visited by a young and thin 'New World' Santa Claus. The beautiful moonlit natural sites the children visit situate native plants and animals unproblematically alongside introduced species such as rabbits and carp. Santa Claus gives the children 'the gift that makes you know and understand Nature's many voices'.<sup>71</sup> This understanding enables close interaction with anthropomorphized animals at a dance held in the bush in which Cis is partnered with a kiwi and Hal with another native bird, the tui. Hal apologizes to the animals for their excessive size (see Figure 10.1) and promises to avoid harming them. In his conversation with native birds and insects, he hears tales of 'hair-breadth escapes from hard-hearted hunters and cruel boys',<sup>72</sup> in a brief gesture towards the anti-hunting sentiment that is central to *Dot and the Kangaroo*. The most powerful elements of the New Zealand natural environment do not induce fear in this story, and similarly Maori, who figure only



"We're sorry we're so big," said Hal.

Figure 10.1 Robert Atkinson, "We're sorry we're so big," said Hal', in Kate McCosh Clark, *A Southern Cross Fairytale* (1891), 13

briefly (in an episode in which they are superstitiously frightened of Santa's illuminated crown), do not pose any danger to the children. Santa informs the children that Maori are 'more frightened of us than you are of them',<sup>73</sup> a phrase that at once rejects the threats that Indigenous people posed in British novels of settlement in New Zealand but likens Indigenous people to unintelligent animals in order to do so.

Though there are a few moments of minor anxiety for the unaccompanied Cis and Hal, children who become lost in the bush are a typically Australian literary preoccupation.<sup>74</sup> Peter Pierce proposes that 'the lost child is the symbol of essential if never fully resolved anxieties within the white settler communities of this country'.<sup>75</sup> These anxieties centre on familiar tropes of the unforgiving nature of the bush and the prospect of interaction with Indigenous people. In Pedley's posthumously published *Dot and the Kangaroo*, when Dot becomes lost, she replicates earlier lost-child narratives' depiction of fear and helplessness:

She was too frightened in fact to cry, but stood in the middle of a little dry, bare space, looking around her at the scraggy growths of prickly shrubs that had torn her little dress to rags, scratched her bare legs and feet till they bled, and pricked her hands and arms as she had pushed madly through the bushes, for hours, seeking her home.<sup>76</sup>

Dot recalls the disappearance of a small boy who died in the bush, yet this story, despite its initial appearance, is not one about the threat of the natural environment. Instead, *Dot and the Kangaroo* enables dialogue between humans and animals and lingers on the beauty of the natural world. The kangaroo who befriends Dot is a harmless representative of nature in her protection and care of Dot, far removed from the brute that is strangled to death in *Bush Luck*. In contrast, the kangaroo repeatedly remarks on the inferiority and brutishness of humans, complaints that Dot can comprehend because she has been given berries that allow her to understand the sounds of nature.

As the kangaroo transports Dot in the safety of her pouch, they visit a series of animals that are petrified of humans. The pigeons, for instance, are afraid to drink at the water hole because of humans and their 'bang-bangs', meaning that they are either 'murdered' or dying of thirst.<sup>77</sup> The use of the term 'murdering' by the animals suggests a lack of justification for animal deaths that is not similarly applied to the use of animals by Indigenous Australians. The character of the 'kookooburra' (kookaburra) points out to Dot that it is 'easy' to live in the bush 'without hurting anyone' 'and yet Humans live by murdering creatures and devouring them. If they are lost in the scrub they die because they know no other way to live than that cruel one of destroying us all. Humans have become so cruel, that they kill, and kill, not even for food, but for the love of murdering.'<sup>78</sup> In colonial Australia,

many animals, such as the koala and platypus, were hunted to the point of extinction not for enjoyment but to supply the fur trade.<sup>79</sup> The kookooburra pointedly differentiates the 'black' humans from the whites, because, though they kill and eat animals, Indigenous people do not 'delight in taking our lives, and torturing us just as an amusement'.<sup>80</sup> Here Pedley likely distinguishes between the necessary killing of animals for human survival, and the kinds of hunting and culling that devastated species for the sake of profit and agricultural expansion.

Yet while the kookooburra makes an important critique of white settlers that exhibits early recognition of the comparative harmlessness of Indigenous living and hunting customs, *Dot and the Kangaroo* retains racist perceptions of fearsome Aboriginal people who inhabit the bush. Dot worries about what 'the blacks' 'would do with her', and is afraid she will be speared to death,<sup>81</sup> perhaps in the same manner as the koala, who cautions Dot that the Aborigines kill them with spears 'and tear off our skins and wear them because their own skins are no good'.<sup>82</sup> The kangaroo shares her apprehension about being hunted by Aboriginal people and their dingoes, but nevertheless feels that Dot might be curious to see them. While animals were a perceived threat in other lost-child narratives, native fauna is protective here, and yet Aboriginal people remain threatening. Nowhere is this more evident than in the illustration of Dot, aligned with the kangaroo, staring from a distance at a corroboree (Figure 10.2). Dot's perception reinforces the distinction made between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: 'They did not look like human beings at all, but like dreadful demons, they were so wicked and ugly in appearance'.<sup>83</sup> However, the kangaroo dismantles any notion of white superiority from an environmental perspective, pointing out that she does not differentiate between humans as all people kill animals. The critique of humanity is so strong that Dot reassures herself that the animals are wrong in their opinion of 'white people', but she 'sometimes wished she could be a noble kangaroo, and not a despised human being',<sup>84</sup> showing a very different identification with nature than merely as something to be survived. In a farcical scene reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*, Dot falls asleep and dreams of being placed on trial by the animals 'for the wrongs we Bush creatures have suffered from the cruelties of White Humans'.<sup>85</sup> A magpie lawyer makes the argument that it is the same nature that makes animals kill each other that make humans kill animals, and the forgiveness of a kangaroo sees the charges dismissed.

Nevertheless, the charges against white settler colonists more broadly remain pressing. These are partially resolved when the kangaroo returns Dot home safely. Dot extracts a promise from her father to cease harming bush creatures and he expresses regret for his past killings. The story's conclusion reassures the reader that no one in the district hurts animals because they are known as 'Dot's friends',<sup>86</sup> suggesting that greater



THE CORROBOREE.

Figure 10.2 Frank P. Mahoney, 'The Corroboree', in Ethel Pedley, *Dot and the Kangaroo* (1900), n.p.

human understanding of animals can prompt harmonious coexistence between them, a quality that is granted to the otherwise savage Indigenous Australians. Importantly, it takes a girl, who is separated from the markers of colonial expansion by her gender and age, to broker this understanding between human and non-human animals. In an Australian-authored tale like *Dot and the Kangaroo*, published at the close of the nineteenth century, the Romantic associations between childhood and nature, displaced by colonialism, are again rekindled. Like other Australian children's fantasies of the period, it diverges significantly from early white settler attitudes that emphasized ideas of human conquest and the threats posed by unfamiliar natural environments to children. *Dot and the Kangaroo*, perhaps in part because of its novel celebration of the Australian environment, ran into several British and Australian editions in the decades following its publication and, unlike the other titles discussed in this chapter, remains in print as a 'classic' of children's literature, being reissued by HarperCollins in 2014.

## Conclusion

The children's fiction set in colonial New Zealand and Australia considered in this chapter shows a broad shift from British narratives that situate colonial environments as inferior, lacking and threatening, to locally authored texts that demonstrate a greater appreciation of nature and nascent environmentalism. Colonial children's fantasies, however, retain aspects of the environmental imperialism and racism on which the very processes of imperial expansion and colonial settlement were predicated. Indeed, these traits continue to be evident in important works of children's literature published after Australian Federation in 1901 and New Zealand obtaining self-governing Dominion status in 1907.

Children's fictions in the early twentieth century nevertheless highlight child protagonists' mastery of nature in a way that displaces environmental anxiety. Norah Linton, for example, the heroine of Mary Grant Bruce's bestselling and enduring *A Little Bush Maid* (1910), is emblematic of growing confidence in the ability of Australians to live and prosper in the bush.<sup>87</sup> Norah navigates the scrub effortlessly because of her riding abilities and is able to outride a fire at the family station in order to drive sheep from harm. Similarly, Esther Glen's *Six Little New Zealanders* (1917) sees the six city-dwelling Malcolm siblings eventually learn to manage nature on a farm in ways that earlier child protagonists of British novels do not acquire.<sup>88</sup> By the turn of the century, white settlement had, after all, boosted the populations of Australia and New Zealand to 4 million and 1 million people, respectively.<sup>89</sup> The environmental conquest of these lands through mass settlement was effectively complete. Concerns about the natural environments of Australia and New Zealand with respect to children, who were imagined as most vulnerable to nature and 'native' people, dissipated with its achievement. This change is also evident in the children's literature of other British world settings, including Canada, demonstrating a transnational movement from pro-emigration novels that nevertheless sought to warn potential young settlers of the dangers of the Empire's unfamiliar lands to fiction that sought to position children as healthy and confident representatives of their young nations.

## Notes

1. Maude Hines, "'He Made Us Very Much Like the Flowers": Human/Nature in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Children's Literature', in Sidney I. Dobrin and Kenneth B. Kidd (eds), *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 17.
2. Ibid.
3. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 6.

4. John Miller, 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Victorian Studies', *Literature Compass*, vol. 9, no. 7 (2012), 476–88.
5. Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.
6. In one of Marcus Clarke's essays on the Australian landscape, he describes the natural environment as incorporating 'the grotesque, the weird, the strange scribblings of nature learning how to write'. 'The Australian Landscape: Comments on Two Paintings in the National Gallery, Melbourne, 1874', in L.T. Hergenhan (ed.), *A Colonial City: High and Low Life: Selected Journalism of Marcus Clarke* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1972), 363. For information on the responses of settlers to the Australian climate and bush, in particular, see Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: A History of Australians Shaping Their Environment*, 2nd edition (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992).
7. Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 6.
8. William J. Lines, *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 28.
9. *Ibid.*, 82.
10. *Ibid.*, 122, 124.
11. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 229–30.
12. *Ibid.*, 255, 265.
13. John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988).
14. *The Rules and Objects of the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria* (Melbourne: William Goodhugh and Co, 1861), 3.
15. Lines, *Taming the Great South Land*, 117.
16. McKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, 296–97; Thomas R. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 54.
17. Molly E. Jamieson, *Ruby: A Story of the Australian Bush* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1898), 7–8.
18. *Ibid.*, 51.
19. Deane Curtin, *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 145.
20. Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 146.
21. Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 4.
22. W.H. Timperley, *Bush Luck: An Australian Story* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1892), 21.
23. *Ibid.*, 22.
24. *Ibid.*, 58–59.
25. *Ibid.*, 56.
26. *Ibid.*, 160.
27. *Ibid.*, 192.
28. *Ibid.*, 222.
29. Lines, *Taming the Great South Land*, 79.
30. Timperley, *Bush Luck*, 223.
31. Ymitri Mathison, 'Maps, Pirates and Treasure: The Commodification of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century Boys' Adventure Fiction', in Dennis Denisoff (ed.), *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 175.

32. Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 7.
33. Timperley, *Bush Luck*, 256.
34. Mrs George Cupples, *The Redfords: An Emigrant Story* (London: Blackie and Sons, 1886), 28.
35. *Ibid.*, 49, 54.
36. *Ibid.*, 59.
37. *Ibid.*, 93.
38. *Ibid.*, 98.
39. *Ibid.*
40. The conflicts between British, Imperial and colonial forces with Maori tribes of the North Island took place on a large scale. The largest campaign saw 18,000 British troops mobilized, though the entire population of Maori during the period is estimated at only 60,000. For further details, see James Belich's *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Penguin, 1986).
41. Cupples, *The Redfords*, 67.
42. *Ibid.*, 83.
43. *Ibid.*, 104.
44. *Ibid.*, 114.
45. *Ibid.*, 115.
46. *Ibid.*, 117–18.
47. *Ibid.*, 91.
48. *Ibid.*, 122.
49. *Ibid.*, 127.
50. See Kristine Moruzi, '“The Freedom Suits Me”: Encouraging Girls to Settle in the Colonies', in Tamara S. Wagner (ed.), *Victorian Settler Narratives: Emigrants, Cosmopolitans and Returnees in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 177–91. Aylmer had never visited New Zealand, but Betty Gilderdale notes that she was related to the Graham family and likely based the story on her correspondence with them. See 'Children's Literature', in Terry Sturm (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), 526.
51. George remains behind as he has two years remaining at Cambridge, but has exacted a promise from the bishop 'that he would give him work to do in the colony'. See J.E. Aylmer, *Distant Homes; or, The Graham Family in New Zealand* (London: Griffith and Farran, 1862), 11.
52. *Ibid.*, 4.
53. *Ibid.*, 6.
54. *Ibid.*, 16.
55. *Ibid.*, 79.
56. *Ibid.*, 125.
57. *Ibid.*, 103.
58. *Ibid.*, 132.
59. *Ibid.*, 177.
60. *Ibid.*, 165.
61. *Ibid.*, 137.
62. Nevertheless, Mr Graham does exhibit anxiety about the prospect of leaving his family to visit Christchurch and the potential for a 'serious and perhaps fatal disturbance' if 'the “Master” was not there to keep order' (*Ibid.*, 127).
63. As the novel explains it, the original owner of land near Taranaki, Wiremu Kingi, a chief, is driven away by 'a stranger tribe', the 'Woikatos [sic]', who sell the

land to the government, and Kingi returns to take up arms against the colonial government (Ibid., 158).

64. Ibid., 171.
65. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, 126.
66. Ibid.
67. See, for example, J.M. Whitfield's *The Spirit of the Bush Fire and Other Australian Fairy Tales* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1898), and Olga D.A. Ernst's *Fairy Tales from the Land of the Wattle* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird and Co, 1904).
68. Julian Kuzma points out that most New Zealand novels were published overseas, and that, like Clark's picture book, as a result 'they contained much explanatory landscape description targeted at a touristic audience'. 'New Zealand Landscape and Literature, 1890–1925', *Environment & History*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2003), 453.
69. Kate McCosh Clark, *A Southern Cross Fairy Tale* (London: Samson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1891), vii.
70. Gilderdale, 'Children's Literature', 529.
71. Clark, *A Southern Cross Fairy Tale*, 11.
72. Ibid., 24.
73. Ibid., 26.
74. For information on several high-profile cases of lost children who captured the public imagination in the colonial period, see Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Kim Torney, *Babes in the Bush: The Making of an Australian Image* (Fremantle: Curtin University Books), 2005.
75. Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children*, xi.
76. Ethel Pedley, *Dot and the Kangaroo* (London: Thomas Burleigh, 1900 [originally 1899]), 1.
77. Ibid., 11.
78. Ibid., 20.
79. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, 50.
80. Pedley, *Dot and the Kangaroo*, 20.
81. Ibid., 42.
82. Ibid., 44.
83. Ibid., 50.
84. Ibid., 52.
85. Ibid., 85.
86. Ibid., 79.
87. The originating novel in the canonical and long-running 'Billabong' series, which totalled 15 volumes. Mary Grant Bruce, *A Little Bush Maid* (London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock and Co, 1967 [originally 1910]), 68.
88. Glen's title makes obvious the influence of Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (1894).
89. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, 48.

# 11

## The 'Willful' Girl in the Anglo-World: Sentimental Heroines and Wild Colonial Girls, 1872–1923

Hilary Emmett

Taking its cue from Sara Ahmed's recent (2014) exploration of the 'willful' subject in literature, political philosophy and cultural history, this chapter applies this concept to literary constructions of childhood in the British world and beyond. Tellingly, Ahmed writes, it was the character of Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* that sparked her interest in willfulness. Her investigation thus begins with an evocation of the 'many willful girls that haunt literature'<sup>1</sup> – a haunting that I take up here in part to resuscitate these girls and answer Ahmed's call for their existence to be recorded in an 'archive' of willfulness, but equally to explore the ways in which literature itself (and sentimental domestic literature aimed at girls in particular) is a complex disciplinary agent that simultaneously documents expressions of willfulness even as it offers blueprints for its eradication. Literature for girls in the latter half of the nineteenth century has been critically acknowledged as a mechanism for 'straightening out' wayward children,<sup>2</sup> and the sentimental domestic novel, as it evolved into a genre specifically aimed at young women, was one of the primary agents in naturalizing certain behaviours as girls matured into womanhood. Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) stands as the foundational example of this genre, in which a family of girls are shaped into 'good wives'.<sup>3</sup> But virtually as soon as it was published other women writers took up Alcott's trope of the hoyden's sentimental education and revised and rewrote it in acts of both endorsement and resistance. Very rapidly, the centrality of parental discipline to the genre of domestic fiction (Alcott's 'Marmee' is the last of her kind) gave way to scenarios in which girls themselves are disciplinary agents. Hence, beginning with Susan Coolidge's 1872 homage to *Little Women*, *What Katy Did*, my analysis draws upon well-known examples of children's sentimental fiction in order to explore the ways in which novels for girls from England, Australia and Canada at the

turn of the twentieth century and up to the 1920s responded to and reinterpreted the paradigms of female behaviour that earlier sentimental texts from the United States sought to model.<sup>4</sup>

I take a further prompt from Ahmed in reading not just genealogically in terms of literary inheritance, but 'sideways or across'<sup>5</sup> the borders of what James Belich has termed the 'Anglo-World' in order both to highlight the North American origins of this mode of sentimental discipline and to disrupt the American exceptionalism of a number of studies in the field (most recently in Joe Sutliff Sanders' 2011 work, *Disciplining Girls*). Such studies too often fail to take into account the traffic of such texts not just across the Atlantic or into Canada, but across the Pacific to Australasia. The concept of the Anglo-World thus reconfigures and extends what is implied by 'British world' or 'Empire' and avoids the problematic term 'postcolonial', in that Australia and the United States are by no means 'post'-colonizing nations. Equally, it extends the more useful term 'settler colonial' to ensure that Britain, and far more specifically, England, is very much visible as a node in the network of Anglophone textual exchange under discussion here. Finally, it also emphasizes that in all the novels analysed, girl characters' 'willfulness' is harnessed to questions of national and civil belonging.<sup>6</sup> In Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (1894) the character of Judy is growing up a hoyden due to (by the narrator's own account) the effects of the temperate climate. In Frances Hodgson Burnett's 1910 novel, *The Secret Garden*, it is the demanding and contrary behaviours that Mary has acquired in colonial India that must be unlearned in the redemptive English landscape of the hidden garden. And in Lucy Maud Montgomery's semi-autobiographical *Emily of New Moon* (1923), the eponymous Canadian heroine is perennially at odds with her elderly aunts and their attachment to Scottish ways and traditions. All these girls must learn to relinquish aspects of their will and live within the parameters of their social worlds. The costs of doing otherwise, as Turner's Judy will discover, can be fatally high. My readings here seek to expose the violence of the 'corporeal' discipline meted out to Katy and Judy, and to draw out the ways that willfulness potentially ruptures the conservative order that sentimental Anglo-World fiction endorses. I conclude that by the advent of Montgomery's autobiographical Emily, the sentimental domestic novel of 'affective discipline' is under contestation by the *Künstlerroman*,<sup>7</sup> with willfulness claimed as a necessary tendency of the artist as a young woman.

Ahmed proposes that the drama of willfulness and its suppression is encapsulated by the Grimm fairy tale of a young girl, who, due to her failure to obey her mother, is struck down by God with a fatal illness. The child dies and is buried, but even in death her arm erupts out of the grave and refuses interment. Her mother is called to the graveside and is obliged to strike her daughter's errant arm with a rod such that it subsides and submits to burial.<sup>8</sup> Ahmed cites the violence of this tale as indicative of the mode of

'poisonous pedagogy' (the term is Alice Miller's) that teaches that to spare the use of such a rod is to 'spoil' the child,<sup>9</sup> a view which came to the fore in Europe in the eighteenth century, particularly within the Protestant tradition.<sup>10</sup> Ahmed tracks the resonance of this maxim across Enlightenment and Romantic pedagogical philosophy, yet despite her interest in willful girls does not take up its surprising afterlife in the ways that pedagogical violence lay at the heart of several of the best-loved and most widely circulated novels for young American women from 1850 onwards. Intriguingly, the ongoing symbolic logic of the rod reveals itself in some of the foundational texts of affective discipline for girls across the Anglo-World.

By the mid-nineteenth century, corporal punishment had become anathema in progressive American educational discourse, and yet, such 'poisonous pedagogy' enjoyed a persistent afterlife in discourses that shaped feminine subjectivity through the imperative to identify empathetically with the pain of others.<sup>11</sup> This persistence has been explored to some extent by literary scholars; Richard Brodhead's foundational exploration of 'disciplinary intimacy' first highlighted the way domestic novels instructed young women to seek love and approval in displays of chastisement and coercion,<sup>12</sup> and Marianne Noble has written at length on the erotics of sentimental suffering, arguing for its dual valence not only as a mode of naturalizing feminine submission but also as an expression of female 'passion, desire and anger'.<sup>13</sup> Both draw attention to literature as a technology of power, underscoring Sanders' claim that 'the power that underwrites discipline is at its fullest when it cannot be seen. If the evidence of discipline is tangible, the techniques by which [discipline is exercised] appear as so good, so natural, that they become invisible to analysis and therefore to critique'.<sup>14</sup> Literary critics have long been interested in discipline, he argues, because of the way in which literature excels in the strategies of naturalization that both exercise power and conceal its operations.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, scholars of literature for children should redouble their interest because from mid-century onwards, sentimental, 'affective' discipline staked out its most enduring domain in the realm of children's literature, enabling its transmission to the young female readers of these texts.<sup>16</sup>

So what does bringing the concept of willfulness to bear on the literary history of sentimental, 'poisonous' pedagogy add to our understanding of this history? Each novel under analysis here is staged far from the metropole, and these peripheral settings – Ohio, Parramatta, India/Yorkshire and Prince Edward Island – reflect the ways in which their heroines are distanced from dominant versions of nineteenth-century femininity. Such spaces allow for the eruptions of wayward and hoydenish behaviour that drive the plots of these novels and emphasize that these young women are girls for whom strong centralized discipline, either parental (and in particular paternal) or pedagogical, has failed. Coolidge's Katy Carr and Turner's Judy Woolcot are too fond of tomboyish pursuits; Burnett's Mary Lennox is intractable and

ill-tempered; and Montgomery's Emily Byrd Starr regularly rebels against her Aunt Elizabeth's rather arbitrary and tyrannical pronouncements. But does waywardness or simple disobedience (no matter how justified) amount to 'willfulness' as Ahmed defines it? On her reading, willfulness is something more than the subject that displays it; the arm that continues to rebel after death (and the rod that is the instrument of social will) are somehow in excess of the girl herself. The girls in the novels analysed here all exist similarly at times in alienation from their own bodies – their hair, their arms and legs, their facial expressions are all explicitly figured as signifiers of the willfulness that drives each narrative. Willfulness thus threatens to rupture the conventions of womanhood laid down in sentimental domestic fiction by resisting the 'noncorporeality' on which successful attainment of femininity is predicated. As Noble has shown, mid-century Protestant American culture idealized women who learned to 'minimise the effects' of their bodies;<sup>17</sup> the insistent reiteration of the existence of girls' bodies in these texts threatens their sentimental resolution. Katy and Judy are subjected to corporeal violence that disciplines their bodies with lasting consequences; Mary must learn to take responsibility for her body, which is then allowed to flourish like the garden in which she finds restoration. However, her 'blooming' is eclipsed by the rehabilitation of Colin's body and its signification of 'mastery'. Only Emily eventually gains agency over her body in ways that curb its willfulness but remain on her own terms.

### **Storied violence: *What Katy Did***

*What Katy Did* describes the fortunes and misfortunes of Katy Carr, a high-spirited, motherless 12-year-old with a genius for getting into trouble in her Ohio hometown. Rarely actively disobedient, Katy nevertheless oversteps a mark when she ignores her aunt's injunction not to play on a faultily constructed swing. The swing collapses and Katy is thrown awkwardly onto her back, resulting in an excruciatingly painful four-year paralysis from which she will emerge an entirely different person. Katy's paralysis has been read variously as a necessary curb to her incessant activity, such that she becomes an adequate 'reader' and subsequent performer of appropriate behaviour;<sup>18</sup> as a signifier for the psychically and physically disabling nature of nineteenth-century American femininity;<sup>19</sup> or, erroneously, as a Sleeping Beauty-esque catatonia from which she awakens to a Prince Charming.<sup>20</sup> All of these readings emphasize Katy's development into a selfless, and/or helpless and passive subject. However, I argue here that her accident does not instil a learned helplessness, but rather, her willfulness is transformed into an active and ongoing project of aggression towards the self and others via the inherently proselytising ethos of the 'School of Pain'. Katy becomes a fictional extension of the rod deployed to cure girls of their willfulness.

Early in Coolidge's novel Katy is described as the 'giraffe' – a moniker she resents as it reminds her of her growing body, 'all legs and elbows and angles and joints' that seems to have a mind of its own.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, she is happiest when she does not have to think of her body at all, yet unlike the orthodox heroine of a sentimental novel, she is less concerned with gentility than with 'forgetting her features as much she could' so that she can transform them into something else.<sup>22</sup> Her favourite book in her father's library, we learn, is Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, a book that 'made her feel hot and cold by turns as she read, and as if she must rush at something and shout and strike blows'.<sup>23</sup> This particular tale is remarkable for its cross-dressing warrior-maiden heroine, Clorinda, and Katy's interest demonstrates her fascination with male violence and warrior women. Significantly, Dr Carr actively encourages his daughter's reading of such material and while he will later endorse her submission to pain and the impact this has on her character, the inadequacy of his parenting is clear in his failure to recognize the dangerous potential of Katy's imaginative life.

Katy similarly fails to receive adequate instruction in gender performance at school. True to prevailing progressive conceptions of discipline, her teacher (Mrs Knight) attempts to appeal to her better nature and for a time Katy is reduced to hysterical tears of penitence at her sorrow, disappointment and 'religious affliction'.<sup>24</sup> However, the novel goes on to illustrate that sympathy, persuasion and encouragement are inadequate to the task of curbing Katy's tomboyish tendencies. Despite her best intentions, Katy is incapable of passing up the next opportunity for rambunctious play.

Katy's physicality comes to a head when she deliberately disobeys her aunt's instruction not to play on the swing. The pain to which Katy is subject as a result of her fall illustrates that the straightening out of willful girls in Coolidge involves if not corporal punishment via the rod, then certainly some kind of corporeal punishment – physical pain inflicted directly on the body.<sup>25</sup> Her body is once again alienated from her will, but this time through paralysis: 'the once active limbs [hang] heavy and lifeless', her legs turned to 'marble', as Katy herself puts it, 'just like the Prince's... in the Arabian nights'.<sup>26</sup> Yet Katy's continued identification with a male figure here (and her willful hair, that stands 'out above her head like a frowsy bush'<sup>27</sup>) illustrate that the intended lesson has not yet been imparted by the chastening rod of her back injury, a lesson that can only be learned by example. It falls to Katy's saintly Cousin Helen to make meaning of her injury. Helen was permanently paralysed some years previously by a fall from a horse. Her paralysis is accompanied by chronic pain, which she bears with unflagging gaiety and good humour. Brought to Katy's sickbed, in the course of one brief visit she changes the direction of Katy's infirmity and convalescence.

Helen's persuasive technique is linked explicitly to pedagogy in that she calls her experience, which Katy now shares, 'The School of Pain'.<sup>28</sup> Encapsulated in a poem (sent by Helen to Katy on St Valentine's Day!) the

ethos of the School is the acceptance of pain as a mode of loving discipline that Katy must recognize in order to embark on the path to recovery:

There are two Teachers in the school,  
 One has a gentle voice and low,  
 And smiles upon her scholars, as  
 She passes softly to and fro.  
 Her name is Love; tis very plain  
 She shuns the sharper teacher, Pain.  
 Or so I sometimes think; and then,  
 At other times they meet and kiss,  
 And look so strangely like, that I  
 Am puzzled to tell just how it is,  
 Or whence the change which makes it vain  
 To guess if it be – Love or Pain.<sup>29</sup>

This poem resonates directly with the ‘poisonous pedagogy’ of the rod in which pain must be received and welcomed as love in order for the willful subject to align herself with parental will. What makes this iteration of such pedagogy so significant, however, is the way that it is endorsed by someone who is effectively Katy’s peer. The gendering of Pain as male and Love as female seemingly bears out Noble’s analysis that girls in novels such as this are being prepared for marriage to men who will embody both the loving and punitive facets of the great ‘Teacher’, God,<sup>30</sup> but where Noble argues that men like Alcott’s Mr March and Professor Bhaer were only too happy to assist women in the difficult task of self-control,<sup>31</sup> there is really no parallel figure in Coolidge’s text. Where *Little Women* ends in marriage, *What Katy Did* ends in Katy’s blissful reunion with her cousin.<sup>32</sup> As Katy learns through pain – and, more importantly, Helen’s explication of it – to discipline her willful body, she becomes in turn a pedagogical example for those girls who will read her story.

### **Naturalizing discipline: *Seven Little Australians* and *The Secret Garden***

Ethel Turner, author of the 1894 novel *Seven Little Australians*, appears in many ways to be the natural successor to Alcott and Coolidge on the other side of the Pacific. Hailed by contemporary reviewers as ‘Miss Alcott’s true successor’,<sup>33</sup> Turner’s novel has been read alongside *Little Women* and *What Katy Did* as a testing of the sentimental domestic paradigm of these earlier American texts,<sup>34</sup> and for its treatment of the invalided heroine.<sup>35</sup> Yet critics have debated its place in the sentimental canon; Brenda Niall has read it as a parody of many domestic fictions,<sup>36</sup> and Lois Keith, too, cites Turner’s stated resistance to writing too moral a tale.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the novel begins:

[I]n Australia a model child is – I say it not without thankfulness – an unknown quantity.

It may be that the miasmas of naughtiness develop best in the sunny brilliancy of our atmosphere. It may be that the land and the people are young-hearted together, and the children's spirits not crushed and saddened by the shadow of long years' sorrowful history.

There is a lurking sparkle of joyousness and rebellion and mischief in nature here, and therefore in children.<sup>38</sup>

Turner thus makes a claim for a kind of Australian exceptionalism, but does so in terms that reflect identical claims that were made about the United States vis-à-vis 'older' worlds in the mid-nineteenth century. Turner's words here echo claims such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1859 insistence that America lacked the 'shadow' of 'picturesque and gloomy wrongs' and that this 'broad and simple daylight is reflected in both its people and its literature'.<sup>39</sup> As in Hawthorne's case, this claim is more than a little disingenuous. Quite aside from the fact that Australia has a history of violence, dispossession, and forced labour to rival that of the United States, given what we know of the way nature will play a role in the novel's tragedy, Turner's description of the natural world as 'sparkling' with mischief seems extraordinary to the reader with hindsight. And while *Seven Little Australians* explicitly disavows its status as a cautionary tale and arguably lacks the structures of affective discipline so obviously in place in the earlier American texts, it is nevertheless a novel with the chastening rod and 'corporeal' punishment at its core.

This novel follows the fortunes of the Woolcot family of seven children, their 'very particular and rather irritable' father and hapless young stepmother.<sup>40</sup> The narrative revolves largely around the two eldest girls of the family, the ladylike Meg and the harum-scarum Judy. Clearly influenced by the sisters of *Little Women*, Turner's Meg, like Alcott's character, is a pretty and compliant young woman, somewhat given to romantic fantasies and foolish vanity and Judy, like Jo, is an impulsive, creative tomboy, given to getting into 'ceaseless scrapes': a young woman described as running 'quick-silver instead of blood in [her] veins; she had . . . a mane of untidy, curly dark hair that was the trial of her life'.<sup>41</sup> In addition to uncontrollable hair, she is also possessed of an irrepressible physicality in that 'if she did not dash madly to the place she wished to get to, she would progress by a series of jumps, bounds, and odd little skips'.<sup>42</sup> The now familiar tropes of willfulness are present here: unruly hair, restlessness, a lack of control over the body.

As in *What Katy Did*, parental discipline is ineffectual, but the severe Captain Woolcot is no reformist Dr Carr and his two elder sons, Pip and Bunty, regularly bear the marks of his authoritarianism on their bodies. The remarkable (and eroticized) violence of these beatings has been noted by Margot Hillel,<sup>43</sup> and certainly the text bears out that Captain Woolcot spares no

riding crop or belt in the raising of his sons.<sup>44</sup> Over the course of the first half (12 chapters) of the novel, six chapters entail a 'thrashing' or the threat of one, and in the climactic moment at which Judy is sentenced to be sent away to boarding school it is unclear whether he is going to stop at disciplining his daughter in such a way.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the schoolroom is so equally ineffectual that it is entirely written out of the narrative. Judy very soon runs away from school and walks the entire way (a distance of 50 miles) home to the family. Revealed to be suffering from tuberculosis as a result of her ordeal, she is not returned to school and all the children are sent out into the country to facilitate her return to health. It is here that in one of the more traumatic twists of nineteenth-century children's fiction, the girl with quicksilver in her veins is finally rendered motionless saving her toddler half-brother from a falling 'ring-barked' tree. Throwing her body over his, her back is broken, and she endures a drawn-out death in a remote hut in the bush as her brother Pip runs to fetch help that comes too late. In Turner's narrative then, as in Coolidge's, traditional 'vertical' structures of discipline fail to 'straighten out' the willful girl. Described by Keith as 'frightening and unexpected',<sup>46</sup> Judy's death is not immediately legible as a cautionary tale because it appears to make no sense within either the narrative of the novel to this point, or the broader narrative of sentimental fiction where girls are either too good to live (Little Eva, Beth March) or completely incorrigible and therefore doomed. Thus, while ostensibly she dies embodying the archetypal sentimental trope of reunion with the mother (as Meg exhorts her to remember the sweetness of their dead mother's eyes and accept that she will 'see her soon'), Judy is not a sentimental heroine in the vein of Beth or Katy. Rather *resisting* death – 'Oh Meg I want to be alive, how would you like to die when you're only thirteen?'<sup>47</sup> – becomes another entry into Ahmed's archive of willfulness.

So what purpose is served by the death of this willful girl? As Michelle Smith has argued in this volume, far from seeing nature as a redemptive or benignly educative force in children's lives, nineteenth-century Australian children's texts frequently 'emphasized the threats and dangers posed by nature'.<sup>48</sup> Building on Smith's reading of the way that early emigrant settler narratives 'repeatedly focus on family groups who must overcome an often hostile natural environment', I propose that Judy dies precisely to perpetuate the white family's claim to Australian-ness.<sup>49</sup> Having blithely promised 'on her life' that she will protect her toddler brother from harm, she is cruelly and literally held to this account,<sup>50</sup> preserving his life at the expense of her own. But intriguingly, this reiteration of her commitment to her family (the first instantiation of such is her perilous journey on foot all the way home from boarding school<sup>51</sup>) is in fact dependent on her willfulness or 'queerness' in that it insists on the sanctity of the lateral bonds between siblings over and against the kind of commitment to futurity that would see Judy grow 'up' and into marriage and children of her own. Judy's 'swerving' in

this way, her sideways movement, is the redemption of her family even as it necessarily entails her sacrifice of one of her own. At the novel's close, the male child is not simply preserved to grow into adulthood but 'worshipped in his little kingly babyhood', and the brutal patriarch has been softened, his remaining children 'dearer to his heart' as a result of Judy's sacrifice.<sup>52</sup> Captain Woolcot's chastening reveals the reversal of affective instruction that has taken place in this novel as once again a willful girl becomes herself an agent of discipline.

Nature also acts as a disciplinary agent in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. Yet what we encounter in Burnett's novel could not be further from the brutal and sublime force of the ring-barked giant eucalypt of the Australian bush. Rather, Burnett presents readers with the sentimental education visited on British children by their encounter with the beauty of the English country garden.<sup>53</sup> In a rather over-determined adherence to the sentimental stereotype, the 'contrary' Mary Lennox of the novel is a motherless child, sent to live with an emotionally (and physically) absent and unfeeling relative in a remote corner of the world. As it often does, the gothic lurks on the margins of this domestic fiction in that the distant relative is the 'hunchbacked' master of Misselthwaite Manor, which stands, like *Wuthering Heights*, on a remote moor in Yorkshire. Brontë's celebrated novel is very much an intertext for Burnett's, as Mary prowls the hallways of the manor, plagued by the sound of a distant weeping that she first attributes to the wind and its 'wuthering' that 'sounds just like a person lost on the moor and wandering on and on crying'.<sup>54</sup> However, this crying is no willfully un-dead girl seeking entry by the manor's windows, but is Mary's invalid cousin, Colin, confined to his quarters in the mistaken belief that he is too weak to lead an active and public life. The narrative mode shifts from this point onwards from the gothic to a 'feminine pastoral' in which the 'enclosed world of [the] garden' becomes a site of 'healing and renewal' for both Mary and her cousin and ultimately for the reiteration of conservative social order.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to the cases of Katy or Judy, Mary's willfulness comes about less by the early loss of a maternal figure than by the fact that she was never exposed to functional mothering in the first place. The first lines of the novel tell us that she was unwanted by her socialite, expatriate mother, whose flirtations with young officers posted to the family's outpost in India mean more to her than her young daughter. When her mother dies of cholera, Mary 'did not miss her at all' and merely awaits the assignation of a new *ayah*, who will give her her own way in all things.<sup>56</sup> Once again in contrast to Katy and Judy, who cannot control their bodies through an excess of energy, Mary's alienation from her body is evidenced in the way that she is incapable of the care of her own body, whether through nourishing it (she is sallow, thin, and pinched, with a 'small appetite' and will not eat her porridge<sup>57</sup>) or dressing herself. In her first encounter with the housemaid,

Martha, she imperiously demands that Martha dress her, and contemplates slapping her, as she did so often her *ayah*, but for the fear that this sturdy young Yorkshirewoman (herself not much older than Mary) would slap her back.<sup>58</sup> Mary's willfulness is thus an odd combination of violence and passivity, but one that makes sense within the wider colonial framework of the novel. Relying on her readers' knowledge of popular images of India's 'dark Otherness',<sup>59</sup> Burnett codes Mary's cruelty and lassitude (two of the hallmarks of Orientalism) less as a mode of colonial authority than as explicitly 'Indian'. The miasmatic heat of India rendered her by turns 'imperious'<sup>60</sup> and 'languid and weak'.<sup>61</sup> As in Turner's novel, the imagined climatic conditions of a far-flung setting determine the behaviour of these 'wild colonial girls'.

It is Martha who prompts Mary's initial self-examination by aligning her impassioned outbursts with the behaviour of the Indian 'blacks'.<sup>62</sup> And interestingly, Mary's 'contrary' nature is regularly defined by her encounters with servants. For example, when she meets the old gardener, Ben Weatherstaff, he expresses their similarity: 'we're both of us as sour as we look. We've got the same nasty tempers, both of us, I'll warrant.'<sup>63</sup> But rather than inspiring egalitarianism, these encounters are designed to reinforce class structures along 'English' rather than Indian lines; Mary's outbursts are 'unladylike' and therefore to be discouraged. The epithet 'Mistress Mary', first earned as a reference to the nursery rhyme whence her 'contrary' label comes, is used at the end of the novel unironically by Martha's mother, Mrs Sowerby, in recognition of Mary's development into a worthy heir to her late, lamented aunt's position.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, when Mary finally meets her cousin Colin, who rivals her in the nastiness of his temper, she, in turn, reads his behaviour as Indian in that he acts like a young 'rajah' whose word is law and to whom disagreement or non-cooperation means death.<sup>65</sup> As Martha did in her own case, Mary turns Colin's imperi(al)ousness against him in order to set him on the path to becoming the Lord of Misselthwaite Manor, becoming (like Katy and Judy) a disciplinary agent herself. In her new self-awareness Mary identifies Colin's domineering and high-handed behaviour as 'queerness' – a mode of willfulness that she describes as coming about from always having had one's own way. She too has been 'queer', she notes, but her experience of the 'Magic' of the English garden has ameliorated it, as it will too for Colin.<sup>66</sup>

Colin enacts several further displays of rajah-like behaviour (for which read: tyrannical and arbitrary authority), but once class hierarchy has been re-naturalized by the children's encounter with the garden, and sanctified by the Doxology sung in benediction over Mary and Colin by Martha's brother Dickon,<sup>67</sup> these displays are laughed off indulgently. In the final lines of the novel the entire cast of servants are then called upon to endorse Colin's claim to mastery over the Manor and all who dwell in it:

'Look here,' he said, 'if that's curious. Look what's comin' across the grass.'

When Mrs Medlock looked she threw up her hands and gave a little shriek, and every man and woman servant within hearing bolted across the servants' hall and stood looking through the window with their eyes almost starting out of their heads.

Across the lawn came the Master of Misselthwaite... [and] by his side, with his head up in the air and his eyes full of laughter, walked as strongly and steadily as any boy in Yorkshire – Master Colin!<sup>68</sup>

Mary's willfulness has been curbed, but not before it has been put into the service of shaping Colin into the true and new 'master' of Misselthwaite. Willfulness therefore has value in empowering Mary to act as a disciplining agent of boys and men, a power that also extends, as Sanders notes, to her achieving her own desire of access to the garden.<sup>69</sup> Yet both Mary and the garden's agency are limited by primogeniture: 'Mother' nature, despite her power in 'straightening out' both children's behaviour (and Colin's back) is the handmaiden of the landowning patriarchy, thus confirming the sentimental novel's conservative outlook.<sup>70</sup>

### Portrait of the artist as a young woman: *Emily of New Moon*

In affording Mary the agency to redirect masculine privilege Sanders describes *The Secret Garden* as a text with 'postsentimental tendencies'.<sup>71</sup> Such tendencies are more fully developed in Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery's 1923 novel, *Emily of New Moon*, in which the protagonist retains her willfulness by channelling it into artistic production. Montgomery is, of course, best known as the author of *Anne of Green Gables*, a novel which, as I have argued elsewhere, ruptures a number of sentimental discourses in order to hint at the unspeakable experiences the eponymous orphan girl endured before arriving at the safe haven of Green Gables.<sup>72</sup> The *Emily* trilogy is more explicit in its revision of sentimental tropes, perhaps due to its status as Montgomery's most autobiographical work, not only detailing the experiences of a spirited young girl taken in by harshly authoritarian relatives as she herself was, but also exploring her development and struggle for recognition as a writer.<sup>73</sup> Most significantly for the genealogy of sentimental discipline I have traced here, the willful Emily regularly brings about positive and progressive change in the social and domestic order.

*Emily of New Moon* is the first of three novels that tell the story of Emily Byrd Starr's path to womanhood. Emily is a sensitive and passionate child who loses the mother she barely remembers at four years old and her beloved father at 11. On her father's death she is taken to live with her mother's estranged Murray relatives: authoritarian aunt Elizabeth, kindly aunt Laura and their cousin, the childlike Jimmy, whose gentleness and whimsy is the result of having been pushed into a well by Elizabeth in a fit of rage in their

youth. With Laura and Jimmy's help, over the course of the novel Emily begins to find beauty in the landscape and traditions of the New Moon farm on Prince Edward Island, but repeatedly finds herself at loggerheads with her Aunt Elizabeth who has particular ideas about how young women of Murray lineage should behave. Elizabeth mandates all aspects of Emily's existence from the clothes she wears, to the food she eats, to the company she keeps. While in the two later books Emily has internalized much of the Murray pride, in this novel she is the catalyst for levelling the rigidly entrenched Scotch Presbyterian-Irish Catholic hierarchy. Strict social stratifications that mirror British colonial relations are enforced at New Moon: the Scottish Murrays exist at the top of this hierarchy, with the Irish as clear social inferiors and Acadian French present only as seasonal hired help. First Nations peoples are absent altogether. Early on in her stay at New Moon Emily destabilizes this structure by striking up a friendship of sorts with a neighbouring Irish farmer 'Lofty' John Sullivan, who bears a mild grudge against the Murrays for their high-handed treatment of himself and his family over the generations. After being insulted by Elizabeth, the Irishman threatens to raze a picturesque copse on his land, the loss of which would permanently disfigure the outlook of New Moon. Emily's actions first bring this feud to a head but then ultimately resolve it, though not before she has scandalized her family by taking it upon herself to petition Lofty John's priest, Father Cassidy, to intervene in the situation. Father Cassidy is successful in averting the catastrophic arboricide, but the condition on which the resolution is based is that Emily be permitted to pay social calls to the Sullivan farm. Emily's disregard for social hierarchy thus preserves the position of the Murrays' farmhouse in the Canadian landscape. Her willfulness, like Mary's, does uphold her family's exalted position in that New Moon's aesthetic integrity is not compromised, but does so in a way that brings about the dismantling of 'Old World' social ordering.

That Emily's willfulness is less 'curbed' than channelled in ways that sustain and uphold her subjectivity and agency is also evident in the way that she takes charge of two forces that, in keeping with Ahmed's formulation, are depicted as involuntary or external to her mind and body. The first of these, the 'Murray look' is an unwilling adoption of a particularly arresting glare that is said to be an inheritance from her formidable grandfather. The second is Emily's repeated insistence that her writing – her poetry, short stories, journal entries and essays – is something she cannot put a stop to, no matter the punishment or inducement for doing so. Tellingly, the reader's introduction to the Murray look occurs in a scene involving the now familiar trope of the willful girl's unruly hair. Aunt Elizabeth's rigidly hierarchical ways cause Emily to be ostracized at school by girls who resent the Murrays' assumption of social superiority. The sensitive Emily feels this keenly, losing sleep and appetite over her friendless state. Elizabeth's solution to Emily's listlessness is to rule that Emily's strength is being sapped by her 'heavy

masses' of 'long, loose hair' and that it must be shingled close to her head.<sup>74</sup> Emily is distraught at the thought of such mutilation but her pleas fall on deaf ears. As Elizabeth readies her scissors,

[Emily] felt an uprush as from unknown depths of some irresistible surge of energy.

'Aunt Elizabeth,' she said, looking straight at the lady with the scissors, 'my hair is not going to be cut off. Let me hear no more of this.'

An amazing thing happened to Aunt Elizabeth. She turned pale... and fled – literally fled – to the kitchen.<sup>75</sup>

As she gasps out to an alarmed Aunt Laura, at the moment of confrontation with Emily she saw their father, the famously inflexible Archibald Murray, glaring sternly at her from her niece's face. By summoning unwittingly the one person Elizabeth feared into her very body, Emily is able to secure her own way and her will is done. Critics have read the Murray look variously as a mode of traumatic return whereby the victimized child reflects back at the dominating 'parent' the monster she has become,<sup>76</sup> and as an alien and alienating force that is deployed by Emily at moments in which she is ethically in the right.<sup>77</sup> As Sanders has argued, Emily thus takes on and redeems repressive patriarchal discipline by channelling her grandfather's visage to compel Aunt Elizabeth to recognize her subjectivity and to treat her with fairness, and, eventually, love and empathy. Once a loving relationship has been established between the two, there is no further need for Emily to exert her will in this way and the sinister 'look' passes out of the narrative.

## Conclusion

I have tracked here some of the literary permutations of the willfulness of girls and disciplinary responses to the phenomenon from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. This comparative account demonstrates that successive texts from all reaches of the Anglo-World entered into conversation with one another to both endorse and interrogate the mode of womanhood that had its origins in Alcott's foundational novel for girls. These novels for girls are thus shown to be nodes in a complex transatlantic and transhemispheric network, even as they are equally tied to the particular national circumstances of their production. These representations move from the reorientation of discipline from parents to peers in *What Katy Did*, to the reversal of discipline in which the child is an object lesson to the parent as in the case of *Seven Little Australians*, to its related operations across both genders and generations in *The Secret Garden*. But although all these girls stand as literary lessons to a young female readership, only Emily is explicitly the author of her own destiny (and implicitly the author of the

three novels that bear her name). Throughout *New Moon*, Emily's passion for writing and aspiration to climb the 'Alpine path' of literary fame and fortune are repeatedly harnessed to acts of willfulness. From the moment she burns her journal rather than have it exposed to Aunt Elizabeth's prying eyes to the final scene of the novel in which she inadvertently offers her mentor, Mr Carpenter, the wrong sample of her work – a series of scathing satirical sketches of her friends and family (himself included) – Emily refuses to compromise her art. Indeed, as she herself responds to Mr Carpenter's question in the culminating scene: '[I]f you knew you'd never have a line published – would you still go on writing – *would* you?' 'Of course I would,' said Emily disdainfully. 'Why, I *have* to write – I can't help it by times – I've just *got* to.'<sup>78</sup> Artistic production here is the ultimate act of willfulness. Both external to the self and deeply integral to it, the act of writing allows Emily to remain the subject of the text, not simply the sentimental object lesson to which so many of the willful girls who precede her are reduced. In ending on an explicitly willful note in which volition and compulsion coalesce to produce an unstoppable drive, *Emily of New Moon* offers a strategy of resistance to sentimental discipline and opens up the possibility of a writerly subjectivity in process, in opposition to the clearly defined social roles modelled in texts by Montgomery's literary precursors.

## Notes

1. Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014), 3.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The claim for Alcott's novel as not simply a foundational text of sentimental domestic fiction, but in fact the progenitor of girls' literature was made by Sarah Elbert in *A Hunger for Home: Louisa May Alcott's Place in American Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 200 and upheld by Nina Baym in *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820–1870* (MIT Press, 1993), 23. Joe Sutliff Sanders, too, founds his analysis of affective discipline in post-bellum novels for girls on the premise that this mode was invented by Alcott: *Disciplining Girls: Understanding the Origins of the Classic Orphan Girl Story* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 57.
4. I stop short here of making a claim to an 'Empire of Sentiment' that moves outwards from the United States and colonizes the reading habits of girls across the English-speaking world, but remain intrigued by the possibility.
5. Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 15.
6. See also Sanders' note about the almost anthropological representation of girls' national character in the novels of this period (*Disciplining Girls*, 18). James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
7. The *Künstlerroman*, or 'artist's novel' is a mode of *Bildungsroman* specifically tracing an (often sensitive and marginalized) artist to maturity.
8. Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 1.
9. *Ibid.*, 2.

10. The phrase 'spare the rod, spoil the child' is John Wesley's, but the aphorism is derived from Proverbs 13: 24: 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes'.
11. Elizabeth Barnes, *Love's Whipping Boy: Violence and Sentimentality in the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
12. Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 18.
13. Marianne Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6.
14. Sanders, *Disciplining Girls*, 1.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 5.
17. For an extended analysis of feminine 'bodilessness' see Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures*, 33–51.
18. Claudia Nelson, 'What Katy Read: Susan Coolidge and the Image of the Victorian Child', in Sylvia Patterson Iskander (ed.), *The Image of the Child: Proceedings of the 1991 International Conference of the Children's Literature Association* (Battle Creek, Children's Literature Association, 1991), 217–22.
19. Lois Keith, *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk: Death, Disability, and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 22.
20. Ellen D. Kolba, 'Out on a Limb', *The English Journal*, vol. 73, no. 7 (1984), 38–41, 39.
21. Susan Coolidge (Sarah Chauncey Woolsey), *What Katy Did*, (London: Puffin Classics 2009 [originally 1872]), 10.
22. *Ibid.*, 11.
23. *Ibid.*, 45.
24. *Ibid.*, 34.
25. *Ibid.*, 125–33.
26. *Ibid.*, 128.
27. *Ibid.*, 132.
28. *Ibid.*, 133.
29. *Ibid.*, 168.
30. Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures*, 23 and 86.
31. *Ibid.*, 40.
32. Coolidge, *What Katy Did*, 210.
33. Kerry White, "'True Blue Alcott': Lilian Turner's Reworking of *Little Women* and *What Katy Did*", *The Lu Rees Archives Notes, Books and Authors*, vol. 4, no. 9 (1987), 2.
34. Kerry White, *Founded on Compromise: Australian Girls Family Stories 1894–1982* (PhD thesis, Department of English Literature and Drama, University of Wollongong, 1985), 2.
35. Keith, *Take Up Thy Bed*, 190–91.
36. Brenda Niall, *Seven Little Billabongs: The World of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce* (Melbourne University Press, 1979), 61.
37. Keith, 191.
38. Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Australians* (Auckland: Lux Aeterna, 2010 [originally 1894]), 1.
39. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* (Oxford University Press, 2002 [originally 1860]), 4
40. Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, 2.

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Margo Hillel, 'Voyeurism and Power: Change and Renewal of the Eroticized Figure in Australian Books for Teenagers', in Thomas Van der Walt et al. (eds), *Change and Renewal in Children's Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2004), 67.
44. Hillel reads Captain Woolcot's unhesitating brutality towards his sons as a precursor to boys' novels of Empire such as Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899) and Farrar's *Eric; or, Little by Little* (1907). The rod thus lingers in British and Australian literature long after it has been discredited both in American educational discourse and its related literatures ('Voyeurism and Power', 67).
45. Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, Chapter 4.
46. Keith, *Take Up Thy Bed*, 190.
47. Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, 119.
48. Michelle Smith, 'Transforming Narratives of Colonial Danger: Imagining the Environments of New Zealand and Australia in Children's Literature, 1862–1899', in Shirleene Robinson and Simon Sleight (eds), *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 183.
49. Ibid.
50. Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, Chapter 18.
51. As Keith points out, it is Judy's 'inability to accept her separation from her family' that precipitates her flight from school and also seems to have brought on her bout of tuberculosis (*Take Up Thy Bed*, 184).
52. Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, 124.
53. Other than Christine Wilkie, who allows Mary a 'residual Dionysianism', which she places against the Romantic Wordsworthian notion of English nature as the 'nurse, the guide, the soul of all moral being', the majority of critics read nature – and specifically 'English' nature – as a normative socializing force in the novel. ('Digging up *The Secret Garden*: Noble Innocents or Little Savages', *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 28, no. 2 [1997], 79). Also see Mary Goodwin, 'The Garden and the Jungle: Burnett, Kipling, and the Nature of Imperial Childhood', *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2011), 105–17, and Gwyneth Evans, 'The Girl in the Garden: Variations on a Feminine Pastoral', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1994), 20–24.
54. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993 [originally 1910]), 97.
55. Evans, 'The Girl in the Garden', 20.
56. Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, 16.
57. Ibid., 32.
58. Ibid., 28.
59. Danijela Petkovic, "'India Is Quite Different from Yorkshire": Empire(s), Orientalism, and Gender in Burnett's *Secret Garden*', *Linguistics and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2006), 87, 91.
60. Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, 81.
61. Ibid., 54.
62. Ibid., 29–30.
63. Ibid., 39.
64. Ibid., 205.
65. Ibid., 111.
66. Ibid., 175.
67. Ibid., 203.
68. Ibid., 221.

69. Sanders, 104.
70. Deborah O'Keefe puts this rather more damningly: '*The Secret Garden* created a wonderful group of equals supporting one another – Mary, Colin, the nature boy Dickon...until Burnett's devotion to the male aristocracy caused her to destroy the nurturing group, deify Colin, and abandon Mary'. See O'Keefe, *Good Girl Messages: How Young Women Were Misled by Their Favourite Books* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 138.
71. Sanders, *Disciplining Girls*, 98–99.
72. Hilary Emmett, '“Mute Misery”: Speaking the Unspeakable in L.M. Montgomery's Anne Books', in Holly Blackford (ed.), *100 Years of Anne with an E: The Centennial Study of Anne of Green Gables* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009), 86–90.
73. L.M. Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon* (London: Virago Modern Classics, 2013), 126, 6.
74. Elizabeth Rollins Epperly, *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass: L. M. Montgomery's Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 145–46.
75. *Ibid.*, 127.
76. Lindsey McMaster, 'The “Murray Look”: Trauma as Family Legacy in L.M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* Trilogy', in *Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature Canadienne Pour La Jeunesse*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2008), 50–74, 57.
77. Sanders, *Disciplining Girls*, 122, 132.
78. Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon*, 403, original emphasis.

# **Part V**

## **Youth and Sexuality**

# 12

## Boys and Homosex: Danger and Possibility in Queensland, 1890–1914

*Yorick Smaal*

On a Sunday evening in mid-1897, Wade and Walt were caught committing sodomy in a room at Cloughly's Hotel, situated somewhere in the western reaches of Queensland.<sup>1</sup> This discovery was nothing exceptional. In a frontier world disproportionately populated by young men in their sexual prime, 'unnatural' crime appeared regularly enough before the colonial courts in urban and regional areas. At first glance, this case appears similar to other matters involving men and boys heard before judges and juries. Walt, age unknown, but certainly an adult, had been working at the hotel for about six months when the offence took place; Wade was a boy of 11 who was visiting his aunt, the proprietor of the premises. One evening, the two residents ended up in a room together, partly undressed and in a compromising position.

Sometime after supper, Walt apparently beckoned Wade into his quarters asking the young visitor to bolt the door behind him. What happened next comes from a police tracker who watched events unfold in the lamp-lit room through a three-inch hole in the door, evidence corroborated by a domestic servant who later arrived at the scene and also witnessed the act. Wade and Walt were sitting on the bed, both with their trousers unbuttoned. When the boy became aroused, Walt lay down on his stomach and pulled his shirt over his head and his trousers below his knees. Wade got on top of the defendant and began to work his body up and down. The tracker testified that the boy was in a state of physical arousal. '[H]is "dicky" was out of his trousers and was stiff', he later told the court.<sup>2</sup> This, it would transpire, was a crucial observation.

When Walt appeared before the courts on a charge of sodomy a few months later, the colony's Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Walter Griffith, was unsure on the basis of the facts presented if an offence had occurred. He referred the matter to the Court of Appeal for consideration. The problem for Griffith was Wade's age and the sexual position he had occupied during the

alleged act. The boy supposedly penetrated Walt, not the other way around. Despite an eyewitness account of Wade's arousal, common law generally presumed that boys under the age of discretion (at that time 14) were physically incapable of such acts. This idea had considerable legacy in English law. The renowned jurist, Sir Matthew Hale, had argued in the late eighteenth century that 'An infant under the age of fourteen years is presumed by law unable to commit a rape, and therefore it seems cannot be guilty of it... it seems as to this fact the law presumes him impotent, as well as wanting discretion'.<sup>3</sup> This legal fiction applied even in the light of other corroborative evidence, including medical advice that boys had attained a state of puberty.

The Queensland Court of Appeal in a split decision determined that the same principle of 'immature age' applied to its jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> It followed that sexually receptive adult males could not be charged in such matters because the law established that young boys could not physically commit penetration on either males or females. In the eyes of the law, Walt could not be found guilty of sodomy, or its attempt, in Cloughley's Hotel on that fateful Sunday night in 1897. The Crown discontinued the case and Walt was discharged.

The case of Wade and Walt brings to the forefront of historical research a number of critical assumptions about boys and sexuality in turn-of-the-century Queensland and the wider British world. Here we have a boy of 11 – by the available accounts a willing and physically able participant in an act of sodomy – classified by the state as having neither the physical capacity nor the intellectual discretion to adopt the active role in intercourse. Implicit in this reasoning is the notion of consent – that by inference, boys under the age of discretion were also unable to initiate or permit sexual activity with others of the same sex no matter which position they adopted.

What should we make of men like Walt, and boys like Wade? How might we understand their behaviour? The historical scholarship on sex involving young people generally adopts one of two frameworks privileging either danger or possibility.<sup>5</sup> Much of the feminist literature since the 'rediscovery' of child sexual abuse in the 1970s has considered contact with minors within discourses of maltreatment.<sup>6</sup> Historians working from criminal charges of rape, carnal knowledge and indecent assault rightly consider their evidence within narratives of gendered exploitation and abuse. Boys, however, are rarely considered in these accounts, notwithstanding a few exceptional examples.<sup>7</sup> Queer scholarship has been cautious of the state's proscription and regulation of sexual behaviour, and has more readily privileged the construction of innocence that developed alongside the emergence of 'childhood' from the eighteenth century onwards. Historians of 'homosex' have been more likely to recognize potentially non-harmful relationships between adults and youths within narratives of identity and subculture.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, age-structured relationships have formed discrete aspects of queer identities at particular moments and places in the past.<sup>9</sup>

Drawing on 116 charges of male-only sex to come before the Queensland courts between 1890 and 1914, this chapter examines the nuanced complexities between danger and possibility associated with age-structured relationships.<sup>10</sup> It suggests a number of ways we might think about boys, agency and abuse in the historical setting. Part of the problem is the illegality of homosex regardless of age. Even if boys like Wade were over 14 they could not consent to same-sex acts. Thus, the threat of criminal prosecution accompanied expressions of desire or identity as well as crimes of violence. This ambiguity covers much of the legal evidence with lawyers, as Stephen Maynard observes, playing a significant role in the creation of these narratives.<sup>11</sup> Prosecutors and defence barristers respectively positioned young males as vulnerable or collusive depending on their aim and strategy. In an 1899 matter in the river city of Maryborough about 250 kilometres north of Brisbane, for instance, Mr McGrath acting for the accused went as far as to ask the magistrate to explain to a boy of nine that he would not be required to answer any questions in which he might incriminate himself while a police prosecutor outlined to the court the boy's vulnerability and assault.<sup>12</sup> Court-room narratives then, reveal an equivocal mix of coercion and participation as a number of scholars examining the complexities of sex with male youths in the British world point out.<sup>13</sup> Their analysis traces the complex power relationships evident in criminal justice records and the possibility of – and slippage between – peril and pleasure contingent on a range of contextual factors like age, relationship, setting and class.

Two Acts of Parliament regulated homosex in Queensland in the period under review. The 1865 Offences against the Person Act in force until the end of the nineteenth century outlawed sodomy, attempted sodomy and indecent assault. It provided no special statutory protection for boys. The introduction of the Criminal Code Act in 1901 refined existing colonial legislation. It added crimes of gross indecency between males (following the Labouchère Amendment in Britain in 1885<sup>14</sup>) and also created a separate offence under section 210 of the indecent treatment of boys under 14, which included touching, mutual masturbation, oral and intercrural sex.<sup>15</sup> The new Code also incorporated in the statutes a provision on capacity brought about by the 1897 Court of Appeal case of Wade and Walt.<sup>16</sup> This particular feature remained part of the criminal law until the end of the twentieth century.

The protection of boys from homosex has formed a significant concern of the courts in Australian jurisdictions since settlement.<sup>17</sup> More than 30 per cent of same-sex matters in Queensland the 1890s involved men and boys (although the age of the complainant is not always clear), even before the introduction of the new law in 1901. But the creation of section 210 provided new arsenal for police and prosecutors. Penetration did not have to be proved and the legislation was well used. It accounts for 40 per cent of the charges to appear in the twentieth century to 1914, not including more

serious crimes of penetration as well as matters involving youths between 14 and 17 years of age.<sup>18</sup>

The increase in prosecutions was in part a corollary of policing practices and the concern for the protection of children that emerged in the late nineteenth century, evident in increases to the age of consent and other legislative refinements. The inequalities of power in age-structured relationships as well as the spectre of 'unnatural' vice were also causes for concern in male-only offences. Spatial and employment patterns stretching across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also go some way to explaining the proportion of boys in the records. Male access to public places brought men and boys into contact with one another in city streets and urban workplaces. Boys in the Australian bush often laboured alongside adult men and shared living quarters with them.

Homosex came to official attention through various means. Some boys reported their own maltreatment or that of their friends to older siblings and parents. In early January 1912, for instance, schoolboys seven-year-old Francis and ten-year-old John each reported the activities of 67-year-old Thomas who had separately taken them behind the bushes on the side of a Brisbane road to do 'something rude' on the promise of loose change.<sup>19</sup> Third parties also notified the authorities of their suspicions or observations when offenders were caught in the act. When a local baker discovered an elderly man interfering with an eight-year-old boy under his Dunwich home on Stradbroke Island in 1913 for instance, he promptly intervened before telling the boy's father what had taken place.<sup>20</sup> The potential dangers of effeminacy and the possibility of 'contamination' were other concerns, but less so in the antipodes where flamboyant subcultures readily found in the metropole were slower to develop.

Of course, like all crimes and especially sexual ones, a large but unquantifiable number of cases never came to public notice at all. Boys were often too frightened or intimidated to report their maltreatment while some youths did not want to report incidents they had enjoyed. Others deliberately kept their age-structured arrangements discreet, exchanging sex for consumer pleasure, money and other resources. Some witnesses also discouraged male youths from going to the authorities given the stigma attached to 'unnatural' behaviour. One scrub-cutter, for instance, advised an older male youth in 1899 not to report an assault. 'I think the best thing you can do is to squash the matter', he said. '[I]t will give both of you a lot of trouble as you have no witnesses.'<sup>21</sup>

Age-structured relationships often involved ambiguity where poverty, vulnerability, and physical stature mediated relationship between men and working-class youths.<sup>22</sup> Let us take the example of unemployed Albert, simply described in the records as a youth but probably in his late teens. He was approached by a 50-year-old German labourer, Fred, in the streets of Warwick, a town west of Brisbane, in late April 1912. After striking up a conversation, the two labourers spent the afternoon together, strolled

through the town's streets, and stopped at a few hotels for drinks. Early that evening, Fred sought lodging for two at the Warwick Club Hotel. After knocking back a few beers, the man and youth stripped off their clothes and retired to their respective beds. Soon after, Fred made his way over to his roommate's cot, pulled back the bedclothes and rolled young Albert on to his stomach. They had only been intimate for about a minute when the proprietor's son (who had been alerted by his mother who occupied the adjacent room) burst in, catching them in the act. He gave them five minutes to collect their belongings and threw them out into the street. The young labourer and his older companion headed off together to find alternative lodgings. Fred told his young acquaintance 'not to worry': he had £36 and would find them somewhere else to sleep.<sup>23</sup> It is unclear how the police became involved.

Other boys also appeared amenable to intimate male company. 14-year-old Wilfred, an apprentice blacksmith, told a constable upon arrest in 1912 that he was a consenting party to gross indecency with Douglas, a 'rough-looking, strongly built' man of unknown age.<sup>24</sup> Wilfred had asked Douglas for 1/- for admission to the Melba Moving Picture Theatre in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. We do not know whether they struck an agreement at the time money changed hands or during the movie, but young Wilfred made a number of suggestions on where they might spend some time together after the show. The judge hearing the matter acknowledged the 'possibility he [the accused] was to a large extent led into it by the boy'.<sup>25</sup>

Also consider the case of three Ipswich boys aged between 13 and 16 who spent regular evenings with Edgar, a former teacher and father. The boys would stop by for a bite to eat and something to drink before Edgar would take them to his room one by one where he would perform oral and anal sex. The boys were each given half a crown for their time, and they returned on numerous occasions. They were well aware of what Edgar wanted; indeed, it appears that one lad had become acquainted with the situation after another had told him of the tutor's financial generosity.<sup>26</sup>

None of the boys in these three examples levelled complaints of abuse. Albert was caught with Fred by a suspicious hotel proprietor; young moviegoer Wilfred was reported to police by other boys who suspected Douglas' intentions. The Ipswich tutor Edgar only came unstuck after an incriminating letter was found by one of the boys' mothers. We should be careful, however, not to read the absence of complaint as the presence of unproblematic consent. Security, money or consumer pleasure all play a role in these cases and many like them. Unemployed Albert may have found security in Fred's financial status and the potential for employment his older companion offered. Wilfred used sex for payment, exchanging his desirability for entry to the local pictures. The young boys who joined Edgar in his room received regular payment and at least one of them was receiving weekly tuition. And as Matt Houlbrook points out, excitement and adventure could quickly develop into something more sinister.<sup>27</sup> In the months after he was

convicted of sexual assault, Edgar appeared before the courts charged with the murder of another boy in the district, although that case failed for want of sufficient evidence.<sup>28</sup>

The boys who frequented Edgar's house probably found safety in numbers. Boys often looked out for each other in public and there are numerous instances where they reported the abuse of friends or intervened in potentially dangerous situations. These friendships between individuals of similar age and physical stature had their own potential for pleasure and discovery. School-boy experimentation could be remembered fondly. In his autobiographical *Confessions*, the renowned Australian sex reformer, William Chidley, described his childhood sexual experiences with his close friend Walter:

I do not remember when it commenced, as I do not remember when we did *not* – when the moods came and we were alone – play with each other's penis and lying down, suck each other's penis. The satisfaction this gave us I remember Walter calling comforting.<sup>29</sup>

Accounts like this add further evidence to boys' capacity for pleasure so denied by the law's concern about their vulnerability on the one hand, and their potential to commit offences on the other hand.

Interest and desire was not confined to activities between boys of a similar age. Some youths appear to have enjoyed longer-term relationships with men and older contemporaries. One 17-year-old horse boy, Jacob, maintained a four-month relationship with Eli, a cook of unknown age, on an outback station in the mid-1900s.<sup>30</sup> According to a number of labourers stationed on the property:

Accused and [Eli] slept in the same room and in the same bed. They only wore shirts in bed. Accused had a bed for himself if he had wanted it. They were generally together and mostly in [Eli's] room when they were not working – when they were in the room the door was generally bolted.<sup>31</sup>

Their relationship was clearly sexual. One labourer recalled a conversation he overheard outside their room. 'Aren't you finished yet . . .', Jacob allegedly asked Eli, before remarking, 'Don't squeeze my balls so hard'.<sup>32</sup> Eli also presented his young lover with a gift of some clothing. While Eli skipped town before the matter got to court, Jacob received a suspended sentence on conviction for his role in the affair.

Jacob's court appearance indicates that the authorities considered boys and youths as parties to offending in certain circumstances. The very prosecution of a boy between 14 and 17 for homosex is a telling indication that the Crown thought it had a reasonable prospect of conviction. But most boys and youths involved in homosex offences were not indicted, even if young males who assaulted children appeared occasionally before

the bench. The Crown faced a number of difficulties in this regard, not least that lawyers and boys themselves were persuasive in arguing that they had been the recipients of coercion or abuse, even if that was not always the case. Like their older counterparts, they were unlikely to admit to behaviour that cast them as an outlaw or immoral. But part of the reluctance to prosecute boys may be explained by judicial attitudes: in effect the courts carved out a place for youthful indiscretion, and judges were anxious that adolescent offences should not ruin future prospects. Certainly, the decision on physical incapacity in the case of Wade and Walt protected young boys up to a certain age from charges of rape and sodomy. Another possibility is that the primary interest of the state was to convict adults who transgressed sexual and social norms. In these cases, the cooperation and testimony of younger counterparts was a crucial part of the corroborative case.

If boys walked the tricky line dividing vulnerability from possibility, then men's behaviour was mediated by desire, situational circumstance and design. The rural frontier is one context that features strongly in the evidence. Late nineteenth-century Queensland was largely a masculine preserve predicated on mining, agriculture and pastoral pursuits. Men still significantly outnumbered women in the 1890s. The imbalance between the sexes persisted into the early decades of the twentieth century, and was magnified outside the larger metropolitan centres of Brisbane and Toowoomba in the state's south-east.<sup>33</sup> It was here, beyond the confines of urban life, that mateship emerged as the dominant narrative of masculinity. By definition, these men had little social infrastructure, limited or no family networks, and a dearth of female companionship. At a time when few working-class boys finished school, it was not uncommon for younger boys and adolescents to travel in company with men in search of work or live rough in a male-only world.<sup>34</sup>

Some young men with no other sexual outlet found intimate companionship and sexual release with their mates in the rural context, especially under the influence of liquor. Alcohol was a prominent feature of male frontier life in colonies like Queensland and New Zealand. Here, boys may have been especially attractive for lonely men. They were more physically compliant and emotionally controllable than adult contemporaries: a safer bet in a world where rough justice could be served without hesitation when sexual availability was misread.<sup>35</sup>

Older European attitudes to the accessibility of young male bodies may have also persisted in the frontier worlds of Australia, New Zealand and America, tempering dominant attitudes to sex with young people. As Randolph Trumbach explains, it was acceptable up until the eighteenth century for boys to pass through a period of sexual passivity as the objects of adult male desire.<sup>36</sup> While this pattern began to fracture in urban environments like London after 1700, where social and industrial transformation was rapid, there is some evidence to suggest this trend persisted in rural pockets of settler societies well into the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

The young male body, then, was not only manipulable but may have offered some kind of institutionalized and erotic allure in a male-only world. For some men, the soft, denuded and lithe adolescent body possibly evoked feminine characteristics in an environment where memory was often the only reminder of the female form. 'Of indeterminate character', Martha Vicinus explains, boys were 'handsome liminal creature[s] [who] could absorb and reflect a variety of sexual desires and emotional needs. The boy personified a fleeting moment of liberty and of dangerously attractive innocence.'<sup>38</sup>

Ethnicity also figured in men's conceptions of youths and sexuality. Like those possibly drawn to the gendered liminality of young bodies, men from non-Western cultures brought with them to new worlds very different conceptions about sex and gender at a time when Queensland was the most racially heterogeneous of all the Australasian colonies. Alongside white and Indigenous populations, Chinese and Japanese immigrants and Pacific Islander indentured labourers made up three distinct minority population segments.<sup>39</sup> Some Melanesians, for example, came from societies where homosexual initiations were fundamental to becoming a man, or where homosexual acts were tolerated in male society.<sup>40</sup> There are a number of Queensland examples where experienced Pacific labourers were discovered in compromising positions with new young recruits.<sup>41</sup>

Chinese notions of sex too were very different to the British sex and gender order that emerged in the eighteenth century. Traditional concepts of sex in China were power-based and geared towards social roles, much like patterns in ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to assess whether these ideas were transposed to colonial settings with working-class immigration. What was a Chinese gardener thinking when he decided to seduce a 14-year-old plumber's apprentice at Killarney on the Southern Downs in 1912? And what should we make of another Chinese male who reported the incident to police?<sup>43</sup>

Along with desire for the young male body and cultural baggage imported from Asia and the Pacific, violence was an ever-present possibility of frontier life. Power, as Chris Brickell reminds us, was both a constitutive and motivating force in age-structured relationships.<sup>44</sup> The case of 21-year-old Daniel and youth Jerome is a case in point. It highlights the deployment of violence against young males and calls into question the utility of age when it comes to identifying abuse and capacity. On New Year's Eve in 1898, Daniel and Jerome had returned to their tent after cutting wood at Brenda Station in far west southern Queensland. Arriving back at the camp, Daniel ordered his younger workmate to strip naked for a beating. Terrified, the youth complied and lay over the bunk where he was struck twice with a cane. Jerome explained what happened next to the court:

He said ['N]ow do you know what I am going to do[?]'

I said 'Yes', thinking he was going to give me a hiding.

He said, 'No I am going to give you something that will teach you to do as I tell you.'

He said, 'I am going to get into you.'

He dropped his pants and caught me around the waist and arms and held me there with both his arms... I could feel him trying to get into me... and after a while he succeeded in penetrating into me a good way. I tried to get away again but he would not lease [sic] me.<sup>45</sup>

If the absence of women in rural Queensland encouraged homosociality and situational sex, the brutality of the frontier equally bred countervailing traditions of violence. Male aggression was directed not only against women and children but against male adolescents as well. As Libby Connors reminds us, sexual violence could be used to reassert the social order, to inflict humiliation and subordination, and to exercise control within the remote colonial world.<sup>46</sup>

Control and power were especially pervasive in institutional settings, even if such matters were less likely to come to official notice because of this very dynamic. Four teachers in this sample were accused of sexual assaults on boys, including 30-year-old Eric, who was convicted of sexually interfering with three male students at a state school near Rockhampton in 1911.<sup>47</sup> Five years earlier, in Brisbane, the 29-year-old Superintendent of the Boys' Home at inner-suburban Woolloowin was charged with three offences against wards in his care.

Narratives of effeminacy often absent in other age-structured affairs appear more prominently in the institutional context. William Chidley, who earlier described his schoolboy interludes without remorse, wrote of his shame when he was later masturbated by a young teacher whom he described as a man with an effeminate face and hands.<sup>48</sup> The Brisbane newspaper *Truth*, meanwhile, in its coverage of the Woolloowin Boys' Home scandal, drew attention to the Superintendent's high cheek bones and affected demeanour.<sup>49</sup> Such descriptions perhaps acted to cast offenders as weak, dangerous and atypical of men in positions of trust.

The family also contained hidden dangers, even if intrafamilial abuse between members of the same sex is almost entirely absent from the historical record. This is an area requiring urgent scholarly attention. We do know that boys in state care were often sent out to work with families, often as part of their sentence in reformatories.<sup>50</sup> Here, under the remit of protection and correction, boys tenured to the colonial family could be subject to abuse by social relatives – perhaps a father or brother figure with whom they were residing. The 1896 case of Wilbert is one of the rare examples to come to light.

In that year, 13-year-old Wilbert found himself in trouble with the law. Convicted of breaking and entering, he was shipped from Bundaberg (north of Brisbane) to the Reformatory for Boys in the colonial capital, some 350

kilometres away. After a number of months in detention, Wilbert was placed in service with the Nicholls family, compromising Mr and Mrs Nicholls and their two children, including their eldest son, 16-year-old Milton. A few months after the boy's arrival, Milton approached Wilbert down by the local jetty asking whether reformatory boys engaged in sexual practices.<sup>51</sup> Wilbert denied knowledge of any such thing, even if the visiting Justices' registers indicate that some of his contemporaries were punished for forceful or arranged encounters.<sup>52</sup> That night after the lights went out, Milton snuck into Wilbert's room and accosted the boy for sex. Wilbert attempted to resist the advances, but the physically stronger 16-year-old was persistent and controlling. Young Wilbert finally relented and so began a three-year pattern of abuse with shades of physical violence.

In 1899, Wilbert, now 16 years old, ran away from service with the Nicholls family and found refuge at a station north of Brisbane. The investigation into his absconding is what brought this case to police attention. But unlike some of the other boys in this chapter, Wilbert had attempted to bring his experience to notice. He had made numerous complaints to an older acquaintance with no success. Apparently his confidant did not take further action because 'he didn't think he [Wilbert] had told me the truth'.<sup>53</sup> Wilbert had been too frightened to notify the police on his own initiative and hoped that his older friend might take action on his behalf. Wilbert's actions were a counterpoint to those boys who were unable or unwilling to speak out. Despite the police investigation turning up other credible evidence about Milton's coercive behaviour with other boys, the police and the prosecution refused to proceed on the matter given Wilbert's doubtful character.<sup>54</sup> The potential stain of 'unnaturalness' on the young perpetrator Milton also figured in the authorities' decision to discontinue the case.

Out of the towns and cities boys and adolescents came into contact with adult men and other youths on the streets and in workplaces. If these environments could be a dangerous place for the young, they offered others an entrée into the nascent queer worlds emerging in the capital Brisbane. As Melissa Bellanta points out, young Australian larrikins and queer men would have intersected on street corners, parks, vacant lots and abandoned buildings where those interested in same-sex pursuits also loitered.<sup>55</sup> Like patterns elsewhere, Brisbane's queer subculture was structured around particular public places – certain men began to knit connective threads across city streets, parks and public toilets. With limited access to private space, wage-earning men sought out privacy and leisure outside the confines of the traditional home.<sup>56</sup> Some queer men began marking out their difference by dress, demeanour and affectation, and by the late nineteenth century, the flamboyant and passive male was slowly beginning to emerge as a distinct archetype. In Sydney, for instance, scandalous broadsheet *The Scorpion* ran a sensational story on the 'Oscar Wilde's [sic] of Sydney'.<sup>57</sup> The report referenced London's high-profile 1899 Cleveland Street scandal and the

working-class messenger boys involved in the affair. *The Scorpion* suggested that similar patterns were occurring locally.

Newsboys in particular developed an unsupervised culture occupying the same kinds of places where certain men cruised for sex.<sup>58</sup> Let us consider Brisbane's 'naughty newsboys' as the press called them: 17-year-old Allan, 19-year-old Wilbur and 16-year-old Robert.<sup>59</sup> On a Sunday afternoon in mid-October 1905, they had all been roughing about with a group of boys in the rooms of an abandoned oyster saloon in Brisbane's Queen Street when, Robert later alleged, their horseplay got out of hand. By intention or design, the three boys got separated from the rest of the group and found themselves in one of the many rooms upstairs. According to Robert, the two other boys grabbed him by the arms and knocked him to the ground. As Wilbur pinned the boy's shoulders to the dusty floor, Allan undid Robert's belt and pulled down his pants. Allan then placed himself between the boy's legs where he 'bumped away' for some ten minutes. Not satisfied with aiding and abetting, Wilbur then demanded some attention of his own. 'If you don't give me one I will shove it in your mouth', he declared.<sup>60</sup> Hearing footsteps in the hallway outside, Robert seized the moment of distraction and managed to wriggle free. Outside in the hall, he saw two other boys, buttoning up his pants as he passed by. He immediately notified the police of what had occurred and his assailants were apprehended soon after.

Like many of the cases here, it is difficult to unpick with any certainty the dynamics of that day's events. Robert's version of events – that he was outnumbered and overpowered by his older companions – was corroborated by Dr Alexander Marks, who testified at trial that Robert had sustained physical injuries from the assault. The jury found the evidence compelling and Allan and Wilbur were both convicted of sodomy.<sup>61</sup> But what did the defendants make of their own behaviour and what about the other boys who were playing alongside them that afternoon? In his own defence, Allan told the arresting officer, Police Constable William Lipp, that Robert was a 'puff'. '[I]t is not the first time he has done it', Allan declared. 'I can bring a witness who will swear that he got ten bob from a black fellow that stuffed him. I knew what he wanted when he walked up the stairs so I followed him . . . There are plenty of others in Brisbane who do it besides us mob, so I am not the first.'<sup>62</sup> The term 'puff', forerunner to the word 'poof', was a nineteenth-century reference to effeminate homosexual males, and used in London from about the 1830s onwards.<sup>63</sup>

Allan remarks indicate that some working-class youths were familiar with queer identities and subculture, using this knowledge to explain and justify their own behaviour. One telling indicator is Robert's alleged status as effeminate homosexual. Presumptions about his identity downplayed the violence of the defendants' actions. Indeed, the revelation that he had 'done it before', apparently meant that he would do it again (presumably with any male who wanted it), and that by walking up the stairs, he had indicated his

sexual availability to the other boys. Despite his own actions that afternoon, Allan did not identify as queer. He maintained his own masculine gender status by adopting the active role in intercourse. As George Chauncey explains of early twentieth-century New York, some youth gangs regarded effeminate homosexuals as fair game. 'Sexually using a fairy', Chauncey argues, was not only 'legitimized as a "normal" act but could actually provide some of the same enhancement that mastering a woman did'.<sup>64</sup> The fact that Allan referred to 'us mob', and that the footsteps heard by Robert that afternoon belonged to two other newsboys who watched the act from the hallway outside, suggests that some Brisbane boys were engaging in sex with males alongside a complex queer underworld. Added to the 'naughty newsboys' who had sex with 'puffs' but otherwise considered themselves normal, other youths appear to be enmeshed in urbanized queer life. One young employee who worked at a Brisbane hardware store in the early 1890s, for instance, picked up customers in the toilets there, and other youths at the store teased each other about sexual positions, joking about 'which end' they adopted in intercourse.<sup>65</sup>

The historical evidence around boys and homosex is difficult to unpick. Frightened, intimidated or concerned about their job security, boys who were abused did not always complain about their maltreatment, or were encouraged by others to let the matter rest. When they did bring matters to notice, their character – their criminal history, reputation or the language they used in court – meant that their allegations might be ignored or disbelieved. On the other side of the coin, those boys who confessed to abuse or maltreatment when confronted by their parents or the authorities were not always as non-compliant as the depositions might suggest. At a time when homosex remained illegal, male youths, like the men caught alongside them, were likely to downplay their agency in same-sex encounters. Boys' sexual engagement with men was mediated by money, consumer pleasure, power and coercion as well as curiosity and sexual pleasure.

The case of Wade and Walt indicates that age was central to contemporary knowledge about boys and capacity – at least as far as the state was concerned. But it is unlikely that this translated to a frontier world at a time when few boys finished school and many performed physical labour alongside adolescents and men. Here, older institutionalized ideas of young male passivity, the lithe and ambiguous adolescent male body, and the cultural baggage of men of other ethnic extraction tempered nineteenth-century British sex and gender norms. Gender too could mediate knowledge of male-only sex. If effeminate behaviour indicated sexual availability for urban youths including the 'naughty newsboys', it also marked out potential dangers that certain men posed to boys. The Superintendent of the Woolloowin Boys' Home and Chidley's teacher were both men of effeminate character. As the twentieth century progressed, this would become

an increasing marker of danger, as homosexual identity, perversion and molestation became increasingly conflated.

If historians of homosex have been prepared to explore the sexual potential between men and boys, they have been less likely to consider the possibility of abuse in their analyses. In some ways, this stems from the scope of their inquiries, which tend to focus on the formation of subcultures and expressions of identity. The criminal justice evidence is quite clear, however, that danger accompanied possibility in equal measure, the balance weighed by age, physicality, power and vulnerability. Age-structured relationships within institutional settings, for instance, are one context that often indicates the presence of abuse: even in the early twentieth century, the assault of boys by those in positions of authority could generate particular concern when it came to notice.<sup>66</sup> The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century world is long removed from our own. But at a time when sexuality, abuse, capacity and childhood remain at the forefront of the public imagination, attitudes and approaches to sex in the past can elucidate our modern knowledge formation and how we might best respond to problems of agency and abuse.

## Notes

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1. All names have been changed to protect the privacy and anonymity of defendants, complainants and witnesses as part of the conditions of use governing these records. The first initial of each Christian name is correct although the name itself has been changed. The names of officers of the court and witnesses for the state are correct.
2. Queensland State Archives (hereafter QSA), CCT7/N65, Briefs, Depositions, and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases [in Rockhampton] (14 September 1897), Deposition no. 3.
3. Sir Matthew Hale, *Historia Placitorum Cronae: The History of the Pleas of the Crown: Published from the Original Manuscripts by Sollom Emlyn; with Additional Notes and References to Modern Cases Concerning the Pleas of the Crown* by George Wilson (London: T. Payne, 1800), 629.
4. I have discussed the legal aspects of this case in Yorick Smaal '“An Imbecility of Body as well as Mind”: Common Law and the Sexual Incapacity of Boys', *Criminal Law Journal*, vol. 36 (2012), 249–51.
5. Yorick Smaal, 'Historical Perspectives on Child Sexual Abuse', part 1, *History Compass*, vol. 11, no. 9 (2013), 702–714.
6. See Stephen Angelides, 'Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse and the Erasure of Childhood Sexuality', *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2004), 141–77.
7. See for example Stephen Robertson, *Crimes against Children: Sexual Violence and Legal Culture in New York City, 1880–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the*

*Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2013); Jill Bavin-Mizzi, *Ravished: Sexual Violence in Victorian Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1995).

8. I have borrowed 'homosex' from John Howard and use this term to denote the complex mix of same-sex practices cutting across class, age and race; see *Men Like That: A Queer Southern History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). On subcultures see for example, George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Clive Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows: The Development of Gay and Lesbian Culture in Queensland* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland, 2001).
9. David M. Halperin, 'How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality', *GLQ*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2000), 87–123.
10. I have counted charges as listed on the register of criminal depositions for the purposes of this chapter. Individuals have been counted separately if they have been charged together.
11. For an excellent comparative British world account see Stephen Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations": Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890–1935', *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 2 (1997), 197–205.
12. Although the magistrate emphatically refused to do so. QSA, CCT3B/N41, Indictments, Depositions and Related Papers in Criminal Sittings [in Maryborough] (2 May 1899), Deposition no. 2.
13. See Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations"', 191–235; Chris Brickell, "'Waiting for Uncle Ben": Age-structured Homosexuality in New Zealand, 1920–50', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 21, no 3. (2012), 467–95; Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–57* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 110–11, 124–25, and especially 182–86.
14. A modified version of the Labouchère Amendment, relating to the protection of girls and the regulation of prostitution, was passed as law in Queensland in 1891.
15. Criminal Code Act 63 Vic. No. 9, section 210 defined the term 'deal with' to include any act done without consent which constituted an assault.
16. Criminal Code Act, section 29.
17. See for example Bruce Baskerville, "'Agreed to Without Debate": Silencing Sodomy in Colonial Western Australia, 1870–1905', in Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon (eds), *Gay and Lesbian Perspective IV: Studies in Australian Culture* (Sydney: Department of Economic History with the Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research, University of Sydney, 1998), 113; Adam Carr, 'Policing the "Abominable Crime" in Nineteenth Century Victoria', in David L. Philips and Graham Willett (eds), *Australia's Homosexual Histories: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives 5* (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research and the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 2000), 33; Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows*, 65–66.
18. Clive Moore and Bryan Jamison show that offences against boys under the age of 14 account for 28 per cent of the charges for homosex to come before the Queensland courts between 1901 and 1954; 'Making the Modern Australian Homosexual Male: Queensland's Criminal Justice System and Homosexual Offences, 1860–1954', *Crimes, Histories and Society*, vol 11, no. 1 (2007), 46.
19. QSA, DCT1/N1 (b), Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases [Brisbane District Court], Deposition nos. 31 and 32; *Truth* (Brisbane) 21 January 1912, 2.

20. QSA, SCT/CC243, Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases Heard in Sittings in Brisbane (3 November 1911), Deposition no. 12.
21. QSA, CCT5/N9, Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases Heard [in Roma], (4 April 1899), Deposition no. 3.
22. Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 183.
23. QSA, A/34794, Criminal Files – District Court, Warwick (22 May 1912), Deposition [no number].
24. QSA, SCT/CC250, Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases Heard in Sittings in Brisbane (2 February 1914), Deposition no. 12; *Truth* (Brisbane), 18 October 1914, 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 11 November 1914, 11.
25. *Brisbane Courier*, 11 November 1914, 11.
26. QSA, CCT2/87, Briefs, Depositions and Associated papers filed in Criminal Cases Heard in the Circuit Court, Ipswich (18 April 1899), Depositions nos. 1–4.
27. Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 184.
28. *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, 18 February 1899, 2; *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, 8 April 1899, 2; *Warwick Argus*, 20 May 1899, 7.
29. S. M. McInerney (ed.), *The Confessions of William James Chidley* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 14. Emphasis in original.
30. This case and that of the ‘naughty newsboys’ later in this chapter, have been explored in Yorick Smaal ‘Coding Desire: The Emergence of a Homosexual Subculture in Queensland, 1890–1914’, *Queensland Review*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2007), 13–28.
31. QSA, CCT4/N60, Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal cases Heard – Circuit Court, Toowoomba (20 September 1910), Deposition no. 9.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Calculated from Population by Sex, State and Territories, Australian Historical Population Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3105.0.65.0012014?OpenDocument> (accessed 7 February 2015); Katie Spearritt, ‘The Poverty of Protection: Women and Marriage in Colonial Queensland, 1870–1900’ (BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1988), 25.
34. Clive Moore, ‘“The Frontier Makes Strange Bedfellows”: Masculinity, Mateship and Homosexuality in Colonial Queensland’, in Garry Wotherspoon (ed.), *Gay and Lesbian Perspectives III: Essays in Australian Culture* (University of Sydney: Department of Economic History with the Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research, 1996), 30.
35. Chris Brickell, *Mates and Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand* (Auckland: Godwit Books, 2008), 35.
36. Randolph Trumbach, ‘London’s Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of Social History*, no. 11 (1977), 1–33.
37. Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows*, 66.
38. Martha Vicinus, ‘The Adolescent Boy: Fin de Siècle Femme Fatale’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1994), 91.
39. Henry Reynolds, *North of Capricorn: The Untold Story of Australia’s North* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2003).
40. See for example Gerald W. Creed, ‘Sexual Subordination: Institutionalized Homosexuality and Social Control in Melanesia’, *Ethnology*, no. 23 (1984), 157–76; Gilbert Herdt (ed.), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).
41. See for example QSA, Z1382, Criminal Files [Townsville] (20 February 1900), Deposition nos. 12 and 13.

42. Chou Wah-shan, *Tongzhi: Politics of Same Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (New York: Harworth Press, 2000), 13, 27–42; David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 160–63.
43. QSA, CCT4/N62, Briefs, Depositions and Associated papers in Criminal Cases Heard [Circuit Court Toowoomba], Deposition [no number].
44. Brickell, ‘“Waiting for Uncle Ben”’, 478.
45. QSA, CCT5/N9 (4 April 1899), Deposition no. 3.
46. Libby Connors, ‘Two Opposed Traditions: Male Popular Culture and the Criminal Justice System in Early Queensland’, in Robert Aldrich (ed.), *Gay Perspectives II*, 94–96.
47. QSA, A/18719, Calendars, Depositions and Indictments in Criminal Trials (10 April 1911), Deposition 2 [3 cases].
48. McInerney, *The Confessions of William James Chidley*, 36.
49. QSA, SCT/CC175, Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases Heard in Sittings in Brisbane (19 February 1906), Depositions nos. 8 and 9; *Truth* (Brisbane), 4 February 1906, 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 19 February 1906, 4.
50. Dorothy Scott and Shurlee Swain, *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).
51. QSA, A/40102, Police Staff Files (5 June–3 August 1905).
52. QSA, QS 1773/1, Visiting Justices’ Minute Book, 1879–1916.
53. QSA, A/40102, Police Staff Files (5 June–3 August 1905).
54. *Ibid.*
55. Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 160–61.
56. George Chauncey, ‘Privacy could only be had in Public: Gay Uses of the Streets’, in Joel Saunders (ed.), *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1996), 225.
57. Robert French, *Camping by a Billabong* (Sydney: Blackwattle Press, 1993), 43.
58. Maynard, ‘“Horrible Temptations”’, 205. Also see Don Romesburg, ‘“Wouldn’t a Boy Do?” Placing Early-Twentieth Century Male Youth Sex Work into Histories of Sexuality’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2009), 337.
59. QSA, SCT/C 173, Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases Heard in Sittings in Brisbane (6 November 1905), Deposition no. 23; *Truth* (Brisbane), 29 October 1905, 4.
60. QSA, SCT/CC173, Deposition no. 23.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. Gary Simes, ‘The Language of Homosexuality in Australia’, in Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon (eds), *Gay Perspectives: Essays in Gay Culture* (University of Sydney; Department of Economic History, 1992), 41.
64. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 81.
65. QSA, SCT/CC99 Briefs, Depositions and Associated Papers in Criminal Cases Heard in Sittings in Brisbane (6 April 1892), Deposition no. 5.
66. Kathleen Daly, *Redressing Institutional Abuse of Children* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 21. For this concern in early twentieth-century Queensland, see *Truth* (Brisbane), 4 February 1906, 5.

# 13

## Leery Sue Goes to the Show: Popular Performance, Sexuality and the Disorderly Girl

*Melissa Bellanta*

On a Saturday night in 1887, 13-year-old Mary Ann M., a resident of the inner-industrial Sydney district of Waterloo, paid a visit to Paddy's Market. After winding past the sideshows and colourful stalls, the sound of bands and the calls of vendors, she ended up talking with a group of 'larrikin' youths in the streets outside. 'Larrikin' was a colloquialism used throughout colonial Australasia in this period, most often in Sydney and Melbourne. It described participants in an urban youth subculture based around loose-knit street gangs known as 'larrikin pushes' or 'mobs'. Composed of young people of both sexes aged between their early teens and early 20s, the larrikin subculture was characterized by a hectic enjoyment of popular entertainments, street-smart dress, burlesque humour, a love of pugilism and clashes with police. It was also characterized by sexual activity, including group acts of male sexual violence towards women.<sup>1</sup>

One of the 'larrikins' whom Mary Ann M. met outside Paddy's had recently been charged over the gang rape of a 16-year-old girl. The charges brought against Michael Mangan over the so-called 'Mount Rennie Outrage' had eventually been dropped, but other members of the 'Waterloo push' to which he belonged had been convicted and hanged.<sup>2</sup> Patrick Flynn, also present outside the market, would be charged with a sexual offence that night. He took Mary Ann M. to Redfern fire station, where he worked as a watchman, and had sex with her along with two of his friends. Discovering them in bed a few hours later, police charged Flynn and his friends with carnal knowledge of a minor. When interviewed, M. claimed the sex had been consensual, and that she had also had sex with two other men a few months earlier while staying with a girlfriend, Nell D.<sup>3</sup>

Contemporary observers of girls mixing in larrikin circles in late nineteenth-century Australia were by turns outraged and concerned by their sexual precocity. They referred to them using sexualized terms such as 'prostitute', 'brazen-faced hussy', 'brazen-faced larrikinness', 'girl brothel-keeper'

and 'leery-faced Sue'.<sup>4</sup> In later decades, Australian historians interested in larrikin street gangs also focused on the girls' sexuality, mentioning their participation in the subculture only to dismiss them as subservient 'drabs'.<sup>5</sup> As a feminist scholar, one might be tempted to go to the other extreme in interpreting these sexist portrayals and celebrate the flagrant sexuality of girls involved in the larrikin subculture. Patently, though, the reality was much more complex. Colonial larrikin girls participated in an aggressively masculinist subculture that rendered them sexually and physically vulnerable – hardly something to extol.

How, then, to approach these young women in a suitably respectful and yet complex way? How to acknowledge their sexuality without focusing exclusively upon it, or to recognize their vulnerability without reducing them to the dupes of men? In the following, I draw on the perspectives of feminist sociologists, most notably Susan Batchelor, in order to grapple with these questions. I also suggest that these young women relied on attractively brazen types from popular theatricals as models for their disreputable femininity. Though it only provides us with partial answers, this approach at least helps us imagine how they maintained a sense of self-dignity while catering to male larrikins' expectations that they flaunt their sexuality. It also provides us with clues as to how they coped with the disapproval of colonial society at large.

### **Past feminist work on girls in street subcultures**

Feminist sociologists first began criticizing male scholars' approaches to girls involved in street subcultures in the 1970s. In a book on postwar youth subcultures published in 1975, British sociologists Angela McRobbie and Jennifer Garber criticized the heroic status many of their colleagues invested in youth such as the Teddy boys while denigrating their female associates as 'dumb, passive teenage girls'.<sup>6</sup> A decade later, New York researcher Anne Campbell published a landmark book criticizing the sexism with which American sociologists such as Frederic Thrasher had treated the female participants in street gangs. In his hugely influential work based on research in 1920s Chicago, simply called *The Gang* (1927), Thrasher divided 'gang girls' into two categories. Both were evidently produced from the perspective of male gang members. Most girls strove to gain membership in street gangs 'in a sexual capacity', he claimed. There were also smaller numbers of girls who were ill at ease with their femininity, and who thus strove for membership by trying to be one of the boys. These girls typically aped male aggression and took active roles in the gang's street fights.<sup>7</sup>

When one considered these girls from their own perspective, Campbell argued, it was clear that this typology was wrong. Whether or not they had helped to understand youth involved in Chicago gangs during the 1920s, Thrasher's ideas were certainly inadequate when approaching the

African-American and Latina girls she had encountered in 1980s New York. After spending time in participant observation of these young women, Campbell concluded that most insisted on their autonomy and disparaged the idea of relying on sex to belong. Many female gang members who took part in street fights expressed a sense of femininity, and friendships with other girls were more important to them than their relationships with boys.<sup>8</sup>

Later feminist scholars such as Susan Batchelor and Jody Miller have qualified Campbell's emphasis on the autonomy of gang girls. They agree that in contemporary society youth street gangs give benefits to marginalized girls in the form of intense friendships with other girls and a sense of solidarity with peers of both sexes. This solidarity is produced through a mutual sense of being on the social margins and through a range of risk-taking behaviours, including – but not limited to – sex with potentially violent boys. They also note that some girls take part in street fights for similar reasons to their male counterparts.<sup>9</sup> Where these scholars differ from Campbell is in recognizing that female participants in modern masculinist street subcultures are profoundly contradictory when it comes to gender relations. Even when they claim to be the equals of men, these girls still support a gendered hierarchy favouring male leadership. Most also make demeaning comments about girls whom they describe as sex objects in order to underline their own autonomy. As a consequence, they are actively invested in gender-stereotypical discourses – 'the complex outcome of a gender hierarchy that celebrates males/masculinity and devalues females/femininity'.<sup>10</sup>

Though they are concerned with different places and a very different era, sociologists such as Batchelor and Miller are still valuable when it comes to thinking about the relationship of girls such as Mary Ann M. to colonial Australia's larrikin scene. Their work makes it clear that no one could credibly present female larrikins as poster girls for feminine empowerment. We should thus avoid going to the other extreme in response to sexist portrayals of these young women as degraded sex objects. At the same time, this work suggests that we should acknowledge the complex ways in which these girls negotiated a sense of femininity and self-worth in 'a highly marginalized and patriarchal environment'.<sup>11</sup> It also alerts us to the possible importance of female friendship to these young women (something I have considered elsewhere),<sup>12</sup> and to the need to consider how they represented themselves.

Though the latter point is important, it is obviously difficult for an historian of the nineteenth century to take on board. Participant observation is out of the question when it comes to colonial larrikin girls, and unfortunately there are no sources in which these girls talk freely about their lives. In these circumstances, the best one can do, I suggest, is to search for moments in which larrikin girls presented themselves to others. The moments in which they acted with a conscious disreputability in the presence of onlookers or peers are the closest thing we can get to evidence of

their self-representation. Mindful that members of the larrikin subculture were keenly interested in popular entertainments, I also assume that these girls were influenced by popular styles of performance at such times. Urban amusements offered plenty of examples of sexualized characters in the late nineteenth century: whether the saucy 'soubrette', the burlesque chorus-girl, the scantily clad female boxer or cross-dressed 'principal boy'. Crucially, they presented these characters positively rather than pejoratively, and as such offered a rare source of inspiration to disorderly and marginalized girls.

While I focus on girls from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds in eastern Australian cities here (most notably Sydney and Melbourne), this discussion has resonances for girls in other parts of the British world. The perspectives informing my approach have in themselves come from elsewhere – Batchelor's work, for example, is on contemporary Glaswegian girls. Significantly, too, Australian larrikins were not a special case. On the contrary, street-based youth subcultures could be found throughout the British world and beyond in the late 1800s. New Zealand had larrikins, albeit in smaller numbers.<sup>13</sup> Birmingham had its 'peaky blinders', Manchester its 'scuttlers', Liverpool its 'high ripper' gangs, London its 'hooligans', Paris its 'Apaches'.<sup>14</sup> In each case, urban entertainments played an important role. Entertainments such as stage boxing and blackface minstrelsy were what Kennell Jackson has called 'cultural traffic': cultural forms that moved easily across geographic boundaries.<sup>15</sup> They travelled with particular agility around the British Empire and United States, facilitated by imperial networks, international alliances between entrepreneurs, the use of the English language and a shared British heritage. There are thus plenty of grounds to assume that the material I discuss here is suggestive for other marginalized young women in other localities.<sup>16</sup>

### **The rise of the larrikin subculture**

Originating in England as part of regional dialect in Warwickshire or Worcestershire, the term 'larrikin' was in itself a form of cultural traffic. In its place of origin it meant 'mischievous or frolicsome youth'.<sup>17</sup> After it migrated to Victoria in Australia in the 1860s, however, it acquired a harder edge. In its new location, it translated as 'exhibitionist and streetwise youth'. The young men in their teens who first called themselves larrikins in 1860s Melbourne were laying claim to a reckless street credibility. They did so by displaying qualities best described as 'rorty' (meaning attention-seeking and uproarious) and 'leary'/'leery' (meaning knowing, in some cases bearing sexual connotations).<sup>18</sup> The majority worked in casual manual labour or earned an uncertain income from street-based pursuits. The girls who associated with them mostly worked as factory hands or servants, though small numbers also earned money from prostitution from time to time.<sup>19</sup>

Urban amusements were indeed vital to the emergence of the larrikin identity and the mixed-sex subculture surrounding it. Like the Bowery b'hoys and g'hals of mid-century New York, or the adolescent enthusiasts of London's penny theatres in the 1830s, larrikins were attracted to cheap entertainment venues.<sup>20</sup> When they could afford it, 'pushes' of these young people could be seen at theatres, dance saloons, sideshows and variety halls clustered around Melbourne's Eastern Market or, in Sydney, around Paddy's Market and the Haymarket. They also sought them out in nearby districts such as Emerald Hill and Waterloo.<sup>21</sup> Pugilism was another draw card. Larrikin youth exulted in illegal bare-knuckle bouts, boxing matches and shows, and also in the boastful exhibitions of male strength often to be found in the ring.<sup>22</sup>

Clashes between police and adolescent groups were not uncommon in industrial localities such as North Melbourne or Redfern in the 1870s and 1880s. Disorderly youth were still primarily treated as a criminal problem in this period, and it was not until the very end of the century that concerted efforts were made to divert youth from the criminal justice system. Before this, larrikins were the target of heavy-handed policing, and some expressed resentment at this by violently resisting arrest.<sup>23</sup> When combined with the Mount Rennie Outrage and three other highly publicized larrikin gang rapes in the 1880s, this violence ensured concern about a growing 'larrikin menace' was widely felt in colonial public life.

Given the moral panic over larrikinism, some scholars have suggested that the phenomenon was essentially a figment of the colonial public's imagination.<sup>24</sup> While the numbers of larrikins and pushes was certainly exaggerated, however, it is not possible to accept this argument. Rather than concluding that 'larrikinism' was the fabrication of journalists and social commentators, it is more convincing to recognize that an interaction was taking place between developments among marginalized youth on the ground and the categories imposed on them from above. The term 'larrikin' emerged on the street rather than in the press, after all. The meanings young people gave to this term were influenced by representations of street-smart characters in popular culture: notably, in the case of the boys, Newgate dramas such as *Jack Sheppard* and knowing Cockney acts from the British music hall.<sup>25</sup> Once representations of larrikins began to appear in popular culture, they influenced how young people acted out a larrikin identity, just as press reports disparaging larrikinism encouraged youth to defiantly identify with the term.

### Girls' involvement in the larrikin scene

Talking about youth identifying as larrikins raises a second question concerning girls' place in this street subculture. Adolescent girls do not appear to have used 'larrikin' or 'larrikiness' to describe themselves. Girls were still

a part of larrikin social networks, however, some in more intimate ways than others. Young women were the sisters, sweethearts, sexual partners and/or friends of male larrikins. Some also engaged in pugilism and street violence, claiming to be members of 'pushes' alongside the boys. An example of the latter is 15-year-old Maria Clements, resident of Collingwood in inner-industrial Melbourne. In 1882, she staged a bare-knuckle fight with another girl in the street, surrounded by cheering male peers.<sup>26</sup> Another was Emily Shoppes, a Sydney factory worker who participated in a skirmish between rival larrikin groups at Sir Joseph Banks' pleasure ground. Fined six shillings for her part in the melee, she exclaimed: 'Oh that is nothing. On New Year's Day I am taking my push to Lady Robinson's beach, and we will give Newtown Court a job of 6s'.<sup>27</sup>

A more disturbing example of a larrikin girl was 16-year-old factory worker Frances Danby, nicknamed 'Cock-eye' or 'Cocky' at work. She was a reluctant witness in an inquest into the death of a 33-year-old prostitute in the inner-Sydney district of Woolloomooloo in 1883. The victim of this so-called 'Woolloomooloo Outrage' had been gang-raped by some of Danby's male friends, known locally as larrikins. The rape had taken place over some hours, involving a moving cast of perpetrators. At the end of the ordeal, the victim had been burned with a hot iron and left unconscious, later to die of shock and exposure. Danby was a sweetheart to one of the accused larrikins' close friends, as well as friendly with them in her own right. She had been seen talking with several of the accused at and around the time that the rape was taking place, joining them on different street corners around Woolloomooloo after sneaking out of home after dark.<sup>28</sup>

The evidence at the inquest showed that Danby was a voluble and exhibitionist young woman, deeply committed to being 'in the know' in her neighbourhood. It also revealed that she was popular in larrikin circles (or rather, *had* been popular before she was forced to testify at the inquest and subsequent criminal proceedings). Several witnesses claimed that on the night of the crime, Danby's larrikin friends had tried to protect her from her father's disapproval, knowing she was not supposed to be socializing with them at night. 'Nit! Fanny, here's your old man coming!', one of them cried, seeing her father walking towards them up the street.<sup>29</sup> Some witnesses also suggested that Danby had supplied the accused with the hot iron used to burn the victim of the Woolloomooloo Outrage.<sup>30</sup> The evidence was inconclusive, but it appears that she had known that the rape was taking place essentially as it was happening, and may even have played a more seriously complicit role.

### **Larrikin girls and popular entertainments**

Given how markedly they departed from Victorian ideals of demure femininity, it is not surprising that outsiders described the girls involved

in the larrikin subculture using sexualized terms. These colonial-era representations influenced the way that Australian historians wrote about them in later decades. In his *History of Australia* (1978), Manning Clark presented larrikin girls as degraded sex objects in considerably more insulting terms than Thrasher in his work on Chicago gang girls. One could identify a female larrikin by the bruises she had received from her boyfriend, he wrote flipantly. She also distinguished herself by her shrieking laughter in public, and by a 'wiggling of the bottom similar to that practiced by South Sea Islanders for the same purposes'.<sup>31</sup> Writing in 1973, James Murray referred to female larrikins even more contemptuously. Like the British sociologist commenting on female Teddy boys, he suggested they were dumb and sexually subservient, referring to them as 'larrikins' drabs'.<sup>32</sup>

Though he did not put this explicitly, Clark seems to have regarded the sexualized and exhibitionist behaviours of female larrikins as a sign of degradation. Their noisy disreputability was a mark of the desperation with which they sought the attention of their male peers; one so marked that they were prepared to lower themselves in the opinion of the rest of society. Manifestly, there *were* problems with the way that larrikin girls related to their male counterparts. Some agreed to sex with men because they were afraid to refuse. Others colluded in the boys' vainglorious expressions of hypermasculinity. Some may even have been accessories to male larrikins' violence against other women. It is overwhelmingly likely, however, that larrikin girls did not view themselves as degraded or desperate beings. It is at this point – trying to imagine how they regarded themselves – that it is important to consider sexualized characterizations of women in the popular entertainments of the day.

Given how little they earned, marginalized young women had limited access to commercial theatricals. Domestic servants earned between five and eight shillings a week, and girls starting out in the clothing industry less than this. This made it impossible for them to afford the shilling required for the cheapest seat at a high-profile city theatre or hall in ordinary circumstances. Even the sixpence charged by second-tier venues would have been out of reach on any regular basis.<sup>33</sup> Having said this, there *are* instances in which young women living on the social margins attended reputable theatres. In the early 1900s, Brisbane adolescents Violet Hill and May Cracknell had sex with a man who took them to see the melodrama *Her Luck in London* at the Opera House before escorting them to the piano room at a nearby brothel. Later, the pair had sex with a male employee at the Waxworks who agreed to admit them to the exhibition for free.<sup>34</sup>

Given that one of the larrikins charged over the Woolloomooloo Outrage claimed to have been at the Theatre Royal as his alibi, it is feasible that Danby was treated by her larrikin sweetheart on special occasions.<sup>35</sup> For the most part, though, girls such as Danby or Mary Ann M. had to content themselves with infrequent visits to venues further down the entertainment food chain

than the Theatre Royal. They were more familiar with variety shows than the dramatic theatre, and more familiar still with dance saloons and the sort of sideshows performed at Paddy's Market on Saturday nights. In 1870s Melbourne, for example, a journalist calling himself the Vagabond saw a sprinkling of 'girls of the very lowest class' among a larrikin crowd at a 'low concert hall' off Bourke Street. This venue offered a number of variety acts, including a 'brazen' dance by a young girl, before the floor was opened to general dancing from the crowd.<sup>36</sup>

The versatility on show at the Bourke Street 'concert hall' was indicative of many cheap entertainment sites. A venue might double as a site for variety acts and dance saloon; as a forum for boxing matches as well as blackface minstrel shows. Tented venues were even more versatile. At Paddy's Market in the 1870s and 1880s, one could see displays of sharp-shooting, equestrian stunts, acrobatics and small-time variety shows. One visitor to a 'varied entertainment' in a tent at Paddy's in the mid-1880s saw sword swallowing, ventriloquism, sleight of hand, and a young woman performing impersonations of character types from the dramatic stage.<sup>37</sup> Another would later recall a visit in the same decade in which he saw 'great actors' performing in playlets by night.<sup>38</sup>

In the mid-1890s, a sideshow doing the rounds of inner Melbourne offered a combination of dancing and circus-cum-variety acts to its low-income patrons. Run by a Mrs Frederickson of inner-industrial Richmond, it included female boxers and 'girl high-kickers' alongside sword swallowing and strongman displays.<sup>39</sup> In the same period, a 13-year-old domestic servant said to socialize with larrikins went with three similarly aged girlfriends to a boxing show in the city of Brisbane one night.<sup>40</sup> It is not clear whether female boxers or variety acts were featured at the show she attended. Given that some half-dozen showmen were present, however, she may well have seen other attractions such as the performance of popular ballads and acrobatic feats that night.<sup>41</sup>

### **On popular performance styles**

Three things might be said about the popular culture milieu informing the sensibilities of disorderly girls. The first is that the line between professional and amateur performances was easily crossed. At a sideshow or 'low concert hall' still steeped in the 'popular tradition of extemporization and direct address', there was little distance between the spectators and performers.<sup>42</sup> This alerts us to the fact that amateur acts were in themselves ways for popular performance styles to circulate among these young women. Second-hand renditions of songs from well-known dramas, variety-show dance acts and boxing-show manoeuvres all found their way into spaces in which young people amused themselves. One can see this at Biloela Industrial School, Sydney, in the 1870s. According to a member of staff, the female inmates

of this institution performed song-and-dance acts for one another once they were locked into their dormitories each night. Always on the look-out for fresh material, they would beg any new girl to teach them the latest songs. (The same young women defied regulations about the length of their dress, provocatively ripping off their tunics to the knee.<sup>43</sup>)

The second thing to say about popular performances relevant to 'larrikinesses' is that they fall under the loose heading of burlesque. This term had multiple meanings at the time. In its most formal sense, it referred to a specific genre of costume drama delivered in rhyming couplets, punctuated by catchy songs and the dances of a revealingly clad female *corps de ballet*. Such burlesques were presented as parodies of a renowned play, novel, myth, legend or historical event.<sup>44</sup> The burlesque *Little Jack Sheppard*, for example, parodied the career of the eighteenth-century thief and prison-breaker, Jack Sheppard. Like their close cousin, the pantomime, burlesque dramas sported male actors cross-dressed as grotesque women and female actors in tights playing 'principal boys'. In *Little Jack Sheppard*, the lead role was indeed reserved for a woman as the Cockney thief. Travelling performances of this burlesque in 1890s Australia featured Maggie Moore or Kate Sheppard as Jack Sheppard, performing songs such as 'As Bad As They Make 'Em' during the play.<sup>45</sup>

Though the term 'burlesque' had specific connections to the dramatic stage, the burlesque performance mode was versatile. It was picked up and reworked in a range of venues. Single-act burlesques thus appeared at the end of variety and minstrel shows, dedicated to low-comic buffoonery. In 1889, for instance, seven blackface actors of both sexes performed a burlesque of a Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera at the end of a Federal Minstrels show at Sydney's Haymarket Music Hall, not far from Paddy's Market.<sup>46</sup> 'Burlesque' was also used as a verb much as it is today, meaning 'to send up through exaggeration' or 'to make ridiculous'. Overall, then, as a style of performance, 'burlesque' had connotations of hyperbole, obviousness, a rollicking sensibility, mocking humour, brazen displays of raunchy femininity and humorous appropriations of gender stereotypes.

The famous song and dance 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' is a good example of a burlesque act appearing in a range of popular entertainments in the early 1890s. Originating in London, it featured a female protagonist who pretended to be refined and demure in the verses before letting loose in a far-from-decorous dervish of high-kicking legs and petticoats in the famous chorus:

You should see me out with pa,  
 Prim, and most particular;  
 The young men say, 'Ah, there you are!  
 And pa says 'That's peculiar!  
 'It's like their cheek!', I say, and

Off again with pa I go –  
 He's quite satisfied – although,  
 When his back's turned – well, you know –  
*Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, etc.*<sup>47</sup>

This act debuted in Australia in 1892, when a travelling company from London's Gaiety Theatre included it in the burlesque *Faust Up To Date*. A reviewer of the company's first Sydney performances at Her Majesty's Theatre said that a gallery seemingly filled with the residents of the inner-industrial districts roared at the tops of their voices throughout this act.<sup>48</sup> From then on, a veritable 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' fever was unleashed on the colonies. The act was performed in many other venues, sometimes by cross-dressed men, other times by women who invested it with the raucous femininity associated with the burlesque chorus girl. It was also played by street bands until writers complained in the press of its ubiquity.<sup>49</sup>

The character in 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' was a burlesque of a stock type known as a 'soubrette': a sexually knowing young woman who played flirtatiously with the idea of being demure. (This is the third aspect that might be identified concerning the popular culture milieu relevant to larrikin girls, to which I will return shortly: it revolved around stock character types.<sup>50</sup>) An example of a soubrette type played for a down-market audience may be found at Melbourne's Empire Music Hall in 1886. When a journalist from the *Argus* visited this venue one night, 'Miss Lettie Le Vyne's Star's Combination' held the stage: a few male performers and some young women in short skirts and coloured tights. One of these young women proved the success of the night when she led a gallery dominated by 'rorty' youths in a high-spirited chorus about a girl who claimed to be shy. One can imagine her working hard to project her voice to capture the attention of her restless audience in this chorus, warding off the potential hecklers, acting with an exaggerated pretence of coyness that no one was expected to believe:

Is there any harm in that?  
 Is there any harm in that?  
 By the glance of my eye  
 You can see I am shy  
 Is there any harm in that?!<sup>51</sup>

### Larrikin girls' self-representations

Knowing what burlesque performers did on stage can only take us so far when trying to think about the behaviours of larrikin girls in everyday life. It does not give us access to what Mary Ann M. was thinking when she went with Patrick Flynn to Redfern fire station. Nor does it reveal how Danby viewed her role in the Woolloomooloo Outrage. Even so, burlesque characterizations point to the fact that a young woman might gain a sense

of positive or defiant self-identity from acting disreputably. They also point to new ways in which we might interpret specific instances in which young women behaved in this way. In late 1892, for example, several girls indulged in an '*al fresco* skirt dance' before a group of male larrikins in inner-eastern Sydney.<sup>52</sup> Manning Clark would no doubt have interpreted this as a sexual appeal to the male onlookers, a wiggling of bottoms and flashing of come-hither smiles. Knowing it took place when the colonies were in the grip of 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' fever, it is more likely that the girls were enjoying the solidarity that came from a collective display of brazenness, letting rip when their parents' backs were turned.

The fact that popular performance styles revolved around stock character types is also useful when thinking about larrikin girls. Late nineteenth-century audiences focused their attention on how a performer worked with the conventions imposed by a certain character type, be it a plucky soubrette, a raucous chorus-girl or blackface minstrel buffoon. They recognized the skill involved when a performer managed to invest a stock type with idiosyncratic qualities, burlesquing it perhaps, or otherwise making it their own. This provides a model for imagining what larrikin girls were doing at moments when they acted disreputably in the presence of peers. They knew that sexualized stereotypes were imposed upon them by others, and so chose to play up to it, trying to give it their own 'spin', as it were.

By consciously acting the 'hussy', larrikin girls were also able to feel a measure of control over the way that others perceived them. One gets a sense of this from contemplating the behaviour of 18-year-old Norah Swan, a young Brisbane woman with larrikin connections, upon being fined for obscene language in the late 1880s. She 'bounced out of court with what was supposed to be a crushing "thank you" to the magistrate', presumably exaggerating the sway of her hips as she did so.<sup>53</sup> The same applies to a 15-year-old Melbourne girl labelled a 'brazen-faced hussy' in the press. She was sentenced to a year in a reformatory after staying away from home at night with male larrikins. Though her parents protested, she waved them away with a mannered insouciance. 'I'd rather live as I have been living than go home with them', she told the magistrate, 'defiantly swinging her bonnet' as she left the room.<sup>54</sup>

Larrikin girls who exhibited masculine qualities departed even more flagrantly from acceptable notions of femininity than their brazen-faced friends. Some may indeed have looked to male figures for inspiration rather than female ones. Maria Clements, the 'knuckle fighter' from Collingwood, may have fallen into this category. So might the young woman at Sydney's Shaftesbury Reformatory who boasted that she could 'fight with any man'.<sup>55</sup> Both these adolescent girls had something in common with the female youth involved in the 'scuttler' gangs of Manchester and Salford in the same period.<sup>56</sup> Others, though, may have been more fascinated by female boxers or burlesque 'boys'. Women playing boy parts in burlesques wore tight breeches to accentuate their feminine curves as they strutted 'manfully' on

the stage. Most female boxers wore tight breeches or fleshings with 'abbreviated skirts' in sideshows, a similar amalgam of masculine and feminine qualities.<sup>57</sup>

At the very least, the availability of these burlesque forms of self-representation in late nineteenth-century entertainments should encourage us to think flexibly about the way 'tough' larrikin girls related to gender. If they appropriated hypermasculine characteristics, trying to experience something of 'the credibility and power associated with hegemonic masculinity', there was a variety of ways in which they might present themselves.<sup>58</sup> Some may have modelled themselves directly on male figures when doing so; others on romping hoydens with a more overt sense of femininity.

The key point in this discussion is that thinking of young women working *with* sexualized and/or gendered stereotypes is different from reducing them *to* those types. The point is also to highlight the multiple ways in which they performed their disreputability – whether through conspiratorial humour, high-spirited romping with female friends or an exaggerated sassiness in court. When we think about a young woman performing as a 'hussy' in larrikin company we must also allow for the fact that she may well have presented herself differently in other social contexts. When she was standing on street corners, Frances Danby was known as 'Fanny', a name befitting a girl who perhaps traded saucy in-jokes with restless Woolloomooloo larrikins on street corners, working hard to turn them into allies rather than threatening hecklers. At the clothes factory, her female colleagues called her 'Cocky', adept with gossip, possibly tough – but most likely she acted in a more decorous fashion when her father appeared.

## Conclusion

Cultural historian Patrick Joyce has called the British music hall 'a laboratory of social style and self-definition in which both old ways and new possibilities were constantly explored'.<sup>59</sup> He said this in recognition of the fact that the British music hall featured performances playing stock character types in interesting ways. Something similar might be said of many other entertainments throughout the British world, burlesque among them. When it comes to marginalized girls, the statement is too optimistic. Popular performance culture did not offer them wonderful 'new possibilities' for self-definition and sociality. They were not in a position to liberate themselves from the gender-stereotypical discourses that cast them as hussies or prostitutes; nor could they alter the fact that the larrikin subculture was stridently masculinist and sexually predatory.

Larrikin girls remain troubling subjects: painfully vulnerable in some contexts; frighteningly tough in others; in others again, disturbingly complicit in male violence towards other women. At the very least, however, thinking about their attraction to brazen characterizations on the popular stage

offer us ways to afford them a measure of agency and self-assertion. These character types provided models for disorderly girls to make the best of the sexualized categories imposed upon them by their male associates and the wider public. Thinking about how they did so also helps us move beyond demeaning categories when we imagine them today.

## Notes

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4. *Brisbane Courier*, 18 January 1886, 5 ('prostitute'); 9 December 1882, 5 ('brazen-faced hussy'); *Collingwood Mercury*, 28 October 1880, 4 ('brazen-faced larrikinness'); *Bulletin* (Sydney), 17 August 1882, 5 ('leery-faced Sue'). For examples of disorderly girls being described via a sexualized vocabulary elsewhere in the British world see: Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood, 'The "Vicious Girl" and the "Street Corner Boy": Sexuality and the Gendered Delinquent in the Scottish Child-Saving Movement', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1994), 549–78.
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27. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 December 1890, 7.
28. See depositions of Elizabeth Orr and Marian Cornish, *R v Williams and Phillips (Murder)*. *R v Williams and Others (Rape)*, Clerk of the Peace, Central Criminal Court Sydney, 9/6702, SRNSW.
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44. Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 176.
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46. Clay Djubal, 'What Oh Tonight: The Methodology Factor and Pre-1930s Variety Theatre', vol. 2 (PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 2005), 270.
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48. *Bulletin*, 17 September 1892, 8; 24 September 1892, 6.
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## **Part VI**

# **Children's Empires and Material Cultures**

# 14

## Savage Instincts, Civilizing Spaces: The Child, the Empire and the Public Park, c. 1880–1914

*Ruth Colton*

British imperialism played a significant part in shaping the experience of childhood in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. This was not only true of those children – migrant and indigenous – living in British colonies, but also of those living in Britain. As David Gilbert and Felix Driver assert, Empire did not just happen ‘over there’, but was experienced ‘in the minds and practices of people within Europe’.<sup>1</sup> For children growing up across this period, the reality of the British world was etched into the landscapes they occupied throughout the day, into the books they read, the games they played and toys they played with. The public park was a particularly significant space in this regard. The so-called ‘Age of Empire’ corresponded with the most prolific period of park building Britain has ever witnessed. Among other factors, this sudden growth was a response to fears over Britain’s fragility as an imperial nation and a perceived degeneration of the population.<sup>2</sup> Children were a significant focus for park campaigners who saw the potential of the park as a place to shape the next generation of workers into active, upstanding British citizens, offering within the railings ‘a path to personal culture’.<sup>3</sup> Children played daily within park boundaries, bringing into the space their own toys and their own ideas. While public parks have been the subject of a growing body of academic research, children have rarely been mentioned.<sup>4</sup> This chapter will demonstrate how the experience of childhood in the late Victorian and Edwardian public park was defined, shaped and controlled by notions of Empire as embedded within the architecture of the park and in the actions and activities which took place there. It will address how the public park was a site for children to witness, learn about and be inspired by the British Empire, and will further argue that the park was a site where the prominent notion of children as ‘little savages’ requiring a civilizing influence was expressed and negotiated. Children, it will be demonstrated, were not merely passive recipients of instruction relating to their place in the world as British citizens of the future, but were

instead involved actively in the negotiation of imperial and colonial identities through their actions in the park. Engaging with park landscapes, children embodied and explored themes of the British Empire and their roles within it, and sometimes challenged them through non-normative modes of play.

In order to illustrate these arguments, two late Victorian parks have been chosen as case studies. These parks were selected to reflect the diversity of parks in Britain, offering an insight into the urban landscapes of Empire outside the metropole, which has already been subject to academic investigation.<sup>5</sup> Opened in 1884, Greenhead Park in Huddersfield was originally 30 acres in size before being extended during the interwar period to include bowling greens, tennis courts and play areas. Long campaigned for, the park represented to the townspeople a victory of civic engagement and local governance. The park quickly became a site for local participation in national events such as remembrance, coronations and royal visits. Whitworth Park, a small urban park in Manchester, was opened in 1890. An area which had been semi-rural in the 1840s was by the time of its inauguration densely populated, and the park itself was considered to be the closest open space to the city centre. For this reason it was deemed to be very important to the city, and was widely admired. Nicknamed 'Whitworth Children's Park' by its creators and the local press, the park was thought to be of special value to the local children. The park has been the centre of the Heritage Lottery Funded Whitworth Park Community Archaeology and History Project, spearheaded by the University of Manchester and the Friends of Whitworth Park.<sup>6</sup> Three seasons of geophysical surveys and excavation have revealed many of the long hidden features of the park as well as significant artefacts that shed light on past practices in the park. Some of these findings are evaluated below.

This chapter draws on both archaeology and history through an interdisciplinary approach. The development of the study of childhood within history has been discussed by the editors of this volume and will therefore not be repeated here. However, it may be useful to highlight similar developments within archaeology. Until very recently, children have been largely absent from archaeological analysis, and when they have appeared it has often been in order to explicate unexplained artefacts (for example miniaturized objects or figurines), or randomized artefact distributions.<sup>7</sup> Underlying this has been a sense that children were an 'unknowable component of past social groups'.<sup>8</sup> Building on the work of gendered critiques of the discipline,<sup>9</sup> however, recent developments in the field have argued for an understanding of children which recognizes them as 'actors and constructors of their own lives who act not simply intuitively, but initiate action by choice'.<sup>10</sup> This approach underpins the arguments of this chapter: children were not just the recipients of adult-directed notions of the British Empire, but were themselves involved in the interpretation and creation of imperialism and British identity at home. During the excavation, Whitworth Park

school children of varying ages participated, providing a unique insight into the interpretation of the park landscape and of the artefacts. The ability of children to remind adults of the strangeness and fascination of everyday spaces and objects is invaluable, particularly when investigating an era whose material culture seems so similar to our own.<sup>11</sup> Engaging with historical documents, including fictional and non-fictional evidence, as well as postcard images, is also central in helping to situate the material evidence within its historical context and hence avoid universalizing past experiences.

## Empire and architecture

In order to investigate the way Empire influenced the day-to-day experience of children in urban parks, it is useful to begin by examining the park landscapes. Built structures, monuments and planting all reveal the imperial design of the spaces; however, the fact that these structures have often survived into the present day has perhaps had the effect of making them underappreciated as objects of study, a sentiment echoed by archaeologist Joanna Brück in her recent work on Irish parks.<sup>12</sup> This prevents us from recognizing the impact of these manufactured landscapes, which at the time were unique, modern and significant to those who used them. For children visiting the parks the architecture and planting may well have contrasted strongly with that of the other spaces they frequented. For this reason the impact of these aspects of the landscape would have played a significant part in the experience of the space.

The architecture of the buildings and structures was usually eclectic, assimilating various architectural traditions within the one space. Gothic, Rustic and Classical architectural structures sat side by side, a blend which can be seen as both an expression of dissatisfaction with modern, industrial conditions, and also a means through which to reinforce, justify and strengthen notions of nationalism and Empire. Charles Dellheim states that Gothic architecture 'presented a highly idealized vision of medieval society'.<sup>13</sup> Rustic architecture also tapped into this idealization of the past, being as William Robinson, the influential landscape designer, put it, 'very suggestive of rural life'.<sup>14</sup> However, this was not only nostalgia at work but also an attempt to express a sense of 'Englishness'. Dellheim argues that the Middle Ages formed 'the crucible in which provincial and national identities had been forged, an exemplar of aesthetic values as well as national symbols worthy of preservation'.<sup>15</sup> This expression of national identity rendered visible in the architecture of the park was pastoral, religious, feudal, chivalric and imperial. The use of the Classical style further underlined a sense of imperial longevity and legitimacy, both as a visual reference to the large estates of the landed gentry (many of which had Classical-style terraces), but also to the great empires of Ancient Greece and Rome.

The entrances to the parks set the tone for the spaces inside. In both Greenhead and Whitworth Parks large and elaborate wrought-iron gates were flanked by tall stone pillars. In Whitworth Park, these pillars were topped with lions wearing crowns and holding shields. The lions stood as national symbols of England and the monarchy, the crowns signifying power and rule, and the shields alluding to defence and military strength. This served to remind those entering the park that this was a space subject to the regulating authority of the British monarch. Immediately reinforcing this point in Whitworth Park was an elaborate eight-metre high statue of King Edward VII, created by sculptor John Cassidy in 1913. The statue depicted Edward with his coronation orb and sceptre, wearing his Order of the Garter ceremonial robes – the emphasis on chivalry highlighting the link between the modern monarchy and its mediaeval roots.<sup>16</sup> Initial designs had intended the statue to be placed in the city centre, but the location at Whitworth Park was deemed more appropriate in offering an aspect towards the Royal Infirmary, opened by the King himself in 1909. In this way the statue served as a reminder not only of an abstract authority but also of local patronage.

Once inside the gates of the parks, the paths led on to reveal a number of unique spaces. Gazing straight ahead in Greenhead Park, the visitor was faced with a long promenade leading towards a grand raised terrace, topped with Classical columns and later the site of a First World War memorial. Viewing platforms like this were popular in parks, and from the summit visitors were able to reflect on the landscape below them. Denis Cosgrove highlights the imperial undertones of this act, arguing that the term 'landscape' was derived from a particular way of representing space which privileged the eye, and therefore the voyeur, as the dominant master over a space whose form varied depending on its distance from the centre of this visual world.<sup>17</sup> Employing this 'perspective' the viewer could physically appropriate a particular area of land as territory, controlled and owned by the visual mastery of the person viewing it.<sup>18</sup> The idea of claiming land through observing it was critical to the colonial enterprise. In the park the visitor could employ these viewing platforms to become 'petty imperialists', an idea to which we shall return.

One particularly significant built park structure was the bandstand. While the style of the Whitworth Park bandstand was less elaborate and more rustic in style, the bandstand in Greenhead Park was highly elaborate and oriental. Edward Said has highlighted how such representation was connected not just with the undoubted Victorian fascination with Eastern culture but also with a hegemonic system of categorizing and homogenizing cultures, some of which were colonies.<sup>19</sup> In other words, by utilizing oriental styles in park architecture, the designers were not just expressing admiration for the forms, but were in addition making a statement about Britain's cultural dominance within the world. In both cases the octagonal-shaped

structures were created as focal points for visitors. In Greenhead Park this feature could be viewed up close by standing on another Classical-style terrace above an arbour next to one of the lakes. In another appropriation of culture, this lakeside arbour initially contained a Roman altar from the fort at Slack. This was joined in the park by various artefacts from more recent history, including three decorative pillars from the late eighteenth century, a grindstone and 'a very fine model of a recumbent lion'.<sup>20</sup>

Lakes – usually utilizing naturalistic shapes – were extremely popular additions to parks. Surrounding the lake in Whitworth Park were more built structures: an ornamental pavilion, boat house and a weather observatory. While landscape design was at this time moving towards a more natural style popularized by Robinson, parks often embraced the 'gardenesque' style of the mid-century.<sup>21</sup> The use of non-native plants as features surrounded by native planting, as well as a sustained use of flowerbeds, represented man's dominance over nature, in particular the ability of British gardeners to grow non-native species in British conditions.<sup>22</sup> These feature plants were labelled in Whitworth Park, mirroring the way in which cultural artefacts from other countries were labelled and displayed in museums. The planting in this way acted in a similar manner to the architecture expressing Britain's cultural hegemony in the world. Brightly coloured flowers, deemed exotic and rare, were produced in the park greenhouses in order to be planted out in flowerbed displays which celebrated national and local events.<sup>23</sup> The use of these exotic plants in celebration once again links the park with the wider imperial project.

As has been suggested, the influence of Britain's empire resonated strongly in the architecture and planting of the park landscapes. Along with articulating narratives of British cultural hegemony, park design was carefully organized to ensure the visitor experienced these narratives in person. In other words, the park offered an embodied experience of colonial rule. Regulated and controlled by the landscape and by the park authorities, the experience of the park for children was one in which they were subject to the dominant power of others. This was despite the fact that they were informed that the park in fact belonged to them. A *Manchester Guardian* commentator observing children in Whitworth Park noted that 'they are simple folk, and their horizon is limited. Some of them think the park belongs to the keepers, whom very properly, they regard with awe. When told that it is... in fact their own park, they shrink away, as from a truth too great for contemplation'.<sup>24</sup> The imagery of the park keeper as a benevolent peacekeeper, living in and guarding over the landscape on behalf of an immature people is instantly recognizable as a trope of Victorian colonialism. While the park offered visitors an embodied experience of the British Empire, for children this could occasionally position them as the colonial 'other', rather than the colonizer.

## Imperial acts

Public parks throughout Britain played an important role as sites for local involvement in national events. In June 1902, celebrations for the coronation of Edward VII were held nationwide. Many of the festivities took place in local parks and involved local children. In Manchester, 53 bands – including children from the Band of Hope temperance movement – undertook to play continuous music throughout the day in the parks. Some of the city parks were decorated, along with police stations, libraries and public baths, thus linking parks symbolically with other important Victorian institutions. Trees were planted in all parks and many also hosted maypole dancing for girls and physical drill for boys.<sup>25</sup> Around 114,000 boys and girls also received commemorative medals, boxes of chocolates and a celebratory breakfast, their involvement and feeding becoming part of the performance itself.<sup>26</sup> One such commemorative medal was found during the excavation of Whitworth Park, depicting the King and Queen on one side and the word 'Coronation' on the reverse. The fact that this medal was lost or left by its owner whilst in the park suggests that Whitworth Park was either a site for specific events, or was used by local residents as part of their celebrations.

In 1913, the royal visit of George V and Queen Mary to Huddersfield saw them tour Greenhead Park. In order to facilitate the chosen route of the monarch, a new straight path was created leading from one of the minor entrances down towards the terrace. This path, renamed 'Kings Walk', remained in place after the event, forever etching the royal visit onto the landscape.<sup>27</sup> The straightness of this path is also significant, mirroring the urban transformations taking place in the imperial capitals of Europe, such as the Haussmannization of Paris and the monumentalization of Brussels under Léopold II. Claire Hancock argues that the creation of wide, straight boulevards, 'the Agora of our Athens' transformed Paris into a spectacle of imperialism.<sup>28</sup> This was performed for the people through 'promenades, panoramas, exhibitions, official processions and urban events'.<sup>29</sup> The creation of a boulevard in Greenhead Park imbued the procession of George V and Queen Mary with imperial grandeur, allowing the people of Huddersfield to experience individually the spectacle of British imperialism.

The fanfare of these events was also significant to the many children who took part in or witnessed them. Outside the classroom, the park was likely to be the main site of direct engagement with the British Empire. During the royal visit to Huddersfield, access to Greenhead Park was limited, yet 11,000 school children were placed along the pathways, giving them particularly favourable views and ensuring that they themselves were part of the show. The *Leeds Mercury* wrote that the presence of children from the Deaf and Dumb Institute offered 'another spectacle equally moving'.<sup>30</sup> As mentioned previously, landscapes and their architecture are subject to 'motional understandings', that is, they are associated with particular

feelings.<sup>31</sup> It is likely that the embodied experiences of these imperial events were coloured by the fact that they were encountered within the park landscape, a space associated with fun and joy. In this way the visit of royalty, or even the commemoration of the war dead, could be experienced positively. The mass commemoration is especially interesting. The use of parks to house memorial structures like the South African Wars' 'fallen heroes' statue in Greenhead Park, the site of an annual commemoration service until the First World War, may have led to a positive association between play, excitement and battle. While it is important not to overstate this point (as after all children were exposed to many other competing associations in their day-to-day experiences), it is not hard to see how the elaborate spectacles surrounding the unveiling of a war memorial added to the sense that it was good and glorious to die for one's country. Literary critics have highlighted how boys' literature increasingly extolled the virtues of Empire throughout the latter part of the century and in the years preceding the First World War. Patrick Dunae describes how the militaristic side of this imperialistic fervour, present in publications such as *Chums* (1892–1934) and the short-lived but popular *Boys of Our Empire* (1900–03), celebrated 'the warlike character of the British "race" and stressed the need for maintaining the empire at all cost'.<sup>32</sup> Noted children's author Gordon Stables extolled the sentiment that war was both a glorious and a necessary part of the British Empire, writing that 'What we have we mean to hold,/ Though pretended friend at home may scowl,/ Though blood be shed,/ And men fall dead, And Savage foes around us howl'.<sup>33</sup> The war memorials in public parks were symbols of the bloodshed and men's lives lost to the imperial cause. As such they formed part of a cultural project to glorify and promote the self-sacrifice of young men for Empire.

Not all children treated the statues in the park with the expected reverence. By the time war broke out in 1914, the Edward VII statue in Whitworth Park was surrounded by flowerbeds and low railings in an attempt to prevent children climbing up the pedestal.<sup>34</sup> By 1922 children were still being reprimanded for anti-social practices, activities which had become increasingly severe if accusations of children throwing mud and stones at the statue are to be believed.<sup>35</sup> This activity falls outside the period addressed here, but reflects a more long-term systematic disobedience by children which seemed to be directed specifically towards this sculpture, rather than towards the others in the park. It is likely that since Edward's reign was short-lived and the sculpture was erected following his death, children in the area were largely ignorant of his accomplishments. Furthermore, by being situated directly inside the gate in such a dominant fashion, the figure of Edward may have come to represent the authorities dominating children's lives, hence rendering the statue vulnerable to attack by youthful patrons annoyed by adult interference. Resistance directed towards the sculpture was perhaps easier than direct disobedience towards the park keepers, the City Council, and

parents or teachers, or even towards the more powerful – yet more distant – bodies of the Government and the monarchy itself. In this way the park architecture became a medium for the negotiation of authority and the expression of childhood identity.

One of the underlying factors in the creation of public parks was the notion of rational recreation. Peter Bailey writes how physical exercise was deemed 'an important agent for moral and social discipline'.<sup>36</sup> Green spaces provided a setting for this to take place. During the early history of the parks, promenading was portrayed as an ideal family activity, encouraged through the creation of circular pathways which intersected the landscape.<sup>37</sup> However, by the 1890s games such as cricket and football, along with athletics, were increasingly being promoted for boys, while tennis, gymnastics and dance were deemed appropriate for girls.<sup>38</sup> Football in particular was encouraged for working-class boys as a means by which to impart middle-class values of 'health, endurance, courage, judgement, and above all else a sense of fair play'.<sup>39</sup> As Montague Shearman wrote in 1888, 'the game is manly and fit for Englishmen; it puts courage into their hearts to meet any enemy in the face'.<sup>40</sup> Despite the popularity of these sports many parks chose not to offer specific facilities for playing these games. This was partly due to a lack of space, but also perhaps to an unwillingness to encourage 'rowdy behaviour'. The increased interest in physical exercise for children was accounted for by a view of children as the 'embodiment both of all past history and as an expression of future possibility'.<sup>41</sup> As 'recapitulated' exponents of human civilization, children were thought to require the facility to run around and to use up excess energy, while as future citizens, their physical and moral fitness were deemed essential for the continued dominance of Britain on a global scale.<sup>42</sup> Parks aimed to satisfy both requirements. Newspaper commentators praised Whitworth Park for having 'as much green turf as children who are tired of straight walks could wish for',<sup>43</sup> as well as logs deliberately placed to provide 'mild gymnastic training'.<sup>44</sup> One observer stressed how the children did not suspect that the logs they climbed over were anything more than fun objects, implying that if the children knew that their activities were fulfilling an adult objective they may not have wanted to take part. This dissonance between adults' objectives and children's motivations is symptomatic of recreation in the park. Parks were designed to facilitate particular forms of behaviour, often with specific notions of imperial endeavour in mind, and children interpreted and used these designs in their own way. Sometimes, unwittingly or not, they fulfilled the design objectives of the parks, and at other times they subverted them in order to satisfy their own purpose.

By contrast with more disorderly practices, one of the adult-sanctioned activities that children could participate in while in the park was Scouting. The park offered a space in which groups like the Boys' Brigade and the Scouts could practice their endeavours and promote their activities through



Figure 14.1 Boys' Brigade, 1st Leith Company Battalion inspection in front of the bandstand in Victoria Park (1908)

Courtesy the 1st Leith Boys' Brigade Company Ex-Members' Association.

displays and drills. As Troy Boone points out, while Scouting is firmly associated with anti-urbanism and a nostalgic view of the countryside, it seeks to train 'Scouts to become well-prepared *urban* adventurers'.<sup>45</sup> The park as an urban interpretation of nature seems to have been the perfect space for this training. Even when the cost of joining these groups was prohibitive, their presence in the park and the ubiquity of Baden-Powell's accessible manual, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (1908), meant that children were able to participate in the movement. Many groups organized specific activities and inspections in the local parks, as in the photograph of the Boys' Brigade assembled in front of the bandstand in Victoria Park in Edinburgh (Figure 14.1). Children also used the parks as spaces to practice associated skills, participating in make-believe play that turned the parkland into a figurative imperial frontier.

While it is often assumed that girls had no role in these activities, Tammy Proctor highlights how girls embraced Scouting enthusiastically, creating their own groups, officially or otherwise. They were lured by the chance to participate in 'the colonial fantasy life of tracking, camping, outdoor cooking, and adventure that Scouting offered'.<sup>46</sup> They revelled in the chance to be tomboys, escaping into a make-believe world in which they were offered adventures not available to them in real life. Within the park railings children were given the space, landscape and freedom to engage in an imaginary

play that may have been impossible at home or in school for fear of attempts at regulation. Girls Scouting was seen as problematic, jeopardizing a girl's 'womanliness, gentleness, and nurturing' which were essential characteristics in the imperial mothers of tomorrow.<sup>47</sup> The park was supervised and yet offered space and opportunity to interact with others. Children could play within eyesight of adults and yet out of earshot. For girls this may have allowed them the opportunity to play at being 'boyish'.

Boone argues that at the heart of the Scouting endeavour was the prevention of the decline of the British Empire.<sup>48</sup> It sought to achieve this by instilling middle-class values in working-class boys, whilst engaging them in surveillance against other members of the working classes. In this way the 'savagery' present in children could be civilized by the middle classes, whilst also preventing an 'animalistic regression suffered as a result of identification with working-class urban culture'.<sup>49</sup> The public park complemented this programme, its proprietors possessing similar attitudes towards the spread of middle-class values, facilitated through the provision of ideal spaces for the surveillance, practice and implementation of moral codes. While in the parks, children frequently came into contact with both peers and adults from different backgrounds. No other institution of the time offered such opportunities for comingling. While children undoubtedly regulated other children, one anecdote from Greenhead Park illustrates how they could subvert the ideal of the Scouting project. In 1894, a complaint was posted in the form of a letter to the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, stating how youths and young girls in Greenhead Park found amusement by making 'very personal remarks about ladies and gentlemen passing... if they hurt or annoy anyone, their object is attained'.<sup>50</sup> The young people engaged in this anti-social behaviour were referred to as 'youths', implying a social inferiority backed up by the author's presumption that their parents had not accompanied them. Going against the natural order, in this instance the young people in the park were surveying rather than being surveyed. This deliberate inversion of the accepted social hierarchy was not just deemed to be annoying by the complainant, but also significant in civic terms, as revealed in the author's pseudonym 'Pro Bono Publico'.<sup>51</sup>

### Playing the colonizer

While the surveying of people could prove problematic for children, the surveying of the park landscape itself was less so. As mentioned previously, the park offered opportunities for visitors to impart ownership of the park through the act of taking it in from various vantage points. For children this allowed them to 'claim' for themselves areas of the park, such as the Mound in Whitworth Park or the ground around the lakeside. These spaces are linked to children in the observations of adults writing in newspapers as well as in the images produced for postcards, both by the number of children



Figure 14.2 Children at the lakeside in Whitworth Park (1914)  
 Courtesy Bruce Anderson (personal collection).

present in these spaces, and also by the way in which they could ‘discover’ these less accessible areas.<sup>52</sup> The region around the lake in Whitworth Park, for example, in common with lakes in other parks, was surrounded by an area of hard standing, separated from the path by a low railing. Children laid claim to this space by climbing over the barrier, an act which was perhaps deemed inappropriate for an adult. The postcard image in Figure 14.2 captures the moment when a child crosses this barrier; when considered alongside the substantial evidence of children’s presence at the lakeside, this suggests that adults were willing to indulge children in this exploration. In this way local children could claim ownership over territory regarded as their own.

The varying terrains in the park fuelled further imaginative play, providing areas to be conquered by young adventurers and armies. Richard Jefferies captures this act of imaginary prospecting in his book *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* (1882). Here Bevis and his friend Mark play in the woods near their home, fighting savages and ‘Indians’ and conquering territory along the banks of a stream which acts in turns as the Nile, the Amazon and the Mississippi.<sup>53</sup> Childhood memories of playing in Greenhead Park contained in a letter to the *Huddersfield Examiner* in 1920 describe a similar commandeering of the park landscape and architecture to employ in imaginary play. The author notes that:

the terrace was a stone terrace and tangle, but the house, palace or mansion belonging to it was a house not built with hands . . . It could be any style of architecture you wished . . . It could bristle with turrets and towers

and castellated battlements, green shutters and striped awnings, hanging baskets and hoisted flags... The rough rocks behind the terrace could be furniture, or horses, or bicycles, at will.<sup>54</sup>

The imaginary ownership and occupation of the park landscape was an additional factor in the childhood experience of the park. Children could conquer, dominate and take ownership of the space in a way perhaps unknown to adults and certainly difficult if not impossible to regulate.

This facet of childhood activity is especially interesting when we consider the toys brought from home into the parks. The excavations in Whitworth Park uncovered toys which had been dropped in the park, either accidentally or on purpose. A lead toy soldier (with still visible blue painted trousers and a broken sword) was found perfectly preserved in the lakebed, along with a doll's hairbrush and part of a tea set. Fragments of a doll's arms were also found in an area known as the Mound, a grassy knoll popular with children. Such toys were often gendered and reflected the dominant modes of imperialism at the time. Soldiers and dolls were popular examples in this regard. Offering a vision of militaristic and orderly boyhood on the one hand, and compassionate and mothering girlhood on the other, these toys were popular with adults and children alike. The production of cheap versions of toys as well as a booming second-hand market meant that play objects like these could be afforded by many parents of children who used the parks. The production of toys to be played with alongside a doll (such as the hairbrush or tea sets – the latter also linked to imperial networks – also found through excavation) offered cheaper play objects to prolong the activities. These games complemented the idealized vision of girls as future mothers of the Empire, caring for their dolls and providing sustenance and education to them. Furthermore, it was not only the modes of play facilitated by these toys which offered an imperial vision of idealized childhood. In 1893, William Britain set up a north London factory pioneering a technique for producing hollow-cast soldiers.<sup>55</sup> Prior to this, the majority of toy soldiers had been imported from France and Germany. Within three years of the new lead soldier going on sale, some 200,000 toy figures were leaving the factory each week.<sup>56</sup> Brown suggests that by 1914 some 10 or 11 million toy soldiers were being produced annually for the domestic market.<sup>57</sup> This British economic success story, operating under the especially dependable name of 'Britains', added a patriotic edge to buying and playing with toys.

The park encouraged variations in how children played with the toys they took there. While many children undoubtedly enjoyed playing the games expected of them, they may also have adapted the games to suit their own agendas. The fact that both the doll and its associated play objects and the toy soldier were *excavated* from Whitworth Park suggests that these agendas did not match those of the adults who provided them with the toys in

the first place. Laurie Wilkie demonstrates how this may be represented in the archaeological record in her reading of a 1920–22 garbage pit in Santa Monica, California.<sup>58</sup> The smashed porcelain dolls' heads found, of which there were at least five, represent not just carelessness but perhaps a deliberate act of breaking and destroying a toy which was intended to provoke nurturing in its owner. In Whitworth Park, excavations revealed part of a ceramic broken doll's arm or leg. While it is not clear how this was broken, it is perhaps an unusual find given that china dolls were expensive, precious items and it was possible to have a broken limb fixed at a doll's hospital or else at home.<sup>59</sup> As Formanek-Brunell and Wilkie both highlight, it was not unknown for dolls beyond repair to be given elaborate funerals, signifying their worth to their owners.<sup>60</sup> That the limb was discarded completely in this case suggests a lack of care on the part of its owner, which could suggest an intentional or purely incidental subversion of expected play. While it is possible that the toy soldier met a similar end to the doll (as, after all, his sword was broken), it is also possible that he was lost out of carelessness. Children playing often create imaginary worlds in which a toy lives and acts as controlled by the child. While a grand battle on the scale described in H.G. Wells' *Little Wars* (1913) may not have been possible in a park, toy soldiers still offered the potential for military conquest over a territory.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, a single soldier may have stood sentinel over a territory conquered previously and subsequently moved on from, representing in this way the figure of colonial rule in an imaginary landscape rapidly forgotten at the end of play.

## Conclusion

Late Victorian and Edwardian public parks were spaces in which the British Empire was rendered visible, tangible and meaningful to those who visited. Parks were not only filled with architecture and planting which referenced aspects of Britain's imperial identity, but they were also a means by which visitors could culturally colonize and assimilate foreign and exotic items through labelling and display. To survey the parks from one of the many viewpoints empowered the visitor to dominate and conquer the landscape. In this way the park offered visitors an embodied experience of Empire. The sentiment behind this regime often situated children as a colonial 'other' rather than the colonizer. Events such as coronations, royal visits or the unveiling of statues commemorating 'fallen heroes' or figures of imperial power provided children with the opportunity to become imperial actors, at least in terms of spectacle. However, the displays of gymnastics, dancing and drill that they performed positioned them as exotics, much like the flower beds also provided for visual consumption. The encouragement of athletics and military-inspired group activities further revealed the ways in which children were thought to require training in order to become part of

the imperial enterprise. In their own practices of play in the park, children assimilated and engaged with explicit imperial messages, but also set about negotiating and redefining their own interpretations. The park was closely regulated and supervised, yet by treating activities like Scouting as imaginary play, as well as by engaging directly with the park landscape and the toys they brought into it, children could subvert adult-imposed identification of them as 'savages' and become 'petty imperialists' of their own making, regardless of the imposed social norms of class and gender. This could lead them into trouble as they attempted to express their own imperial identities in a manner visible to adults, whether by climbing on a statue perhaps viewed as irrelevant to their own experiences, or by subverting their instruction in class surveillance.

## Notes

1. David Gilbert and Felix Driver, 'Capital and Empire: Geographies of Imperial London', *GeoJournal*, vol. 51, no. 1–2 (2000), 24.
2. See for example Hazel Conway, *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
3. Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872–1989* (London: Routledge, 2003), 3.
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# 15

## Memorializing Colonial Childhoods: From the Frontier to the Museum

*Kate Darian-Smith*

In the early 1940s, Felicity Clemons, the wife of a Tasmanian doctor, embarked on the task of 'improving' a small dolls' house her daughter had received as a gift. This endeavour spanned four decades, and revealed Clemons' interest in colonial history. The daughter of Sir Geoffrey Syme, managing director of the *Age* newspaper, Clemons had grown up in Melbourne and had exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria.<sup>1</sup> She directed her artistic skills to her Georgian dolls' house, Pendle Hall, which gradually acquired 21 rooms over four storeys. Its elaborate interiors were arranged with finely wrought period furniture, and hundreds of tiny, handmade objects: foodstuffs, ornaments, books and other household items. By the 1970s, Clemons was operating a private museum in a restored colonial building in Westbury, widely known as Tasmania's 'most English' town. On display were her collection of children's toys and other memorabilia, with Pendle Hall as the centrepiece. A local tourist attraction for many years, and well known to doll's house enthusiasts around the world, Pendle Hall was recently donated to Museum Victoria, and its rooms and their contents can now be viewed by the public online.<sup>2</sup>

The attraction of any dolls' house lies in its scaled-down version of the world, and its capacity for re-enacting family and social relations in miniature. As Susan Stewart has argued, the miniature as a form is 'linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history' so as to present 'a diminutive, and thereby manipulable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination'.<sup>3</sup> Following the First World War, which ended the domination by German manufacturers of the production of quality toys, a revival occurred in Britain of the dolls' house as an educational and commemorative form, intended for mass viewing. Renowned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens was commissioned to design the 'ultimate' dolls' house for Queen Mary, drawing on the talents of 1,500 artists and manufacturers. His inclusion of electricity and the latest modern conveniences provided a glimpse of luxurious living, and emphasized the superiority of

British manufacturing and its dependency on the raw materials and markets of Empire. As a model of a modern home suitable for the monarchy, Queen Mary's Dolls' House was originally exhibited at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924–25, where an estimated 1.6 million people viewed it.<sup>4</sup>

In colonial societies, similar 'display' dolls' houses could assume a complementary function, constituting through their built form an ideological and historicized representation of the material and symbolic ties to the former British homeland but also asserting a sense of national belonging. Pendle Hall evokes an English country house in the 1740s, some decades before the Australian continent was 'discovered' by the British exploration voyages of Captain James Cook. However, the date and place of its production and exhibition situates Pendle Hall as an Australian dolls' house, framed by direct and indirect relationships between Britain and its empire. This can be seen, for instance, in its name. Pendle Hall refers to a Syme family property in rural Victoria, on the Australian mainland – which in turn was named in memory of Pendle Hill, Lancashire, a natural feature near the birthplace of Clemons' English-born mother.

The second half of the twentieth century, as Clemons embarked upon her project, was one of increasing interest in national history and heritage. In Britain, this included a yearning for the confidence and economic strength associated with the former empire. One aspect of this heightened engagement with history was realized in a 'heritage crusade' to protect 'stately homes' (like Pendle Hall) from demolition, while another was the impulse to collect and display everyday objects from the past.<sup>5</sup> In Australia, international influences such as the National Trust in Britain, and a swell of local enthusiasm in the lead-up to the bicentenary of British settlement in 1988, re-invigorated interest in the nation's historical origins. This was evident in the conservation of colonial buildings, in wider recognition of Indigenous histories and in the collection and exhibition of the colonial settler folklore – not least that of children.<sup>6</sup>

Within this wider social context, Pendle Hall can be interpreted as a multi-faceted artefact tied to place, family, nation and Empire. It recreates, at a literal level, the vanished lifestyle of the British upper class in Georgian England. But its production in Tasmania alludes to an increasing historical consciousness about colonial history in Australia, which could be manifested in a pride in and nostalgia for distant and continuing ties with Britain. Pendle Hall is a monument to the individual artistic vision of Clemons, but also is representative of the skill of women more generally. As a dolls' house, it is associated with the play of children and the cultural heritage of childhood, but also with adult creativity and appreciation, thus blurring the boundaries between the material culture *of* children and the material culture *for* children. This distinction is often opaque. Children may subvert or refashion things made for them by adults, just as adults may appropriate children's objects; one commentator has even claimed that women involved

in the making of miniature dolls and dolls' houses have entered a 'second childhood'.<sup>7</sup>

As artefact and memorial, Pendle Hall provides the starting point for this chapter's exploration of the ways children's histories have been recognized in public commemorative contexts in the former white settler colonies of the British world. Australia, Canada and New Zealand comprise my case studies in this regard. Although the ideological and social understanding of the child and the expectations of what childhood entailed were circulated across the British world, distinct historical, geographical and institutional specificities were as influential in determining the realities of children's lives in different colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Whether on the colonial frontier or in the contemporary museum, the histories of children can be traced through objects, texts, visual images, commemorative memorials and other forms of cultural heritage to reveal a multitude of experiences. These include those of the treasured middle-class child, who would have played with dolls and their houses. But they also encompass experiences of hardship and abuse, particularly of children who were institutionalized, removed from their parents and sent as child migrants from Britain to the colonies. This chapter explores how the experiences of children have been publicly memorialized, if at all, with a focus on white settler children. Indeed, children across the British world were almost entirely erased from public statuary or other memorial forms during the Victorian era, with the exception of private gravestones.

For much of the twentieth century, the representation of children and childhood in the commemorative landscape has remained muted, despite some democratization of memorial practice that has seen greater recognition of the histories of women or families. It was not until the 1980s, with new radical practices in museology and social history and a shift to vernacular memorial making, that the historical experiences of children have been inserted more centrally into the collective remembering of the past in Australia and other ex-British settler colonies. This has involved greater interest in the objects and histories of childhood, and the collection and display of children's material culture. By the twenty-first century, contemporary perceptions of the loss of childhood and the 'adultification' of children's culture itself – whether this be in clothing, toys or consumer choices – have also contributed to the use of the past as a counterpoint and even a model for the present.<sup>8</sup>

## **Children on colonial frontiers**

By the nineteenth century, a repertoire of popular and formalized rhetoric and imagery that highlighted imperial relations was widely employed throughout the British world. This symbolic rendering of power, racial and economic relations was often presented within a familial framework that

served to reinforce the distinguishing features of each colony, but also their similarities. The visual representation of Britannia (often personified by Queen Victoria), flanked by her loyal 'children' of India and the white settler colonies was an allegorical reminder of imperial kinship, including between the colonial siblings, and appeared widely in cultural forms ranging from commemorative medals, allegorical sculptures and monumental paintings to advertising and cartoons.<sup>9</sup> Through such imagery, British colonies (and the United States) were constructed as 'young' nations, free from the burdens and the civilities of the old world in Europe, but nonetheless beholden to it. In Australia, for instance, overlapping imperial and national frameworks drew upon the metaphor of the white child to represent Australia as a 'child-like' nation that was 'growing up' and seeking greater independence from Britain. In the nationalist stirrings from the 1880s, such depictions included that of a vulnerable and innocent fair-haired girl, or the more worldly 'Little Boy from Manly', a cartoon figure in the radical newspaper, the *Bulletin*.<sup>10</sup> In Canada, the British Empire's largest patriotic women's organization, established in 1900 and still operating as a charitable body today, took on this filial nomenclature as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire.<sup>11</sup>

In reality, white colonial children across the British world could be convicts or migrants, workers, students and members of families and communities – though these roles were not mutually exclusive. Children experienced the same challenges, privations and material comforts as adults, with their circumstances as equally determined by factors of class, gender and race.<sup>12</sup> Although children had some autonomy, their lives were closely constrained by the adults and institutions responsible for their care: parents, employers, teachers, clergy and the state. Child convicts were transported to the Australian colonies, including the 3,000 or so accommodated at Point Puer Boys' Prison at Port Arthur in Van Diemen's Land, the first purpose-built reformatory for young offenders in the British Empire.<sup>13</sup> However, the majority of children migrating from Britain to the white settler colonies did so as 'free' migrants with their families. As John Tosh asserts, 'family units comprising parents and offspring were the basic building blocks of new communities in Britain's overseas colonies', and were supported by assisted migration schemes.<sup>14</sup> Children comprised around 30–40 per cent of family migration, and their labour was crucial in the establishment of colonial towns and rural properties alike. By 1861, almost half of the population of colonial Sydney were children aged under 12.<sup>15</sup>

Settler children were vulnerable to disease, and in the early colonial period there was a high incidence of accidental death from fires, drowning and a host of other tragic incidents. Infants and small children accounted for over half of the deaths on government migrant ships, and the 'common tragedy' of infant and child mortality remained high until the late nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The most frequent, and poignant, reminders of the lives of colonial children across the British world can be found in their early death. Many

poorer families could not afford a burial stone, so their children were buried in unmarked graves, while others were barred from consecrated ground on the basis of race or religion. Today, the lonely graves of small children are present in town and family cemeteries throughout the former British Empire, a testament in stone to the vulnerability of frontier life.

Imperial Britain was saturated with products and ideas that came from the colonies, with the reverse the case in colonial societies.<sup>17</sup> For both the metropole and its peripheries, however, the frontier was a key material and imaginative site in the settlement of the British Empire: a culturally contested liminal space between what was known, and what was – at least from the perspective of the colonizers – an unknown new world. Theorized as a ‘contact’ zone, the frontier was the space of negotiation between the British colonizers and indigenous nations for access to land and resources.<sup>18</sup>

Despite many similarities, the experiences of British world children living in frontier locations differed. From the late sixteenth century in North America, thousands of white settlers (including women and children) were kidnapped by Native Americans as spoils of war. While many captive children did not live to adulthood, others were absorbed into their new culture or sometimes returned as young adults to white society. The circulation of hundreds of literary and autobiographical captivity narratives was important in framing cross-racial relations in the United States and Canada, but these narratives were also read more widely in Britain and in further outposts of Empire.<sup>19</sup> In South Africa and New Zealand, there were also accounts of white women and children being taken captive, as the well-worn frontier narrative was transposed to a new location.<sup>20</sup>

The situation differed markedly in Australia. Indigenous Australians were the saviours of Europeans who had wandered into the bush or were shipwrecked, rather than their captors, even if the threat of such captivity was occasionally conjured as a rationale for settler violence.<sup>21</sup> Instead, the figure of the lost child was the dominant image of frontier danger in the Australian colonies, and based on newspaper reports it was a relatively frequent occurrence. Although North American settler children did, of course, become separated from their families or were lost on the prairie, it was the ‘captive child’ who constituted ‘the image of childhood’ at the heart of the national mythology of the American and Canadian frontier.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, it is the ‘lost child’ who is commemorated in Australian culture.

The two most significant memorials in Australia to children in the colonial era are to those who were ‘lost’ in Victoria during the 1860s, as dense bushland was being cleared for cultivation. In the first incident, near the town of Horsham, nine-year-old Jane Duff was celebrated as a heroine when she cared for two younger brothers until their rescue after nine days alone in the bush. In the second incident, at Daylesford, the bodies of three young boys were found curled together in a hollow tree some months after they had wandered from home. A stone plinth, funded by public subscription,

was erected in the Daylesford cemetery at the time of the boys' death. Commemoration of both incidents has continued for well over a century. 'Lost in the bush' stories first featured as cautionary tales for schoolchildren in the 1890s, but when the Duff story was published in the Victorian school reader of 1930 it became widely known. By the early twentieth century, as Australians looked back on a pioneering past that was still within living memory, 'lost children' were one element in the narrative of nationhood. The 1980s, with a renewed interest in colonial history prompted by the Australian Bicentennial, saw the beginning of several retrospective additions (a named highway, a park, a walking track) to the commemorative landscape for the Duff children and the Daylesford boys.<sup>23</sup>

Despite a rich and resonant historical landscape of memorials to Empire and national experiences, there is a remarkable scarcity of memorials to colonial children in Australia. This situation is echoed in New Zealand and Canada.<sup>24</sup> The presence of children is almost exclusively encompassed within family and community memorials or historic sites. There are, for instance, less than 100 entries cross-listed to children on the Canadian Register of Historic Places, established in 2001 to develop a national listing of significant sites and with an online database of over 12,500 places. In these, the lives of colonial children are situated within family historic homes or house museums, or within institutional buildings such as schools or orphanages. Some memorials to historic events are also utilitarian in form and intended for the use of children. For instance, at Loyalist Landing, in St Stephen, New Brunswick, a playground and theme park commemorate the arrival of British Crown Loyalist families in 1784. To return to an earlier point, children's historical experiences on the frontier are most directly present at burial sites. One example on the Canadian Register of Historic Places is the African Bethel Cemetery, in Greenvale, Nova Scotia, where the graves of 85 African-Canadian children are reminders of the fragility of colonial childhood.<sup>25</sup>

### **The modern child**

Across the British world, the understanding of childhood was shaped through the exchange of information on the social value and capacities of children. Throughout the nineteenth century, changing assumptions about the responsibilities of the state, religious bodies and philanthropists to protect children culminated in the child rescue movement, and the circulation of its discourse between England, Canada and Australia.<sup>26</sup> In the settler colonies, aligned concerns about children's welfare resulted in the introduction of universal education and restrictions on children's work. Improved public health and maternal and infant welfare services contributed to a decline in child mortality and family size.

Colonial-era commentators visiting the antipodes referred to characteristics that differentiated colonial children from their British counterparts,

including height, weight and attitude.<sup>27</sup> These qualities were taken as a measure of progressiveness, especially in relation to class, that could be found in colonial 'social laboratories'. Although it was claimed middle-class children in Australia were overly indulged, this was often countered with local concerns about uncontrollable street children and larrikinism.<sup>28</sup> In nineteenth-century New Zealand, white children were said to be wilder – and 'less moral' – than British children. James Belich has argued for the historical recovery of the colonial 'Wild Child', citing as evidence several factors: limited parental control, children's close interaction with the natural environment and its wilderness, and, at least until the 1910s, a mixed record of school attendance.<sup>29</sup>

At the height of the British Empire, its children were connected through imperial literature and patriotic youth endeavours such as the Scouting movement.<sup>30</sup> The declaration of war in 1914 emphasized such national and imperial allegiances, but also had a material impact on families and children. Children were left temporarily or permanently fatherless, with increasing family poverty and the institutionalization of children.<sup>31</sup> The First World War also highlighted the plight of civilian children in war-torn Europe. Children in ex-British colonies were, by contrast, safe and physically (though not emotionally) untouched, and their voluntary labour was channelled into fundraising activities. In the Australian country town of Leongatha, for example, school students were 'rearing and selling canaries... making photo frames... catching mice, catching and selling fish... carrying the mail, and building a fowl-house' to support the war effort.<sup>32</sup>

Wartime propaganda featured children on recruitment posters or appeals for war donations. Such symbolism could elicit an emotive and swift response. In 1917, the picture of an innocent blonde child on a poster for Victory Bonds raised \$419 million in Canada in just two weeks.<sup>33</sup> In the rebuilding of postwar society, as Susan Fisher points out in a Canadian context, 'children themselves were to be a war memorial'.<sup>34</sup> The Ontario Department of Education issued an anthology of Great War writing which argued that although the loss of life in the war could be memorialized in bronze or stone, the 'best' national monument was the creation of an united, harmonious and prosperous society. This would be constructed from the 'raw materials' of children, ultimately ensuring that they – and Canada – had a future.<sup>35</sup> In Australia, too, the legacy of those who died was honoured through the creation of 'a land fit for heroes', their families and children. Among the hundreds of war memorials erected across Australia in the 1920s were a number dedicated for the use of children. The inscription at a memorial pavilion at suburban Prospect, in Adelaide, South Australia reads:

PROSPECT CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND MEMORIAL/Erected by the residents to perpetuate the memory of those who fell in the Great War

1914 – 1918/SONS OF THIS PLACE LET THIS OF YOU BE SAID/THAT YOU WHO LIVE ARE WORTHY OF YOUR DEAD./THEY DIED THAT YOU WHO LIVE MAY REAP/A RICHER HARVEST ERE YOU FALL ASLEEP.<sup>36</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, Great War memorials dominated public commemorations throughout the British dominions. The Second World War resulted in a fresh wave of local and national memorials. Images of children were prominent after 1945 in the nation-building campaigns of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, particularly in promotions to attract immigrants.<sup>37</sup> In these representations, the well-being of children was equated with the national well-being – a sentiment actively pursued in the explosion of advice available for parents and educators on child-rearing and psychology. As Alison Clarke has outlined, it is only since this period ‘that the “child” has become a specific facet of the market to be addressed with an increasingly complex series of objects, games, and clothing, designed using a range of child-centric aesthetic genres’.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the heightened social and economic status of the modern child, the presence of children as subjects in public memorials or in museum displays remained scarce in the latter decades of the twentieth century. This is perhaps surprising given the discernable shift from the 1960s from traditional memorials to vernacular forms and performative commemorations.<sup>39</sup> From the 1980s, the number of memorials mounted retrospectively to honour historical events and people has sharply increased. This rediscovery of the past was aligned to a more inclusive understanding of colonial and imperial histories in countries like Canada or Australia, and to the role of museums and heritage sites in conveying a national narrative. It has led to the acknowledgement of some historically contentious incidents such as massacres of indigenous peoples, and the recognition of groups or individuals – including women and families – hitherto ignored in public statues, plaques and other commemorative sites.

But where are the children in this more diverse memorial landscape? Certainly, children are an increasingly important audience segment for the heritage sector: the ‘educational benefit’ of taking children to museums is cited as a key motivation by parents and teachers.<sup>40</sup> In another example, the public representation of children as historical actors is slowly gaining momentum in the symbolic commemorative landscapes of Ottawa and Canberra. It is only in the new millennium that children have appeared on monuments erected on Ottawa’s Parliament Hill and other strategic locations within the Canadian capital. Unveiled in 2003, the Monument to the Canadian Fallen in the Korean War depicts a life-sized Canadian soldier extending his protection to two Korean children. In this arrangement, Canada is symbolically situated as a mature nation that can guide nations cast as ‘developing’, like Korea.<sup>41</sup> In Canberra, at the heart of the central parliamentary zone, Reconciliation Place was opened in 2002 as a

series of interconnected monuments dedicated to reconciliation between Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. Two large artworks commemorate the forced separation of Aboriginal children from their parents, with fragments of testimony and images of Indigenous children.<sup>42</sup> This complex memorial landscape situates Australia as a nation coming to terms with the legacies of its colonial past.

Dedicated exhibitions on the history of children in major state museums have also been limited in ex-British colonies, although this is in line with a more general worldwide trend. As Sharon Roberts has pointed out, museum displays of childhood that do exist are usually either reflecting contemporary images of childhood or tracing its history – although sometimes the two approaches are combined.<sup>43</sup> Where dedicated exhibitions have been mounted, they have attracted critical attention, as in the landmark *Century of the Child: Growing by Design*, held in 2012 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>44</sup> Although toys or games are most often selected by curators to evoke children's experiences, children's worlds may remain situated in the spaces of adulthood unless explicit curatorial and programming practices aim at increasing accessibility for children.<sup>45</sup> An exhibition in 2015 of historic dolls' houses at the Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood in London, for instance, achieved this by building upon its collection to encourage greater exploration by children through additional activities aimed to foster children's interaction with objects and ideas.<sup>46</sup>

The Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood is a highly unusual institution because of its defining focus on the material culture of the child. No major state institutions in former British settler nations have a similar mission. There are, however, a small number of children's museums designed to entertain and educate children through hands-on experiential learning; these include the Canadian Children's Museum located at the Canadian Museum of History in the national capital district, and the Children's Gallery at Museum Victoria in Melbourne. Children's museums are, of course, not primarily concerned with displaying the history of childhood. Major state institutions in Canada, Australia and New Zealand do, however, have significant collections of children's material culture and folklore, but in general have integrated references to children's experiences in mainstream social history exhibitions rather than in dedicated spaces.

An exception is the Auckland War Memorial Museum, where a gallery entitled *Wild Child* opened in 2007 to present a history of childhood in New Zealand over the past 150 years through themes of freedom and restraint, taking its impetus from the work of historian James Belich. The gallery explores how play and routine 'transformed the wild colonial child of the 1880s into the cherished modern child of the 1950s'. Exhibits are grouped into the Home, with a distillation of the life that New Zealand children led under parental direction, and the School, where children's behaviour was controlled by teachers and their rules. A third area called Wild Space

(which features the taxidermied body of Rajah the elephant, put down at the Auckland Zoo in 1936 for being unmanageable), aims to encapsulate the less regulated spaces of childhood.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the displays there is a combination of material culture made for and representing children, and objects made by children themselves. This serves to complicate the 'picture presented in traditional museums of childhood where the distinction between the histories of childhood and the histories of children is seldom questioned'.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, the *Wild Child* gallery is nostalgic in its celebration of children's experiences, and strongly nationalistic in its commemoration of a distinctive New Zealand childhood still within living memory.

### Imperial legacies and recent memorials

As we have seen, the British world was bound together by a shared culture and economy, but also by the flows of migration from the 'old world' to frontiers of the Empire. Children were both willing and unwilling immigrants. In 1869, Quaker philanthropist Annie MacPherson established the foundations of a scheme, later supported by the British government, which eventually sent more than 130,000 children aged from three to 14 years to Canada and Australia, with a small number also setting sail to other Commonwealth countries. In Canada, these 'home children' were mostly boarded with rural families and were seen by the Canadian government as a 'valuable resource during the scramble to expand the young nation'.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, child migrants to Australia were usually placed in institutions run by charitable and church organizations, and often in isolated locations where the children produced their own food.<sup>50</sup>

The 1930s economic depression and the Second World War disrupted the immigration of child migrants from Britain. When the scheme resumed in 1947, only Australia elected to participate, and continued to take British child migrants for another 20 years. A small number of children sent from Malta also came to Australia.<sup>51</sup> At best, British child migrants gained new educational and vocational opportunities and a chance of social and economic mobility in their new country. However, as is now well known, the system was open to various forms of abuse. While some children were genuine orphans, many had been placed temporarily in British institutions as a result of parental poverty or illness, and were sent abroad without the formal permission or knowledge of their parents. Many children also experienced hardship upon their arrival in Canada or Australia, and were subjected to physical and emotional deprivations and abuse.<sup>52</sup>

From the late twentieth century, acknowledgement of the histories of child migration from Britain has gained increasing prominence in Britain, Canada and Australia – although with a particular national inflection in each place. The public revelations by former child migrants of their difficult childhoods, and their attempts to reunite with parents in Britain and seek

official restitution and recognition have occurred with broader national and international discourses about the legacies of British colonization. Government inquiries since the 1990s in Australia and Canada, for instance, have addressed the ongoing impacts of colonial and national practices of child removal and the trauma experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous children who were institutionalized.

The most politically charged and symbolically significant of these national inquiries have explored the official treatment of Indigenous children, and the implications of such racialized colonial histories on Indigenous communities and the nation more generally. In Australia, the 1997 landmark *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* examined the lives of as many as 100,000 Indigenous children who were 'stolen' from their communities by government authorities between the late nineteenth century and the 1970s, and placed in state and church institutions to be assimilated into white society.<sup>53</sup> This report spurred formal apologies to Indigenous peoples by state and territory governments. In 2008, a national apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd emphasized the specific experiences of child removal and the Stolen Generations. In Canada, a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 addressed the Indian Residential School system, which relocated up to 150,000 First Nations children from their communities to residential boarding schools with the infamous aim to 'kill the Indian in the child'. This led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, and in 2008 a national apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to former students of Indian Residential Schools. The establishment of a national Truth and Reconciliation Commission has emphasized the need to heal the wrongs inflicted by Indian Residential Schools through the public memorialization of this past.<sup>54</sup>

In Australia, national inquiries into the historical experiences of non-Indigenous children generated the publication of two major reports based on copious first-person testimonies: *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record on Child Migration* (in 2001) and *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children* (in 2004).<sup>55</sup> In 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologized to the 'Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants'. The following year, Prime Minister Julia Gillard delivered a 'National Apology for the Victims of Forced Adoptions', recognizing the suffering of children and their mothers, fathers and extended families. That same year, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown apologized to former child migrants, acknowledging that 'instead of caring for them, this country turned its back, and we are sorry that the voices of these children were not always heard and their cries for help not always heeded'.<sup>56</sup> In sharp contrast, with no national apology forthcoming, the Canadian government designated 2010 as the Year of the Home Child and issued a commemorative postage stamp.

Such increasing recognition of the hardships experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, and the political advocacy of their support groups has placed imperial and national policies pertaining to the welfare of children under unprecedented scrutiny. Memorials and museums have played an educative role in this process. The presence of the British world in the lives of children is brought to the fore in a significant touring exhibition developed between the Australian National Maritime Museum and National Museums Liverpool in the United Kingdom. *On Their Own: Britain's Child Migrants* opened in Sydney in 2010 and toured throughout Australia for four years before opening at the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool, and later at the Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood in London.

*On Their Own* traces the individual and collective histories of children sent from Britain to Canada, Australia and elsewhere to serve as the 'building blocks' of Empire. Drawing on oral histories, memoirs and treasured objects as a means of capturing a child's perspective, the exhibition also invites its audience to follow the narratives of selected children across the thematic organization of the displays. A section is devoted to 'reflection, remembering and reunion' for former child migrants today. Message boards and commemorative books allow the recording of personal responses to the exhibition and the collection of new stories of migration. My own observation of the exhibition in Australian venues was that it prompted a number of former child migrants to visit with their children and grandchildren, sharing details of their own past with their families, perhaps for the first time.<sup>57</sup>

The *On Their Own* exhibition is one element of a commemorative environment that has since the new millennium directly acknowledged harsh childhood experiences in postcolonial societies. This has been most common and overt in terms of the public commemoration of the Stolen Generations and the experiences of Indigenous children and their communities. Recognition of child removal as a colonial policy is now acknowledged in state and national museum exhibitions, in installations at the sites of former institutions and in national memorials in Australia and in Canada, including through the work of its Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>58</sup>

However, there are also new memorials that recognize the experiences of non-Indigenous children. These include online memorial sites, sponsored by advocacy groups and individuals, but also many memorial markers and plaques at specific sites. In Canada, for instance, the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial, unveiled in 2011, commemorates the 9,000 home children who passed through this institution in Peterborough, Ontario.<sup>59</sup> At Fremantle in Australia, a life-sized bronze statue of a boy and girl carrying their worldly possessions in a suitcase was launched on Human Rights Day in 2004 in memory of British and Maltese child migrants to Western Australia. Its inscription reads, with considerable understatement: 'Hardships were endured, benefits were derived. These child migrants provided valuable contributions to Australian society in diverse ways as parents, workers, and citizens. Australia is better for their coming' (Figure 15.1).<sup>60</sup>



*Figure 15.1* Moondyne, Child Migrant Statue (2004), Fremantle  
Courtesy Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA, Creative Commons License.

Public memorials to children appear to be more numerous and explicit in Australia than in Canada, and from the early 2000s there are no taboos when it comes to highlighting children's historical experiences of physical, mental and sexual abuse. In December 2003, a nameless memorial of crosses was erected on the lawn of the Tasmanian Parliament in Hobart. The memorial was intended as a highly visible reminder of child sexual abuse, and grew organically as further crosses were added each day, until it was eventually removed amid controversy.<sup>61</sup> One year later, what has become known as the Child Abuse Memorial was unveiled in central Brisbane. A life-sized bronze figure of a barefooted boy is dedicated to the memory of all children 'who suffered and of those who did not survive abuse' in children's institutions in Queensland. The breaking of silence about child abuse is at the fore in the inscription that reads: 'For there is nothing hidden, except that it should be made known'.<sup>62</sup>

Around Australia, in the past decade memorials have been erected in all states to remember the painful experiences of the Forgotten Australians and to commemorate the national apologies to those in institutionalized care. In Perth, the state memorial is modelled on a child's fortune-telling game of a 'chatterbox', and is located in front of the Western Australian Museum and Cultural Centre. The inscription is pointed in casting historical wrongs as a lesson for contemporary experience:

This memorial brings the 'Forgotten Australians' out of the shadows and into the light. Their most enduring legacy will be that the people now and in the future will know their stories and build upon them a platform for better care.

There is a strong thread that links the way a child is raised with the person they become in adulthood. This memorial stands as a reminder of that thread to all who create policies that affect children.<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusion

This overview of the evolving public memorialization of the histories of children and childhood in the former white settler colonies of the British world is, until recent times, more an account of omission than of presence. Nineteenth-century memorials to colonial white children lost in the Australian bush are notable because of their evocation of a hostile frontier, but are also one of the very few public representations of children's lives at this time. More recently, children's experiences in social history museums have often been overlooked or subsumed within family or community histories, rather than presented as distinct. Where the lives of settler children have appeared in exhibitions, it has most usually been through the material culture of the middle class, such as clothes, toys, and even dolls' houses such

as Pendle Hall – not least because these are artefacts that have been collected and have endured.

In recent years, however, the new prominence of children's history in the public sphere has been fanned by the children's rights movement, which dates back to nineteenth-century campaigns to 'save' children from exploitation and to preserve childhood as a distinct period in the life cycle. The widespread influence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, and its recognition of the special needs of children in contemporary human rights discourse has also changed the way that children's history is today perceived and commemorated. In countries such as Canada and Australia, today's political and social concerns about the institutionalization and abuse of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children have sharpened recent attention towards how both imperial and national authorities failed to protect and nurture the children in their care. This has in turn led to an entirely new and politicized wave of public commemorations of children's lives where the identification and historical framing of children's past abuse and suffering can serve as lessons for today's education and welfare bureaucrats.<sup>64</sup> National apologies in Australia and Canada for the colonial system of Indigenous child removal, and public recognition of the suffering of British child migrants sent to both countries, has also served to reinsert the legacies of British imperialism into Australian and Canadian national histories.

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